

THE GOZO COLLEGE – *a community college where each diversity is treasured and celebrated as a gift*

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### **Preamble**

The Gozo College was one of the four pilot colleges launched in October 2005 after the publication of the document FOR ALL CHILDREN TO SUCCEED – *a New Network Organisation for Quality Education in Malta*, by the MEYE on 28 June 2005. The Gozo College is actually one of the ten Colleges regrouping all State schools in Malta and Gozo.

The Gozo College network comprises officially eleven mixed primary schools and two secondary schools, one for boys and one for girls. However, the Gozo College has for the past four years worked very closely with the Arts and Crafts Centre at Għajnsielem, the Music School at Sannat, the Drama school at Nadur and the Sir M.A Refalo Centre for Further Studies. As from this past year, all Church Schools in Gozo have been attending, on a regular basis, our monthly Council of Heads meetings along with the other Heads of School. This means that, practically, the Gozo College network incorporates all schools in Gozo, State and non-State. The Gozo College also works in close collaboration with other stakeholders in the community.

### **Mission Statement , Aspirational Purpose, Aims, Vision and Voice**

The mission statement of the Gozo College was agreed upon by consensus after a number of discussion meetings at Council of Heads level. It states: The Gozo College, believing that

- *every child matters,*
- *every child can be a powerful learner,*
- *every child can be ' intelligent' if taught effectively,*
- *every human being within it is a special occasion,*
- *by working together we can work smarter,*

*aspires to* provide a holistic education of the highest quality to each and every learner entrusted in its care and to the whole Gozitan community that it serves.

Our aims and objectives are intended to enhance:

- *pupil/student learning* with a clear pedagogical focus on *all* learners and *all* teachers, the aim being to raise the individual attainment of each pupil/student and the individual performance of each teacher ;
- *adult learning* where teachers share experiences alongside their students through collaborative approaches. In a perspective of life-long and life-wide learning this includes also parents and the whole community;
- *leadership for learning and leadership development* focusing on the continuous professional development of Heads, Assistant Heads and other members of the senior management team (SMT); the aim is also to encourage all to improve practices by not

being afraid to take calculated risks and not to shy from experimenting after careful reflection;

- *school-wide learning*, to transform schools into learning organisations and learning communities, learning organisation being defined as: ‘ .. *an enterprise made up of learners and where learning is used continuously to transform the organisation*’. (Senge, 1990)
- *school to school learning* where professionals can work in unison sharing knowledge and good practices in a process of co-construction with other outside schools and institutions;
- *Network to network learning*: where knowledge is transferred from one network to another enabling networks to learn from each other and grow professionally together;
- *inquiry, personal mastery and research* in a continuous process of reflection and self-evaluation.
- *Innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship* since these are essential to Malta’s and Gozo’s future economic prosperity and quality of life. Our innovation methodology builds on Lingard’s concept of productive pedagogies – developing classroom practices that revolve around substantive conversation, recognition and celebration of diversity, connectedness and intellectual challenge.

A vision is ‘*a dream created in our working hours of a preferred future*’ (Block, 1987) . Helgesen (1991) speaks of enhancing the concept of vision with that of voice, somebody to hear it until it becomes an interactive, shared vision. The shared *vision* of the Gozo College revolves around the following principles:

- Shared Dialogue, Collaboration, Cooperation and Collegiality,
- Leadership,
- Promotion of resilience to develop emotional and cognitive skills,
- Diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity,
- Multilingualism, multiculturalism, interculturality,
- Enhancement of curricular, pedagogical and methodological practices,
- Constant inquiry and discourse, personal mastery and access to external expertise.

### **Shared Dialogue, Collaboration, Cooperation and Collegiality (CCC)**

‘*Teachers learn best by sharing ideas, planning collaboratively, critiquing each other’s ideas and experiences and reducing the isolation encountered in most schools*’ (Veugleres and O’Hair, 2009) Networking and synergy among our schools is helping in no small measure to create a healthy dialogue and to break this isolation.

From its very beginning, the rationale of the Gozo College was to develop a **shared dialogue** of equals among all stake holders: Heads, Assistant Heads, SMT’s, teaching personnel, kindergarten assistants, learning support assistants, parents, social workers, clerical and minor staff, school and local councils, the Gozo Cultural Committee, support services (ex: Sedqa, Appogg, Arka, FES, FTS...) Gozo is a very closely-knit society and the amalgamation of all these potential forces hailing from State, non-State and the civil society in general, spells value-added benefits to our educational cause.

Michael Fullan (1995) states clearly that if you want people to be with you at the landing you have to invite them for the launch. This is a ruling principle at the Gozo College. One of our

mottos is : *Working together, achieving together, succeeding together*. The Gozo College hymn entitled *Flimkien (Together)*( Gatt, 2006) reflects, as well, our will and firm conviction to join forces and work together as a team.

Our collegiality is much more collaborative than contrived. In collaborative cultures working relationships are more spontaneous, voluntary, development-oriented, persuasive across time and space and unpredictable; contrived collegiality is much more administratively regulated, compulsory, implementation-oriented, fixed in time and space, and predictable. (Hargreaves 1992).

First and foremost CCC with **Heads of School**: undoubtedly, they have a key role to play in terms of education reform. (Fullan, 2002) These are required to provide leadership and vision. They need to develop performance, be innovative, enterprising, and entrepreneurial. (Woods 200). Different schools have different cultures and each Head of school is expected to develop inclusive cultures to cope. (Fullan, 2001). One of my roles as College Principal is to synergize with all of them, celebrating good practices but at the same time leaving intact the identity of each school. In this sense, the College holds at least one Council of Heads meeting every month each time in a *different* school thus giving each and every school the opportunity to play host to all the other schools and to present at least one concrete, hands-on, on the spot example of good practice. During these meetings, each and every Head is given ample time and opportunity to bring forward his/her views. In this way, each school becomes a leading school in its own right irrespective of its number of students and available space. Projects are discussed, planned and agreed upon by consensus; professional material and experiences are willingly shared. Indeed, the general policy of the College is moulded mainly during these regular meetings. In this way, we feel stronger because we can work together and no school is in any way deprived of its identity and autonomy: this is fundamental for the empowerment, well-being and positive feeling of the network. This positive ambiance at the Gozo College is helping to eliminate needless fear and to create school cultures that accept and encourage intelligent experimentation and risk-taking and open dialogue in order to reach the needs of all learners. (Lucas and Valentine, 2002)

In addition, the Gozo College regularly assembles all **Assistant Heads** in what has become known as the Council of Assistant Heads. The Gozo College invests immensely in the expertise of these future, potential Heads of our schools and College. To date, Assistant Heads have worked conjointly and proactively on various College-wide projects including the preparation of common half-yearly papers, common College policies and in-house CPD.

CCC with the various **teaching personnel** is done on a regular basis. We are very conscious that teacher leadership is a *sine qua non* for school effectiveness. Teachers are sounded regularly in the various action research initiatives taken by the College. Besides, various meetings are held with all teachers, learning support assistants and KA's. It has now become traditional across our College to hold professional development and Inset sessions in common. Moreover, teachers are actively involved in the preparation of common half-yearly examination papers. The contribution of all teaching staff in the various school activities is an everyday occurrence. Determined to give an academic voice to our teaching personnel, the Gozo College has just published a GOZO COLLEGE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES (2009) with academic contributions from educators in our schools.

Then, our College leaves no stone unturned to cooperate and collaborate with **parents and guardians**. Partnership with parents in education requires effective communication. (Hornby 2000). Besides the usual Parents' Days, the College truly advocates an open door policy to suit the individual needs of the parents. Regular meetings for parents are held regularly in the different schools during and after school hours. Writing programmes are organised for those who mostly need them. We have also revived the AKS (Assocjazzjoni Kunsilli Skolastici) Gozo Branch to give a stronger voice to the parents and help them share in our educational venture. Two very active special support groups, one for Dyslexia and another one for ADHD, have been set up to aid especially the parents of these children. Parents, grandparents, other relatives are regularly invited for all our activities: celebration days, mini-musicals, sport festivals, multi-cultural festivals ... in a true communal spirit.

The Gozo College prides itself on being a **Community College** set to promote community cohesion. We believe that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for an agenda for learning to be effective, we must also work 'out there' with families and communities and not only in the College schools and classrooms. (ILRC June 2009) As invitational leaders, we reach out to all members of the community by listening to their voices and understanding and responding to their points of view. In fact, work and meetings with local councils are not uncommon and the Principal and other College staff give regular educational talks on the various community radios that are scattered all around the isle of Gozo. We also make it a point to attend and give our contribution during meetings organised by other relevant bodies in the community such as the Gozo Chamber of Commerce, the Gozo Tourism Authority, MCAST, ITS, ARKA, Eko-Gozo and others. This not only enhances the visibility of the Gozo College but keeps us abreast of the policies and developments taking place in the Gozitan community.

Practically, all schools within the Gozo College avail themselves of the various EU programmes and actions. This assures that our networking is further enhanced by closer dialogue, collaboration, cooperation and collegiality with our European partners embarked on the same educational mission.

### **Effective leadership**

*'Leadership is one of the key feature of successful schools'* (National Commission of Education 1993) *'In attempting to bring about change, ... effective leadership is a key determinant in deciding whether anything positive happens in a school or a school system'* (Stoll and Fink, 2003). Moreover, Leithwood et al., (1999) affirm that in this post-modern climate of diversity, complexity, indeterminacy and instability, *commitment* rather than *control* strategies are called for. This would call for transformational (more people-oriented) rather than transactional leadership (more task-oriented). (Mitchell and Tucker, 1992) In fact, transformational leaders not only manage the structure but purposely impact the culture to achieve school development.

In passing, one should mention, as well, that, especially in the initial months, we were dealing with transitional leadership which is normally and usually characterised by a high level of uncertainty and a degree of apprehension. (Waks 2007). In these circumstances, it was mostly up to me as College Principal to map out an appropriate path inspired by the vision of the new policy, to motivate and enrol the stakeholders on the journey along this path, thus securing their commitment. (Gunter 2005). To facilitate this transition I constantly kept in mind the three aspects identified by Goldrig et al. (200e), namely, changing conceptual boundaries, maintaining a sense of direction and slowly but steadily adjusting the culture.

This said, our rationale of shared dialogue, collaboration and collegiality calls surely for *distributive* and *collaborative leadership*, core capacity components central to capacity building, which stand to remind us that

- we are all leaders at different times for different purposes;
- no one person has all the knowledge or expertise;
- everyone has something to contribute towards the effectiveness of the school.

We believe that the role of the leader is essentially to harness, focus, liberate, empower and align that leadership towards common purposes and, by so doing, build and release capacity. (Hopkins and Jackson, 2003)

We are firmly convinced, as well, that leadership is also about communicating *invitational* messages to individuals and groups with whom leaders are interacting in order to construct and act on a shared, evolving vision of enhanced educational experiences. At the Gozo College we are building on the four components of *invitational leadership*, (Siegel, Purkey, 2002) namely,

- *optimism*: our belief is that people need to be affirmed about their present worth and that, given the right circumstances, can fully realize their potential;
- *respect*: we also believe in respecting the individuality of each of us by being more civil, polite, courteous and caring to each other;
- *trust*: basic for groups to function and have the right motivation, and
- *Intentional support, caring and encouragement* – fundamental to enhance communication and human relationships.

As invitational leaders, we not only articulate a vision but we share power and authority and invite others to share and develop the dream.

We tend to concur with Brighthouse and Tomlinson (1991) that effective, educational leaders draw upon a wide range of personalised leadership strategies knowing how and when to utilize professional judgement, when to push, when to support and when to give others opportunities to lead; that attend to both structure and culture, continuity and change; that they are both managers and leaders - '*managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do right things*- (Bennis and Nanus, 1985), leadership and management being difficult to separate in the daily life of schools and colleges. (Louis and Miles, 1990). After all, this integrated approach gives leaders different tools to tackle diverse aspects of complex realities. (Bush and Glover, 2003).

Our intention at all times is to be democratic: democracy that addresses current needs, that is guided by key values, including the worth of individuals, open inquiry and critique, the responsibility of individuals to deliberate about collective choices; democracy implying mutual understanding and a social morality through which individuals act for and with others.

We strive day in day out to empower people, to build bridges of cooperation, collaboration and collegiality among all our partners in our educational, lifelong journey. We project ourselves as one big family where each retains his/her identity while, at the same time, acquiring the full benefits of belonging to a cohesive group. After all, '*ultimately, leadership in a culture of change will be judged as effective or ineffective not by who you areas a leader but by what leadership you produce in others.*' (Fullan, 2001)

## **Promoting Resilience to develop emotional and cognitive skills**

Resilience is the power of resuming the original form after compression or stretching. In ecology, resilience is the ability of an ecosystem to return to its original state. Close synonyms of resilience are flexible, supple, strong. The opposite is to be weak and stiff.

In educational terms the resilience perspective led to a reconsideration of the ways in which schools can work towards success in children and young people. It brought a paradigm shift in that it suggested that one could be much more effective in supporting learners' development, educational journey and global well-being by focusing on their strengths rather than on their weaknesses and shortcomings. (Cefai 2008)

In this recent publication, Gozitan born and bred educational psychologist, Dr Carmel Cefai, construes educational resilience as a dynamic, contextual phenomenon rather than a fixed, individual characteristic. It is something that can be moulded and enhanced within the different contexts in which teachers and learners teach and learn.

This definition is forward-looking, inclusive, holistic and very positive because it focuses on learning rather than achievement and opens opportunities for all and values both the cognitive and affective qualities of our learners. During the four years of its existence, the Gozo College has worked with might and main to *focus on the strengths of our learners by adopting a philosophy of resilience* as explained by Dr Cefai and as spelled out clearly in our mission statement. This mindset is leading our College, schools and individual classes to horizons and fresher pastures of health-promoting and competence-enhancing contexts for *all* our learners, without exceptions.

We believe that effort rather than innate ability leads to success. (Stoll and Fink, 2003). We believe that our College by being resilient and consequently learner-oriented is improving both performance and achievement, as results, even examination results, are already showing. (JL results, 2009)

The Gozo College has from its inception preached and embraced a culture of valuing and celebrating all multiple intelligences be they bodily-kinesthetic, verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial, logical-mathematical, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, existential or/and naturalistic. (Gardner, 1993)) These are intelligences which we constantly celebrate at the Gozo College because they spell beauty in diversity.

Being a resilient College we are offering an array of opportunities which each of our learners can exploit according to his/her talents under the expert guidance of our dedicated educators. These opportunities seek to help children explore, in safety and security, opportunities that help them believe, dream and increase their self-esteem and mastery orientation. Resilience is helping us to view each diversity as an invaluable gift.

We at the Gozo College are striving to give a real education of quality to all our learners, at school primarily but also at community level. All our learners need to find and nurture relationships, see possibilities and potentials in what we teach them. The Gozo College is proud to be building a climate and a process within this climate that works for the benefit of all.

## **Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunities at all levels**

The principle of resilience favours respect for diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities at all levels. Ours is a vision of education which seeks to celebrate rather than exclude, to engage rather than alienate or ignore. (Cooper, 2006) We welcome the challenge of responding to student's diversity and of preparing our teachers for it. ( Bartolo et al., 2007). We respond to student diversity. Very conscious of this, we, at the Gozo College, make it a point to:

- treat all as individuals of equal worth, regardless of gender, race, background, special needs;
- address equality of access, uptake and outcome;
- counter, challenge and eliminate stereotypes, discrimination, bias and misconceptions;
- promote a clearer understanding of equal rights and freedoms;
- celebrate the notion of difference and promote positive images of a diverse populace where it exists;
- identify how to break down discriminatory practices;
- develop citizenship in a non-discriminatory way;
- promote a philosophy of all equal all beautiful.

We are proud to have eliminated unhealthy competition in our classes and schools. Emulation yes, unhealthy, visceral competition no, a definite no. Unnecessary stress kills creativity in the bud and creates a social climate of depression and suspicion.

This is why

- traditional prize days have given way to celebration days where the talents of each are rewarded, where each student is invited to compete with him/herself, where each has a fair chance of being celebrated;
- streaming has given way to mixed ability-cum-team, core subject teaching thus improving learning and teaching and helping to avoid discrimination between pupil and pupil, teacher and teacher, parent and parent;
- our new system of reporting progress will be embracing all areas of studies including the softer skills of learning to learn and entrepreneurship at the same time assuring more validity, reliability and better wash-back effect;
- we have introduced an extensive, free-of-charge, after-school programme in each Gozo College school which is meant to assist our learners both academically and socially and to help especially working parents in our community.

Indeed, our many activities for the *whole* community are meant to bring the community closer to our schools. For being inclusive also means stretching our means to all and sundry in the community with their diverse needs and help them to reach their aspirations. Especially those members of the community who mostly require our assistance.

By working consistently on such strategies, we are surely lessening in no small measure the discriminatory attitudes of society which tend to focus on the difficulty rather than on the need, an attitude which could present the greatest obstacle to education and learning. (UNESCO, 2005)

The promotion of diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities in our College is helping us in the formation of academically and socially-mature learners prepared for the tests of life and not solely for a life of tests and examinations; it means, as well, making a positive difference in the lives of learners irrespective of background, and to help produce citizens who can live and work productively with change in increasingly dynamically complex and diverse societies.

### **Multilingualism, multiculturalism and interculturality**

Resilience and diversity also favour multilingualism, multiculturalism and interculturality: basic for harmonious living in a flatter world. As a result of globalisation, increased mobility and immigration, European society has become more international, and more linguistically and culturally diverse. Consequently, every institution of schooling has to face the challenges which this linguistic and cultural diversity management entails. Schooling in particular plays a leading role in the establishment of an integrative, harmonious, cohesive society.

Schools should today be rehearsing the future. Schools have the duty to prepare learners to shape tomorrow's society which should be founded on harmonious living. (Vienna, 2009) With this in mind, our College endeavours to give concepts, such as culture and integration, their true significance. As a College, we see it as part of our modern mission to inculcate in our learners the strong belief that harmony requires more than one tone, that schools need to promote more constructive intercultural dialogue, conducted on the basis of mutual respect which should be initiated through the fostering of multilingualism and multiculturalism. At the Gozo College, these are fundamental principles. We are constructing a College in which our pupils, the citizens of tomorrow, from the very early years, are learning to live with linguistic and cultural diversity.

A tangible proof of this –to quote just one concrete example- is the multi-lingual, multi-cultural annual festival for all kinder classes, including those from church schools, organised each year by the Gozo College, winner also of the 2008 Best Language Practice Award. This year fifteen schools collaborated in the preparation of an activity in a different language at the same time promoting cultural aspects of the country where the language is spoken; fifteen languages including Indian, Flemish and Mandarin Chinese. This is also one of our strategies to integrate foreign parents inside our schools. The final show is held at the Sports Complex in Victoria with two thousand parents, grandparents attending and cheering this celebration of cultures, languages and diversity. The various EU projects, example Comenius but not only, are helping us a lot in bringing cultures and together, in making us all realise that we are all different, all equal; that diversity is a precious gift.

### **Enhancement of curricular, pedagogical and methodological practices**

The Gozo College strives to give each child an education of the highest quality in line with the National Curriculum Framework and the latest methodological and pedagogical practices. Alas! Much too often we have dwelt on giving children answers to remember rather than problems to solve. The Gozo College works with might and main to reverse this tendency. Rather than teaching in a strict, didactic manner that focuses primarily on memorisation of factual information, the Gozo College encourages and trains teaching staff to engage students in the personal construction of knowledge, skills, attitudes and critical mind that will have value also beyond the school in a perspective of lifelong and life-wide learning.

A lot of emphasis is being placed at the Gozo College on more open-ended methodologies that favour, bottom-up, experiential and thematic approaches, learning to learn, self-directed and autonomous learning (Rogers, 1969, Holec, 1996), entrepreneurship in its widest educational sense, group and project work. And not only in the more traditionally academic subjects. In the true spirit of our National Curriculum Framework and the eight transversal key competences as defined in the Commission Staff Working document (2005), we want our children to be bred in a holistic education where areas of studies merge and support each other to create whole, balanced human beings who can benefit human kind locally and globally.

The aim is to transform our classrooms into learning laboratories and community centres where learning is viewed as a continuous, positive, lifelong and life-wide experience for all and sundry. We are encouraging more student target setting linked to high quality formative assessment thus making lessons more active and dynamic, better paced and more enjoyable supported at the same time by partnerships that go beyond their actual classrooms. It is the mission of the Gozo College to mould our learners into more imaginative, more innovative, more entrepreneurial and cosmopolitan lifelong and life-wide learners able to get along in later life without a teacher.

The elimination of streaming and formal prize days, the introduction of team-cum-core subject teaching and formative assessment have been a great step forward in helping our teachers to enhance their methodologies. Classes have become more learner-centred, much less teacher-centred. E-learning is a common day experience, I dare say, in the majority of classes. Professional development for all teaching personnel- we firmly believe that teacher learning is a necessary condition for pupil learning - has shown a quality rise in recent years and results are showing. The number of education officers helping in the various areas and the revising of syllabi with clearer objectives and clearer learning outcomes are a most welcome solace to our schools. The integration of post-primary students into one secondary school will further enhance curricular practices with more varied teaching, differentiated approaches and surely better overall results, and not only academic.

Some of the concrete, innovative curricular projects which we have introduced at our College are the following: creative writing workshops, innovative animation sessions through drama for Mathematics and English for Year 6 students, common half-yearly examinations, hands-on science and health and safety exhibitions in typical Gozitan farmhouses for the whole community, an extensive after-school programme featuring homework and activity clubs in all primary schools, ICT fairs, ICT after school sessions for students, teachers and parents, literacy forums, a permanent, self-directed, communal Career Exhibition, healthy breakfast days, environmental issues through the participation of Eko-Skola (acquisition of Green Flag) and Eko-Gozo, week-long PSD seminars for Years, 4, 5 and 6 students, hand-on farming projects, innovative, special learning zones in secondary schools in close affiliation with MCAST, ITS and the Centre for Art and Crafts, multi-cultural and multi-lingual festivals, a mini-musical of the highest calibre in a renowned Gozitan theatre, Chess academy, language festivals, awareness of foreign languages programme in primary schools, innovative sports' days, innovative PE lessons including swimming sessions and so on and so on.

Special mention must be made of the Special School at Gozo College Sannat where not only inclusion is at its very best but where, in line with the Spiteri Report (2005), curricular

practices are tailor-made and constantly being refined to give the very best education to these special children and their parents. The Sannat Special Unit, it must be stressed, services, as well, all our schools in Gozo. The emphasis on e-learning and the introduction of level descriptors have brought a new lease of life for these children and their teachers. Besides the material resources available and constantly being enhanced, a sincere word of praise goes to the dedicated staff who with patience, love and great professional care have transformed the Special unit at Sannat into a smiling centre reminiscent of Dante's beatified, candid rose in heaven.

### **Inquiry, personal mastery and access to external expertise**

The professional obligation of each of us as leaders in his or her particular sphere never ceases to grow professionally. In conformity with our rationale of invitational leadership we are constantly informing ourselves by reading, relating, reflecting and researching. We believe that research engagement provides an opportunity for school leaders to share leadership and for staff to develop their leadership skills.

The Gozo College is a learning organisation *par excellence*. In line with Confucius, we believe, that without learning the wise become foolish; with learning even the foolish become wise. We are convinced that without constantly updating, our visions will wither away and we will not survive as leaders in a world of constant change.

We are living in a flat yet spiky world of constant changes. We are very much aware at the Gozo College that it is not possible to solve the change problem; yet, we are convinced but we can learn to live with it more proactively and more productively. (Fullan, 2005) Indeed, our capacities to deal with change, learn from it and help our students learn from it and adapt to it, is crucial for the future development of societies. We, as educators, must see ourselves and be seen as the experts of the dynamics of change. We labour at the Gozo College to harbour a philosophy of constant inquiry and personal mastery so as to become catalysts and not victims of change.

Inquiry means essentially internalising norms, habits and techniques for continuous learning. Our quest at the Gozo College is not just a new management paradigm but a way of thinking that is constantly open to the next paradigm and the next and the next in an ever-ending process of vitality and self-renewal. (Fullan, 2005)

We are convinced that inquiry can thus lead to personal mastery which in no way means being content and complacent with what we already know: it means approaching our life as a creative work, living life from a creative as opposed to a reactive viewpoint. Personal mastery is a process, a lifelong discipline and helps us to live in a continual learning mode.

Our College embraces a philosophy of inquiry and personal mastery as described above. . The Gozo College is a professional, learning organisation and community and so, myself as Principal, Heads, Assistant Heads and SMT's, teaching staff and other stakeholders keep ourselves constantly exposed to ideas and knowledge in a process of self-amelioration. This is done not only through CPD sessions but through constant exchange of experiences and pedagogical material.

Not less through access to external expertise, research and action research. The Gozo College works and collaborates closely with various agencies, institutions, other colleges, universities

local and abroad, and Government departments. Our staff make it a point to attend seminars organised by the Directorates and other bodies. A good number of our teaching staff has also the chance to enrich his/her experiences abroad through the various EU, available projects. Various research and action research projects are regularly carried out. To date these focused on networking, leadership, literacy, examinations, assessment procedures, level descriptors, differentiation and student behaviour.

Our aim is to develop a college culture where practitioners draw readily from research and external and internal evidenced-based practice, and where practitioners have developed the skills to apply this learning in their own context.

### **Concluding remarks**

The Gozo College network has built on good practices that existed in the educational system over the years. Networking has helped in various ways to enhance the past educational system in a world of change and constant transformation. On a general, concluding note networks are helping us to address better the needs of individual learners, to work in partnership with each other, sharing resources and assembling the right mix and range of education for each individual learner, to investigate new forms of leadership, to work with peers and share good practices, to launch creative and innovative practices, to facilitate collective responsibility for children, to provide a challenge and discipline to teachers' constant learning and development based on a wealth of professional knowledge drawn from a wider context and to create new opportunities for adult and continuity learning, to facilitate research, reflection and discussion. In this way, we believe we are freeing individuals to find their inner wisdom and confidence so that they will make increasingly healthier and more constructive choices. (Rogers, 1969)

A lot has already been achieved by the Gozo College. But education is fortunately a never-ending process where only the journey is the reward: the reward and satisfaction that the educational experiences we are presenting to our learners are making a difference in their lives and preparing them to meet the transformation, challenges and opportunities that the future holds for us all.

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