



ŻGHAŻAGH
G H A L L - B I D L A

1ST MEETING
REPORT

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Mosta Local Council Hall

8th April 2026

MEETING BRIEF



On April 8th, we launched Žghażagh ġhall-Bidla, a collective of approximately 40 young individuals united by a common goal: to contribute to the change that youths aspire to see across various domains. As an independent group, Žghażagh is dedicated to pursuing **change**, **encounter**, and **possibility** — three elements that were prominently featured during our inaugural event:

Change

- We explored potential improvements for the education system, particularly in compulsory, post-secondary, and tertiary education.
- This discussion served as a testament to the fact that when young people come together, they can effectively challenge the status quo.

Encounter

- The group consisted of 13 secondary students, post-secondary and tertiary students, youth workers, teachers, and others, both within and outside the education system. This diversity fostered an engaging dynamic, allowing individuals of different ages and backgrounds to share unique perspectives.

Possibility

- The vibrant interactions opened up opportunities for conversation, conflict, debate, and collaboration.
- The meeting resulted in the identification of policy suggestions, innovative ideas, and key issues within the education system.

Following the meeting, numerous individuals expressed interest in collaborating, offering assistance, and joining this group. Ultimately, the initial gathering highlighted the necessity of this space. With many young people actively engaging in activism and eager to create change, it paves the way for future gatherings. This, in turn, opens up a wealth of opportunities for more young people to benefit from.

Luke Fenech

Founder of Žghażagh ġhall-Bidla

08.04.26

AGENDA

7-10PM

- 7:00PM Registration
- 7:15PM *Žghāžagh ghall-Bidla: A Start*
- 7:25PM Guest Speakers
- 8:00PM Breakout Conversations
- 8:30PM Group Discussion
- 9:00PM Closing & Feedback
- 9:30PM Networking

COMPULSORY EDUCATION (Primary & Secondary Level)

- **Discrimination** issues persist, affecting people of color and gender alike. Schools often fail to address these situations appropriately, particularly when it comes to bullying. The lack of enforcement regarding bullying can lead to serious consequences such as depression and anxiety, ultimately impacting students' learning experiences. Additionally, racism has become so normalised that teachers frequently overlook racial discrimination during lessons, which can severely affect students' mental health and academic performance.
- The education system tends to categorise students into general **stereotypes**, assuming that everyone can learn effectively under the same teaching style and method.
- Students are often driven to learn solely for good grades or to impress themselves or their parents, rather than for the long-term benefits of knowledge. **Motivation** should not only stem from completing tasks but from the joy of learning through those tasks.
- There is insufficient support for fostering individual **passions**, leading to pressure that may push students away from their genuine interests. Many passions, such as arts or performing arts, are viewed as '**unrealistic**' in today's job market due to perceived instability in income. This perception can undermine students' confidence in pursuing these fields.
- Teachers often focus on rote memorisation and note-taking rather than fostering a **deep understanding** of subjects. Educators themselves require further training on how to effectively teach and interact with students. They have to remain updated.

COMPULSORY EDUCATION (Primary & Secondary Level)

- The practice of **ranking students** (as seen in State schools) often leads to inequities, as those in 'lower' classes receive less motivation, fewer opportunities, and an overall diminished educational experience. Conversely, students in 'higher' classes enjoy greater motivation, opportunities, and praise. This disparity can erode the self-esteem of those in 'lower' classes, potentially leading them to abandon their educational pursuits. As a result of these limited opportunities, they may face rejections at a later stage.
- Students should be grouped according to their **chosen paths** or passions, rather than their grades. For example, categories could include technology, art, agribusiness, etc.
- The syllabus often contains **excessive information**, which detracts from in-depth exploration of specific topics. This expansion forces students to memorise a vast amount of content, increasing pressure during exam periods, even when much of it is not assessed. Students lack study guides and are expected to retain everything learned throughout the year. Some topics could be deferred to higher education, such as university.
- Currently, there are separate exams for English language and English literature, while Maltese language and literature are combined into **one exam**. Since both are official languages in Malta, they should be assessed with similar examination structures. Separating Maltese into distinct Language and Literature exams would alleviate stress on students during exam periods.

COMPULSORY EDUCATION (Primary & Secondary Level)

- While students are encouraged to follow their passions, once they decide to pursue those interests in school, they often face significant **pressure** from the syllabus.
- In Malta, there is considerable emphasis on learning Maltese, despite it being taught for **only four lessons** a week, compared to six for English. To create a balanced approach, both subjects should have five lessons each week, matching the hours allocated to other essential subjects like Mathematics, or alternatively, Maltese could have six lessons weekly as well.
- After exams, students typically **do not receive feedback** on their performance, leaving them unaware of their mistakes or areas for improvement. This lack of insight prevents them from recognising their weaknesses and hinders their ability to achieve better marks in the future. Providing feedback would greatly assist students with low marks in identifying what they need to work on for improved performance and opportunities down the line.
- Universities often place significant importance on obtaining a **Maltese O-level**, even though most lectures are conducted in English. There should be greater emphasis on other O-level subjects, such as Mathematics and Physics, to reflect their relevance.
- Students enrolled in **Maltese as a Foreign Language (MFL)** classes are often placed in lower-tier classes simply because they struggle with the language. As previously mentioned, these lower classes typically offer fewer opportunities. Regardless of a student's intelligence, being unable to speak Maltese results in placement in mixed classes, exposure to different teaching methods, and varying treatment compared to their peers.

COMPULSORY EDUCATION (Primary & Secondary Level)

- While teachers can enhance learning by explaining topics effectively, they often feel **disincentivised** due to the overwhelming amount of material they are required to cover. Consequently, teachers frequently rush through lessons to meet unrealistic syllabus standards, leaving many students feeling lost and confused.
- The syllabi tend to be cluttered with extraneous material that may not benefit students in their future careers. A prime example is **Maltese literature**, where students must engage with numerous literary works at the expense of developing their own grammatical writing skills and language comprehension. Mastery of grammar, spelling, and vocabulary is far more crucial than literature, as students should establish a strong foundation before delving into literary analysis. Instead, they are often compelled to study outdated literary pieces that many find dull or perplexing.
- Low-performing students may struggle in the face of these overwhelming syllabi, as they require additional practice in specific areas. However, the rigidity of the syllabus restricts teachers from adapting their teaching methods. Conversely, **high-performing** and **gifted** students may experience boredom and disengagement due to the same rigid structure, which limits opportunities for deeper challenges and exploration necessary for reaching their full potential.

COMPULSORY EDUCATION (Primary & Secondary Level)

- There is a lack of programs that allow **high-achieving and gifted** students to challenge themselves in their areas of interest, which may lead to feelings of frustration as they perceive those subjects as unengaging. To address this, more initiatives and competitions should be established across various subjects, including Maltese, English, Maths, Physics, Agribusiness, and others. This would enable students who excel to showcase their talents and deepen their learning. High-performing students often struggle later in life because they have not faced challenges early on, which hinders the development of essential skills for learning and studying. Since they did not have to exert effort, they may find it difficult to adapt when they encounter challenges. It is also crucial that children in these programs are not compared to their peers or told they are superior. They should understand that failure is a normal part of the learning process to avoid setting unrealistic expectations for themselves and experiencing disappointment. Comparison benefits no one.
- Although the government subsidises most educational programs, certain career paths still require students to pay out of pocket, potentially excluding low-income students from pursuing their desired careers. One notable example is **aviation**, specifically for **aspiring pilots**. In Malta, pilots must cover the full cost of their licenses, which can amount to tens of thousands of euros. This is particularly disheartening given that the government funds most educational initiatives and there is currently a shortage of pilots. The government should consider subsidising this pathway, as it pertains to education related to a profession in aviation, which would significantly benefit the economy.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

- The syllabi need to be revised more frequently to be in line with current affairs, and modern technology.
- More spaces in post-secondary where people with similar interests can meet, work on projects, and participate in events.
- More student exchanges abroad.
- More people from different industries and lines of work need to reach out to post-secondary students, giving more first-hand perspectives. In general, people need to understand better what they are specialising in, especially at this stage.
- Having the possibility of mentorships, including from teachers themselves.
- Re-introduction of trade schools, that continue to post-secondary education.
- More emphasis on people with different needs, including addressing neurodivergent issues even at a post-secondary level.
- More spaces for debates and conversations on campus.

TERTIARY EDUCATION / GENERAL

- The student-teacher relationship has room for improvement. Educators might not be reachable, or interested in getting to know their students.
- Despite being in tertiary education, there is still over-emphasis on marks.
- We need more spaces for informal education during tertiary education.
- Some lecturers are not even educators by profession, which in turn affect their teaching ability and vocation towards their students. Moreover, teachers need to be both equivalent to know their subject and simultaneously able to teach it (such as delivery or projection skills).
- The syllabi are often out-dated and unrealistic for the outside world.
- Having dedicated study units (or spaces) for life-skills.
- More spaces for educators and students to improve their physical and mental wellbeing, especially on campus.
- More fairness in mark distribution; assessing different skills and abilities.
- Educating the public on different routes in education. As is, there is still an over emphasis on 'prestigious jobs', such as studying law, medicine, or engineering. This also has to do with the over-emphasis on STEM subjects over the Humanities.
- Tertiary schools are not always equipping students with the AI shifts that we are experiencing in different industries.

TERTIARY EDUCATION / GENERAL

- There is a lot to be done on increasing creativity in schools and campuses. Since we still prioritise marks, we are unfortunately losing hundreds of students who do not conform with the academic route, despite being very creative and able in different paths. The education system needs to guide your creativity and curiosity, rather than killing it.
- Despite associating the education system with preparing students for work, the courses themselves are not always fully-preparing students for work-related needs. For example, in Commerce courses, students are not much taught on how to use Excel and other software that will be actually used in the line of work. That is why syllabi ought to reflect real-world scenarios (notwithstanding that 'work' is not the only path one choses to educate oneself).
- The University courses are unfortunately too theory-based. More efforts have to be taken to introduce practical measures for students to experience. This includes increasing collaborations between other insitutions, including academic ones.

SNIPPETS





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