

**A synopsis of feedback
submitted following the Seminar “Literacy for All”,
held on 15th November 2012,
at St Ignatius College Siggiewi Primary School,**

1. Feedback contributions

- 1.1 There were 36 feedback contributions, sent in by different participants which included groups such as College Literacy Strategy teams, groups of teachers from schools and individual teachers.
- 1.2 Although participants at the Seminar held on 15th November were given guidelines, consisting of a number of questions, upon which to structure their feedback, few respondents adhered literally to this format although they answered the questions sometimes not quite explicitly.

2. The recommendations of the HLG

- 2.1 The recommendation which seems to have caught the attention of respondents was **the need to immerse learners in a literacy rich environment**. It was encouraging to see that a number of respondents took note of “the importance of Kindergarten”. The reference to these early years was reinforced later on at all points: the need to train Kindergarten staff, the need to screen as early as possible.

3. Suggestions

- 3.1 Suggestions for the improvement of the teaching of literacy converged heavily on **inclusion, diversity, training and ownership**. In varying ways, respondents stressed the need to include stakeholders, to take different migrant groups and family models into account, to keep the issue of bilingualism, with its ramifications, in mind. Strong professional training for teaching staff was mentioned practically throughout, with fewer references to initial teacher training than to continuing professional development. In-class support such as class demos featured regularly in

comments. The understanding of a need for ownership could be felt in a quasi-unanimous call for “an inclusion of all stakeholders”, for the involvement and guidance of parents in literacy issues so that learners can continue to be supported at home.

4. Literacy strategies

4.1 Feedback clearly reflected a consensual need for institutions to have a strategy (not necessarily one strategy for all). The possible components of the strategy were strikingly convergent, and can be listed thus:

- a. Several respondents referred specifically to reading for pleasure, and the widespread feeling is that one must start to expose learners from the early years and to screen learners as early as possible, with specific respondents saying that taking action in Year 4 is already too late.
- b. Respondents gave valid clues as to the general characteristics which literacy strategies should possess. They would need to:
 - include Kindergarten, promoting exposure as from early years
 - include ICT as part of the methodology used
 - promote awareness / attitudes towards dyslexia and contribute towards
 - the creation of dyslexia friendly schools
 - monitor standards and levels, as well as the quality of teaching and programmes
 - define the roles of stakeholders, including LSAs, in the process

4.2 More specifically, literacy strategies would ensure the allocation of time for

- listening to stories
- storytelling/speaking activities
- reading (in different ways)

4.3 Literacy strategies need to coordinate different programmes of learning to avoid duplication or conflict. Although only one respondent spoke of extending complementary education to Years 5 and 6, with another noting that learners need continued support after Year 4, the respondents from Secondary also mentioned the need for support.

5. Medium term suggestions

5.1 In the medium-term, the respondents mainly targeted syllabi which they considered too vast, and a few mentioned the need for less interruptions in the school routine.

6. How goals can be achieved

6.1 In answer to how literacy goals can be achieved in the family, respondents were corroborating each other's views that parents need to be involved, educated and guided in supporting their children's needs.

6.2 Respondents gave the following as answers to specifically achieving the goals in the school (involving but not necessarily encapsulating the literacy strategy):

- establishment of reading clubs in schools (mid-week)
- the use of educational outings
- the extension of the culture card to primary school learners
- the extension of support to learners experiencing difficulty at secondary level
- dealing with the issue of absenteeism and its implications on learner achievement.

6.3 Community goals can be achieved

- by engaging Local Councils in an active role in the issue of literacy
- by establishing community libraries
- by establishing and funding reading clubs

6.4 The question of how to achieve goals on a national level produced a panoply of suggestions:

- one should address all levels, not just stragglers
- the teacher: pupil ratio may need to be revised
- the production of educational television programmes
- investment in increasing literacy support staff
- allocation of specific budgets for literacy teaching
- a campaign in the media promoting positive attitudes to reading
- awareness raising in the media of poor performances in this field, and the implications this will have on economic performance
- the need to act concretely on international reports
- implementation of national measures for newborns
- the need for interministerial collaboration, treating literacy as a national issue
- the need to deal with elements which contribute to the problem, mainly socio-cultural or economic in nature
- the possibility of enhancing literacy through other domains such as drama.

7. Some exceptional suggestions:

The feedback did also mention 'exceptional' suggestions:

- implementing special measures to encourage parents to participate in literacy skills courses (in this case children's allowances were mentioned)
- more support for the Degree Plus programme
- having a "Sena tal-Qari" in 2018 ... and even the slogan was suggested (**"Reading is cool!"**)
- national funding for the publication of children's work
- the organisation/establishment of community literacy workers