

# The National Curriculum Framework 2011

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This year those in charge of the Education Sector have been working on changing the old Curriculum with a new one which caters for all learners. Underneath you will find the key ideas of this new Curriculum Framework. Read them through to start with.

## Key Ideas of the National Curriculum Framework:

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1. The development of lifelong learners who are engaged and responsible citizens, and active in the economy.
2. The support for all learners to achieve and succeed, whatever their backgrounds, needs and aptitudes.
3. A clear focus in colleges and schools on meeting the needs of all learners through increased curricular autonomy.
4. The creation of active, inclusive learning communities which put learning and learners at the heart of all that they do and are accountable to their stakeholders.
5. Seamless progression through the early, primary and secondary years in the skills and competences required for lifelong learning.
6. Learning which is active, personalized, relevant, and purposeful.
7. Learning that emphasises the application of knowledge and skills in different contexts and settings as well as breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding.
8. A curriculum framework that focuses on learning areas, creating links and synergies across traditional subjects.
9. Assessment and evaluation which use information and feedback formatively to inform planning for improvement.
10. Cycles of quality assurance and evaluation which recognise that continuous professional learning is an essential part of educational practice.

**The National Curriculum Framework - The draft curriculum framework is presented in a set of four consultation documents, namely the following:**

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**Document 1: The Executive Summary**

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**Document 2: The National Curriculum Framework - Rationale and Components**

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*This document includes a detailed introduction to the theoretical background against which the proposals of the national curriculum framework were conceptualised.*

**Document 3: The National Curriculum Framework - The Three Cycles: The Early Years, the Primary Years and the Secondary Years**

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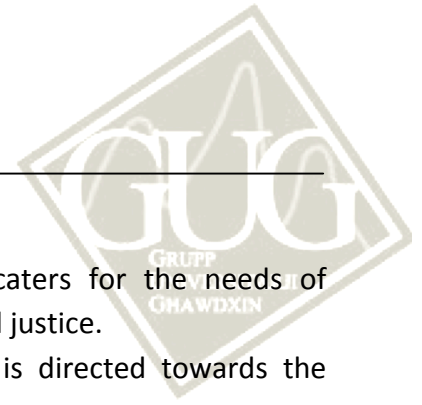
*This document presents details of how the national curriculum framework envisages the learning programme to be offered to children and young people in the early years, the primary years and the secondary years. This document focuses on the application of the framework in schools and colleges.*

**Document 4: The National Curriculum Framework - The Way Forward**

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*This document summarises the recommendations of the national curriculum framework and examines the implications of such recommendations. The document presents ideas about the management of change which underpin the consultation and implementation strategies the framework would like to promote. In turn, the consultation and implementation strategies presented are based on an understanding of a change management process.*

## The National Curriculum Framework - Discussion:



### Positive Outcomes:-

- ✗ The new NCF has one educational vision; that which caters for the needs of everyone. Thus presenting the idea of fairness, equality and justice.
- ✗ Education is presented as something holistic; in fact, it is directed towards the development of students' holistic potential.
- ✗ Students will be given utmost attention and preparation; they will learn skills related to the generic concept of citizenship. Students are brought up as future citizens of a society.
- ✗ The NCF covers all learning areas.
- ✗ Creativity and innovation can be identified in each learning area; especially in the proposed five cross-curricular themes.
- ✗ More importance is given to assessment for learning and there is a less daring emphasis on examination; auto-evaluation made by students and the idea of creating a portfolio can help students' learning.

### Negative Outcomes:-

- ✗ The NCF is a bit heavy-loaded with information; although its appearance may be attractive, the amount to read is not as appealing as it should be to the main reader (i.e. the busy teacher).
- ✗ Language is to be kept quite brisk and simple; as not everyone understands higher-order terminology. Nothing is to be taken for granted and the NCF is open for everyone to read.
- ✗ The implications of differentiated learning may have its downfall; differentiated teaching is appealing for better schooling but 'gifted' students still fall in the crack of our educational system. Less gifted students are given extra attention and help, so gifted students should also be given such privileges.
- ✗ Foundations classes should not be loaded with the same equivalent academic subject; we should avoid putting students in front of more difficulties which they cannot handle and overcome on their own. If they are still unable to do sums or to read Basic English, then they should not be loaded with a foreign language too.
- ✗ The idea of Portfolios is too idealistic; with the current curriculum and syllabuses it can be quite a challenge for teachers and students to create these portfolios. In order for these portfolios to take life, the number of students in each class should be far less; so teachers can give more individual attention to each particular need. Otherwise, portfolios should be assigned to those students who really want to work for it.

## Points to be discussed:

Although we are sure that the NCF aims at providing a quality education for all learners we have some points and questions to put forward:

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In *The Maltese National Curriculum - A critical evaluation* by Prof. Wain (this argumentative text by Prof. Wain criticizes the 1<sup>st</sup> Maltese NMC published in 1988) Wain argues that the NMC should have been written differently. He even goes on to argue that in Malta there was **no preliminary consultation document published**.

*“Feedback [was] received by invitation from curriculum experts from the Ministry of Education in New Zealand and Learning and Teaching Scotland.” NCF (document 1)*

- ➔ Will the new NCF make **presumptions that the ideas present in the curricula will be perfect without validating any reactions?** Will it expect people concerned (ex:parents/headmasters/teacher) to express their reaction after it is published? Or is it working on making sure these people are involved in the finalization of the curriculum framework?
  - ➔ **What about the Consultation Process? How was it handled?**
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It is clear that the new NCF includes a statement of the general aims of the content and the justification of it as well.

- ➔ **Have teachers been consulted or were they even given the chance to take part in its construction?** How will teachers and their respective school cope with the programme found in the NCF if they do not feel like they are part of it? Teachers can cope with the curriculum if they are involved directly, by giving them proper professional autonomy.
- ➔ **One of the six general principles of the NCF is Principle 6: teacher support what does this entail specifically?**
- ➔ **Will the new NCF focus on coverage rather than mastery?** It should not be a matter of quantity but of quality, it is matter of syllabus versus the need of the child; but teachers seem to be more preoccupied with quantity rather than the other aspect. Could this be because there is a lot to be covered? Doesn't this hinder the promotion of differentiated teaching in schools?

→ **Principles of diversity and inclusion surely underpin the NCF, how is it more inclusive in its method of teaching and sharing of knowledge?** For instance, learning issues should have the necessary resources to provide schools that are safe, attractive and well-resourced. Schools must recognise, acknowledge and provide for different learning styles and cultures. Another thing is to provide for multiple delivery systems which cater for differences within a comprehensive school environment; the bringing together of students with different learning needs, abilities, orientations and interests.

→ **Will the proposed five cross-curricular themes help develop this idea of inclusivity?**

**The five cross-curricular themes being:**

- eLearning;
- Education for Sustainable Development;
- Intercultural Education;
- Education for Entrepreneurship; and
- Creativity and Innovation.

→ **How is the idea of schools as learning community a substantial part in the new NCF?** Teachers should not simply aim at forcing students to learn but must provide them the necessity to learn. Teachers should give students a reason why they are taught what they are taught and show them how they can implement this once they go outside to the real world.

*“The proposed NCF allows for flexibility within which colleges and schools determine particular aspects of the curriculum in order to address specific needs and to build upon strengths within the context of their learning communities”*

**NCF document 1**

→ **How will this be achieved?**

In the *Structures of Argument* (which was written to sustain or go up against the idea of inclusion policies for students with a disability) we find the **right** and **justice arguments** which support the ideas of ‘equality and fairness’ and it allocates itself with how good services can be guaranteed by a state to persons in a community.

→ **Will there be fair distribution in the new NCF according to the six general principles of the NCF, being **Principle 1: Entitlement** and **Principle 2: Diversity**? Will these principles assert that those with disability are to be considered on the same level and should be given equal education as those who are non-disabled learners?**