

**DEVELOPING A QUALITY ENHANCEMENT CULTURE
IN MALTESE EDUCATION**

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Reflective Statement

My EdD studies which I started in 2009 have been an immensely enriching period of self-reflection. Through the refractive action of intellectual engagement throughout my studies, including my assignments and IFS and finally this thesis, I have been granted the rare privilege of re-viewing my professional convictions, accomplishments and experiences as well as key educational developments of my country from the 18th century to-date, with a special focus on the last two decades.

My first EdD course was Foundations of Professionalism. The assignment was entitled 'The Professionalising Project of Teachers in Malta: From Paternalistic Professionalisation to Democratic Professionalism'. I explored the historical development of the concept of professionalism for teachers in Malta throughout most of the 20th century, from being *de facto* equivalent to janitors in 1919 to the granting of professional status in 1988 and beyond, up to the reform of 2006 that I delved into in greater detail in my IFS and thesis.

Both the course and the assignment were a real eye-opener for me. They forced me to rethink my role as senior policy maker and to look with 'new' eyes not only at my work but, more importantly, at the reform and the epistemological and teleological ecology of its operating paradigms. I could thus scrutinize the reform that I myself had been deeply involved in bringing about, and in which I believed, but with a much more critical perspective than before. Half in jest, at the end of this first course I asked myself: Am I an unwitting agent to teacher oppression?! Was the reform really reaching the goals it set out for? I took up these issues again in my IFS.

The main conceptual tools I acquired from the Foundations of Professionalism Course were:

- The contested and evolving definition and nature of professionalism;
- The relationship between 'government' and 'governance';
- The role of micropolitics in educational development.

My second course was Methods of Inquiry (MoE) I. The assignment was entitled 'Researching Networks and Vectors in Malta's College-Based Decentralized Compulsory Education System'. In the assignment I explored further the discourse and underpinning assumptions of the current Maltese educational reform that I had first problematized from a historical perspective in the first course from the entry-point of teacher professionalism. I reflected on the opportunities and limitations inherent in my high-level role in educational provision and development in Malta. The struggle to reconcile my desire to explore attractive lines of inquiry with the ethical limitations imposed by my professional situation forced me first of all to come to terms with these realities, and then to think creatively both about the sources of these limitations as well as possible ways forward. This led me to reflections on the limitations of research and practice in a micro-state such as Malta, an issue which I took up again in the IFS and in considerably more depth in the thesis.

My MoE1 course and assignment also exposed me to an entirely new way of conceiving of the research question. In my M.Ed. from 1993 to 1998 I had had a good induction to the uses of different kinds of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. But we had never delved into the intricacies of the development and honing down of the research question itself. Nor did I have sufficient sensitivity to

ethical issues as I hope I have now. The ontological and teleological perspectives to developing the research question were entirely new to me.

The main conceptual tools I acquired from the MOE 1 course were:

- The microstate context as the inescapable theatre of the development and implementation of ongoing education reform in Malta as well as my research and practice, and
- An appreciation of ethical research issues, with special reference to insider research.

My third course was the Specialist Course in International Education. The assignment was entitled 'Modeling Anglicizing Educational Transfers in Pre- and Postcolonial Malta'. For this assignment I followed the advice given by the course tutors and explored areas beyond the IFS focus proper but still of interest to me. I had originally graduated as a teacher of Maltese, Malta's national language, and was fascinated by the tumultuous history of its rise in status from a peasant vernacular in the Middle Ages to one of the official languages of the European Union. I therefore researched this development from the perspective of two new conceptual tools I acquired during this course: education transfer theory and post-colonial theory. The importance of this assignment was that I could research these two key concepts and start relating them to educational development in a micro-state context, thus adding/uncovering further levels of complexity and meaning in my IFS research project.

My fourth course was the MoE2. This assignment helped me to start to understand the practical challenges involved in formulating and undertaking an actual research exercise, from gaining ethical approval, to designing the appropriate interview schedules, to transcribing and coding the data. Although I had intended to use the assignment to start applying and intermeshing some of the conceptual tools I had acquired along the way from the previous courses and assignments, I actually focused mostly on technical rather than theoretical issues; the latter was explored in much greater depth in the IFS proper.

A critical element in the development of my assignments and of my thinking was, of course, the assignment feedback, both the formative and the summative types. For two assignments I could also back this up with face-to-face discussions with my tutors on particular elements. What the feedback helped me understand was the difference between Masters-level and doctoral-level work. I was particularly challenged by the need to 'go beyond' the unconscious reification of readings and research, to contextualize and problematize this information, sharpen my powers of inquiry, and uncover new routes of investigation and possibilities. I understand much better now that the role of a doctorate is to contribute to new areas of knowledge within a community of learning.

Thus, my four assignments during my first 18 months of the Ed.D. were a fascinating and unpredictable journey of intellectual discovery. As a result of these experiences I came to my IFS with a number of theoretical 'lenses' that I could use to gather and review my data. These 'lenses' were:

- School networking within school improvement theory;
- performativity and professionalism;
- 'government' and 'governance' in school networking;
- the role of micropolitics in school and system development;
- education transfer theory and post-colonial theory as applied to the micro-state context of ongoing education reform in Malta;

- insider research ethical issues.

The IFS report was entitled 'Networks and Vectors of Communication and Power within State Colleges in the First Three Years of Malta's 2006 School Networking Reform'. It investigated the mandated networking of primary and secondary state schools in Malta into ten Colleges that became national policy in 2006. This reform was rhetorically situated within the experience of school networking in England, but in fact sprang from a very different context. This study mapped the networks of communication and power from a Weberian perspective between the eight ex-Heads in this study and their line managers, the College Principals.

The most important finding from this research were that the Colleges presented a dichotomy between the official discourse and its underpinning justificatory literature on the one hand, and its hierarchical intentions on the other. Furthermore, this discourse did not acknowledge the back-channel agency and informal autonomy that the Heads were capable of exercising in the pre-College scenario. Instead it took as given the constructed narrative of post-colonial formal centralised bureaucracy and school powerlessness, which did not ring true to the Heads themselves. This was further compounded by insufficient preparation and training, and imperfect handling of the uncertainty, fear and stress generated by the reform and felt by school stakeholders including Heads.

My research contributed to the scholarship on school networking by highlighting the differentiated agency and informal autonomy of Heads in normatively highly centralised, disempowering state systems. It built on the growing discourse that school networking is not an unmitigated good, but that it has to be purposeful and based on intrinsic legitimacy to offset the loss of school autonomy and the time and energy of the school leaders involved. Finally, even with its limited scope this study added interesting nuances to the literature on the complexity of the micropolitics within school networks, and how this can impact on system-wide reforms.

After my IFS I wanted to carry over and expand some important insights that I had developed in my IFS research. These were in terms of a) an in-depth understanding of insider research issues and ways of addressing them; b) the 'absolute conditions' (e.g. Friggieri 1996) that characterised Malta's post-colonial micro-state social context, and c) the Weberian approach to the power interplay between different stakeholders in term of policy formulation and implementation. To this I added the paradigmatic perspective because of the opportunity it afforded to address the tendency of insider-research for tunnel vision, of the unintentional reification of the present as a 'resolution' of the past. At my age and with my experience, I was less interested in nailing my flag to the mast of any particular 'ism', and much more in mindfully splicing together different but apposite theoretical insights with the data gathered to help me make sense of my and my country's educational reform journey.

In my thesis I looked at Malta's attempt at whole system change in education in the first decade of the 21st century by transforming state oversight in all education sectors from an inspectorial to a quality enhancement model. This thesis was the confluence of two personal journeys. One journey was from the inside out, to understand the 'givens' and hidden drivers and forces in the national and international contexts that underpinned and influenced the changing rhetoric of educational development from the 19th century to the Education Act of 2006 to which I had contributed. The other journey was from the

outside in, to understand my role in this reform in terms of these external influences on my work in quality assurance from 2009 to-date. So, the text was both a critical 'biography' and an autobiography.

These two journeys corresponded to two distinct 'moods' of the thesis and the two different types of data sources. In terms of the critical 'biography', I conducted a Foucauldian archaeology which relied on the analysis of primary archival material and documents. The reflective journey was aided by the elite interviews that provided both background and foreground, in the sense that they provided information and perspectives that gave added texture, colour and context to the narrative, and they also opened up new avenues for the journey itself. As my text and I re/constructed each other, I tried to engage critically with what I allowed myself to discover about myself and my work, whilst simultaneously remaining open to learning lessons for the future.

I have already explained how from the first assignment my theoretical engagement with the course and my intellectual struggles in my assignments brought a new understanding to my professional work. This only increased up to and including my thesis. I am now less certain of 'what works', more mindful of the epistemological, ontological and teleological minefield that surrounds that most beloved of phrases for government policy makers. My desire to make a difference in children's educational and life chances has not given way to cynicism. But it is now tempered by a more sceptical stance. I am less inclined to judge simply on the 'research evidence', more willing to understand the background, baggage and ramifications of policy proposals.

In fact, I have lost my policy virginity, and I have the UCL-IoE to thank for that!

Abstract

This thesis looks at Malta's attempt at whole system change in education in the first decade of the 21st century by transforming state oversight in all education sectors from an inspectorial to a quality enhancement model. The former was rooted in the Panoptic Inspectorial Paradigm (PIP) due to Malta's colonial experience within the British Empire and its post-colonial aftermath throughout the 19th century up to the 1980s. The latter, the Quality Enhancement Paradigm (QEP), sprang largely from a mix of local post-colonial developments and the influence of the Bologna Process, especially the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

A Weberian-paradigmatic conceptual framework was developed that also took into consideration the 'absolute' conditions and resilience of small island states. Using this framework, a Foucauldian archaeology of archival material was conducted to identify the PIP and its eventual replacement by the QEP. A case study was also undertaken with the help of fifteen elite interviews with Maltese and European quality assurance (QA) exponents that mainly looked into Maltese HE QA developments since 2006 in the context of European QA developments.

The theoretical framework reconceptualised the interplay between HE QA stakeholders at pan-European level as discrete but intersecting choreographies that resolved into two opposing paradigms, with the dominant Neo-liberal QA paradigm being countervailed by the ESG. These mirrored the two Maltese paradigms; indeed, the Neo-liberal QA paradigm shares its ideological DNA with the PIP and leads to entropic isomorphism.

The Maltese case study showed that small island state characteristics can help buffer its HE structures and institutions from the effects of the Neo-liberal QA paradigm, and foster the development of a quality enhancement culture which leads to parabolic isomorphism. One example is the development of a national QA framework with a strong developmental orientation covering further, higher and formal adult learning, the first in Europe.

Author's Declaration

I, Alexander Spiteri confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Word count (exclusive of appendices and references): 44,991 words.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AS', written in a cursive style.

November 2016

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I dedicate this work to the women who made it possible in many ways:

- my mother Doris, who is still proud of me;
- my wife Cristina, who still believes in me;

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- our three boys Mark, Matthew and Julian who cheered me on through seven years of temperamental fatherhood.

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Glossary

ALV	Interviewee: Prof. Alfred Vella, Pro-Rector in charge of QA, UoM
AV	Interviewee: Prof. Andre Vyt, University of Ghent
Bologna	or Bologna Process for HE
BT	Interviewee: Mr Blazhe Todorovski, Vice-president ESU
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Developments of Vocational Training
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CF	Interviewee: Prof. Charles Farrugia, 1 st Chair of UoM QAC
CH	Interviewee: Dr Chris Haslam, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Chester
Copenhagen	or Copenhagen Process for VET
CT	Interviewee: Dr Colin Tuck, Director of EQAR
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQA	External Quality Audit
EQA SoP	External Quality Audit: Standard Operation Procedure
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
ESF	European Social Funds
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines
ESU	European Students' Union
ET 2020	Strategic Framework for Education and Training 2020
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
EW	Interviewee: Prof. Edward Warrington, UoM
F&HE	Further and Higher Education
FACTS	White Paper 'For All Children to Succeed'
Further Education	In the Maltese context it refers to provision up to Level 4 of the Maltese and European Qualifications Frameworks
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher education institution
Higher Education	In the Maltese context it refers to provision up from Levels 5 to 8 of the Maltese and European Qualifications Frameworks
IFS	Institution Focused Study
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
ISO 9001	Standard for quality assurance of the International Standards Organization

ITS	Institute of Tourism studies
IW	Interviewee: Dr. Iring Wasser , Director ASIIN
JP	Interviewee: Prof. John Portelli, Chair of NCFHE QAC
JS	Interviewee: Mr Jacques Sciberras, ex-CEO of NCHE
KSU	Kunsill Studenti Universitarji (Students' Council of the University of Malta)
LG	Interviewee: Dr Louis Galea, ex-Minister of Education who piloted the 2006 Education Act
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
MGG	Malta Government Gazette
MK	Interviewee: Dr Maria Kelo, Director of ENQA
MRP	Methodological Research Programme
MRPE	Methodological Research Programme for Education
MUT	Malta Union of Teachers
NAM	National Archives of Malta
NAM	National Archives of Malta
NCFHE	National Commission for Further and Higher Education, Malta
NCHE	National Commission for Higher Education, Malta
Net-QAPE	Network of Quality Assurance Professionals in Further and Higher Education
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QAC	Quality Assurance Committee
QE	Quality Enhancement
SJ	Interviewee: Dr Stephen Jackson, Director of EQAs, QAA
SW	Interviewee: Dr Stephanie Wilson, Director for Corporate Performance and Quality, University of London International Programmes
UoM	University of Malta
VM	Interviewee: Mr Vince Maione, Deputy Principal in charge of QA, MCAST

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis looks at Malta's (latest) attempt at whole system change in education in the first decade of the 21st century. The main vehicle for this attempt was the 2006 Education (Amendments) Act (Government of Malta, 2006) which is represented by popular policy discourse as the starting point, at least at the rhetorical and structural levels, for the development of a comprehensive quality culture across Maltese educational provision, from compulsory to vocational and tertiary provision. This attempted paradigm shift was intended to affect all aspects of school life, including the socio-academic stratification of schools, the relationship between the state, schools and the community, and the nature and purpose of teaching, learning and assessment.

I was a member of the policy team and later on the national senior management that worked on the policy developments leading up to the 2006 Education Act and its implementation thereafter, in compulsory education up to 2013 and since then in higher education. When I started my Ed.D. in 2009, my intention was to make use of the various components of my studies as a privileged platform from which to critically reflect on how the 2006 reforms were being enacted. By the time I started thinking about my thesis in 2014 it was clear that there was a growing disconnect between what we had hoped and planned that this transformative policy agenda would do for our learners, our schools and communities, and how it was actually unfolding on the ground.

This was partly because of the inevitable entropy that is the fate of any policy for societal change as it gets filtered down, interpreted, appropriated, resisted and sabotaged by different stakeholders and interest groups. But the vagaries of political fortune also played a role. The party in government that had launched the 2006 reform was reconfirmed in the 2008 general elections with an unstable majority, which after protracted political instability it lost in December 2012. A long *interregnum* followed until the March 2013 general elections swept the opposition party to power with an agenda to clean the perceived Augean stables.

And yet the original vision of 2006 is still valid today and can still be perceived, albeit battered in some areas and changed in others. One area which seems to have survived the political turmoil is the transformation of educational inspection and quality assurance (QA) in both compulsory and post-compulsory educational provision, which is why I focused on this area in my thesis.

The purpose of this thesis is not to determine the effectiveness of the 2006 Reform and its relevance and evolution over time. That will come later – indeed, I see my IFS and thesis as the first part of a research project that extends beyond the Ed.D. This thesis seeks to identify some of the key parameters and points of reference at a conceptual level on the basis of which such a determination can be made. My intention is to problematize the discourse that underpins the QA reforms of the 2006 Education Act, and its relationship to the Maltese post-colonial EU small island state context, by contextualizing it within a wider interplay of QA discourses in Europe and internationally. This study is therefore of interest to students of whole system educational change, small island state studies, school inspection, and European trends in QA for higher education.

The quality culture heralded by the 2006 Act was of a particular kind, with a hybrid ideology that touched upon improvement, compliance and accountability. In its official discourse its primary objective was to be “in support of the evaluation and the internal audit of every school” (ibid. Article 9(2)(e)). The onus of ensuring quality in teaching and learning was on the providers through their internal developmental processes; the external oversight through inspections and audits was justified inasmuch as it supported these internal processes. This particular relationship between internal and external QA also applied, to a degree, to the further and higher education (F&HE) reforms in the Act.

The discourse and breath of this quality culture is strikingly different not only from the Maltese traditional school inspection inherited from colonial times, but also from the ‘choice, transparency and accountability’ neoliberal New Public Management discourse of the marketisation of education that is a dominant paradigm internationally. I have situated the Research Question for my thesis within this discourse disjunction. The main question has three sub-questions that lead the reader through the thesis:

Why and how did Malta, a post-colonial EU member micro-state, attempt to replace educational inspection, born and bred in the 19th century colonial logic of panoptic¹ oversight and paternalistic micro-management, by an overarching Quality Enhancement model?

- **How did state educational inspection of both pre-tertiary and university provision develop during the British colonial period?**
- **Why and how were these practices subjected to pressures to change over the last 30 years?**
- **How was the Quality Enhancement discourse enacted within the University of Malta and in national regulatory provision for further and higher education?**

My literature review is found in Chapters 2 and 3; I first define the key concepts and then develop the conceptual framework that I shall be using in my work. In Chapters 5 and 6 I first critically investigate the historical/ideological development of the traditional educational inspection paradigm in Malta during the 19th and 20th centuries for the whole range of educational provision and its attempted replacement by an overarching quality paradigm, using the parallel English experience as comparative background. In Chapters 7 and 8 I then critically explore the development of the Maltese quality paradigm in F&HE with a particular focus on the University of Malta, as a case study of developments in QA within Europe.

My thesis is organized in the following way:

- Chapter 1 introduces the thesis research question;
- Chapter 2 defines the key concepts that I use in this thesis: the rise of neoliberalism, managerialism and the implementation of New Public Management in HE with respect to quality assurance;
- Chapter 3 discusses the tripartite conceptual framework that is used throughout this work;
- Chapter 4 discusses the research design and methodology of this thesis;

¹ This Foucauldian concept is discussed in Section 3.4.1.

- Chapter 5 explores the development of the Panoptical Inspection Paradigm in education throughout the 19th and the first two thirds of the 20th century;
- Chapter 6 explores the decay of this Paradigm, and the subsequent emergence of the Quality Enhancement Paradigm in Malta from the last decades of the 20th century onwards;
- Chapter 7 discusses the scenario of HE QA in Europe with a particular emphasis on developments in England;
- Chapter 8 on the basis of the framework developed in Chapter 6, it focusses on the case study of the QA developments in F&HE in Malta with a special focus on the University of Malta;
- Chapter 9 discusses Malta's prospective developments in QA in the light the findings. It also points the way forward for further research.

Chapter 2

Defining the Key Concepts

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 I stated that the discourse of Malta's quality culture in education is different not only from the Maltese traditional school inspection, which I explore in Chapters 5 and 6, but also from the neoliberal and New Public Management (NPM) discourse of the marketisation of HE, explored in Chapters 7 and 8. This observation relates to the politics of power and agency that underpin quality discourse in education. Indeed, the link between quality assurance, neoliberalism and NPM was ever-present, either in the foreground or the background, in all my critical reading on school inspection and quality assurance in education.

Before I embark on the critical narrative of the research and reflective journey of my thesis, it is therefore important that this Chapter outlines and defines the key concepts that underpin my exploration of the context and formation of contemporary quality assurance discourse in education, with a particular focus on HE. These are the rise of neoliberalism and managerialism, the implementation of New Public Management in HE and its effect on quality assurance versus quality enhancement in the sector.

2.2 The rise of Neoliberalism

As its name implies, neoliberalism is an updated version of liberalism, the Western politico-economic philosophy that reached its zenith in the 19th and early 20th century. I will first give a brief overview of what constitutes liberalism, and then discuss how it evolved into neoliberalism.

At its core, liberalism was the belief that the rights and freedom of the individual replace the primacy of family, clan or social hierarchy as the basic unit of society. Different starting-points have been proposed for the genesis of this individuated model: the birth of Protestantism² (Russel 1979, p.577); the rebirth of ancient humanism in Renaissance Italy (Burchhardt, 2004), and even before that in early Christianity (Siedentop, 2014).

For liberal thinkers such as John Locke, sometimes called the 'father of Liberalism' (Korab-Karpowicz, 2010 p. 291), individual political rights and freedoms could only be guaranteed by corresponding economic freedoms. The state should be as limited as possible so as not to impede commerce and enterprise in any way. Indeed Locke considered that "Only a limited government can be justified; indeed, the basic task of government is to protect the equal liberty of citizens" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2014). Adam Smith (2007) went so far as to assert that it was more beneficial for society for each individual to pursue their own self-interest,

since he (sic) is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. (...) By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it (pp.349, 350).

² Weber (2001, p.10) also considered that the spirit of capitalism had sprung from the ethical mores of the Calvinists, Quackers and Mennonites, amongst other Protestant groupings.

This mutually-justificatory mix of individual rights and freedoms (however limited in terms of gender, class and ethnicity), free-wheeling capitalism and a *laissez-faire* style of governance with a minimum of state interference constituted 19th and early 20th century classical liberalism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, op. cit.). However, its by-products of social injustice from which sprang the writings of Charles Dickens, amongst others, led to the emergence of a group of British thinkers such as L. T. Hobhouse, known as the New Liberals (Seeman, 1978), who argued in favour of state intervention in social, economic, and cultural life and saw individual liberty as something achievable only under favourable social and economic circumstances (Freedman, 1978).

The economic crash of the 1930s, the horrors of the Second World War that followed, and the emerging positive experience of democratic government in the first half of the 20th century led to the repudiation of the classical liberal politico-economic model and the development of a post-war alternative that was less sceptical of the potential for positive government action than classical liberalism had been. This took the form of what was termed ‘social justice’ liberalism or, more popularly, the Welfare State (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, op. cit.), which built on the positions of the New Liberals and sought to put in place “improvements in techniques of modern capitalism by the agency of collective action” (Keynes, 1926). This ‘softer’ liberalism balanced individual liberty with concerns for social justice. It still endorsed a form of regulated market economy and civil and political rights and liberties, but it also established that the provision of education, health care and a minimum standard of living could not be left exclusively to market forces and private arrangements – it required a strong state. It was a “Keynesian Compromise (...) (of) semi-socialism” (Ward, 2012 p.19) between the wholesale socialistic-dirigistic economy espoused by Marxism/Leninism and the *laissez-faire* state and unrestricted capitalism stemming from classical liberalism.

However the immediate post-war period did not just give rise to Keynesian economic policies and Beveridge’s social welfare programmes (Dutton, 1997; Marr, 2007; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, op. cit.). It also saw the setting up of the Mont Pelerin Society that first met in Switzerland in 1947 on the initiative of economist Friedrich Hayek (Jackson 2010; Butler, 2014; Eagleton-Pierce, 2016). The members of the Society viewed the post-war (western) world in apocalyptic terms:

The central values of civilization are in danger. Over large stretches of the Earth’s surface the essential conditions of human dignity and freedom have already disappeared. In others they are under constant menace from the development of current tendencies of policy. The position of the individual and the voluntary group are progressively undermined by extensions of arbitrary power. Even that most precious possession of Western Man (sic), freedom of thought and expression, is threatened by the spread of creeds which, claiming the privilege of tolerance when in the position of a minority, seek only to establish a position of power in which they can suppress and obliterate all views but their own (Mont Pelerin Society, 1947).

The explicit aim of the Society was to counter what it considered an ideological movement by intellectual argument and the reassertion of a (classical) liberal ideology. Its agenda was not simply economic wellbeing. As with 18th and 19th century classical liberalism, Society members had a clear sense of mission to champion individual liberty in the face of what they perceived as a post-war preference across the erstwhile combatants for significant state involvement in their lives: “people now craved security more

than freedom” (Butler op. cit. p.4). Hayek’s ultimate goal was not just to develop a critique and alternative to economic interventionism, but to formulate “a comprehensive philosophy of freedom” (ibid. p23).

Jackson (2010, 2012) has asserted (although Farrant and Mcphail, 2011, have disagreed) that the target of the proto-neoliberals in the 1930s and 40s was more the real socialism of the Soviet Block than the Keynesian economics of the social-democratic welfare state. However by the 1970s and especially with the ascendancy of the Chicago School of Economics (Mayo, 2015; and Nik-Khah and Van Horn, 2016), the target had broadened. According to neoliberals’ own:

complex and self-serving origin story (...) Keynesian and socialist policies that had prevailed in many Western societies since the Great Depression (...) had, by the 1970s, severely bogged down economic growth, diluted shareholder value, stymied competition and created bloated and crisis prone governments and governmental institutions (Ward, 2012 p.16).

The aim of the late 20th century ‘neoliberal revolution’ was to fundamentally reconfigure the relationship between the individual, society, economy and the state, the “production of a particular subjectivity” (Sotiris in Mayo 2015 p.2). It sought to forge a return to what was heralded as a more responsible, independent and resilient mode of personhood and self-care (Ward, op. cit.). The one major theoretical divergence from classical liberalism was that rather than insisting on a *laissez-faire* minimalist state, neo-liberalism was willing to manipulate, transform and extend the state apparatus to ensure the fulfilment of its agenda (see, for example, Mayo, 2011; Peters, 2013).

This revolution was popularly seen as spearheaded in the 1980s by Thatcher in the UK and Reagan in the USA, although neoliberalist economic policies were also present in other countries at the time (Baatyes et al., 2012; Mayo, 2015; and Springer et al., 2016). It bred its own vocabulary. Workers were seen as taxpayers and citizens as consumers, that is, not in terms of their rights, needs and dignity, but in terms of their economic contribution. By extension, the neoliberal narrative presented the poor in terms of deficit stereotypes: ‘the layabout unemployed’, the ‘welfare mum’. The rich were recast as entrepreneurs and wealth generators, and social groupings were either ‘stakeholders’ or ‘interest groups’, in terms of whether they were perceived as contributing or hindering economic growth (Ward, op. cit.).

Olszen and Peters (2005), Kumar and Hill (2009), Ward (2012) and Giroux (2014) have identified a number of key ideological components of neoliberalism. As with classical liberalism, it is justified by the primacy of self-interest and on the perceived inherent superiority of the market not only in terms of economic growth but – and this is an essential aspect of the ‘new’ element to liberalism – as a change driver for all social institutions. Indeed, economics is used as the final arbiter or tribunal of reason for all decisions, leading to the economisation of social policy. The velocity, range and scope of economic exchange as well as the focus on shareholder value are intensified. There is an emphasis on deregulation and free trade in reforming the public realm, using market and privatisation measures as well as “a regime of denigration and humbling of publicly provided services” (Kumar and Hill, 2009 p.4). There is also an emphasis on a shareholder society where individuals are linked through private consumption, self-interest and individual ownership. Finally, neoliberalism opposes economic collectivities, such as unions and professional bodies, since they are seen as hindering the free flow of the market and thus economic growth. Grant (2009) considered the defeat by Reagan of the U.S. air traffic controllers’ strike in 1981 and Thatcher’s defeat of UK coal miners by 1985 as “testaments to this (neoliberal) hegemony” (p.xiii).

Another key characteristic of neoliberalism is its advocacy of free globalised trade. This is a necessary corollary to the expectation of an ever growing economy that requires the creation of forever expanding markets. Such markets require the lowering and eventual elimination of tariffs and other structural barriers to the free flow of goods, people and services. In turn this has led to the creation of neoliberal-inspired international mechanisms such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to develop and coordinate economic policies and provide loan assistance, which Grant condemned as “a new kind of (...) arms-free imperialism” (ibid.). These mechanisms also have a crucial proselytizing function (Connel et al. 2009). Hill and Kumar (2009) and Mayo (2015), amongst others, have commented acerbically about just how ‘free’ this trade with the ‘developing’ world was, which they saw as one-sided and marked by “hegemonic globalisation” (Mayo, 2009).

The promotion of free trade has also resulted in transnational trade partnerships such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and its Central American counterpart, the recently-signed EU-Canada free trade agreement and indeed the fore-runner of the EU itself, the European Economic Community. The Four Freedoms of the EU – goods, capital, services and people – (European Policy Centre, 2017) are all inspired by neoliberal economics and politics (Mayo, 2009) as much as by European countries’ determination to forge links that would make war not only unthinkable but impossible. Indeed, as we have seen, in the post-war period the first was perceived as the indispensable enabler of the second.

Connel et al. (2009) argued that neoliberalism has marked gender effects. Although neoliberalism is rhetorically gender-neutral, the reduction of the public sector, which is one of the mantras of neoliberalism, to fuel the growth of the private sector has gender implications since more women depend on their income on the former rather than the latter, where men predominate. “The notionally gender-neutral figure of the entrepreneur is, culturally speaking, a variety of masculinity” (p.332).

More generally, Hill and Kumar (2009) considered that neoliberal policies both in the United Kingdom and globally have resulted in: “(a) a loss of equity as well as economic and social justice; (b) a loss of democracy and democratic accountability, and (c) a loss of critical thought” (p. 12). Just as the fall-out of classical liberalism in the 19th century led to the development of a more socially-conscious version as discussed in the previous section, Ward (2012) identified two phases in neoliberalism. The first was in the 1980s which was neoliberalism’s ‘roll-back’ mode, with a focus on cutting back government. ‘Third Way’ governments such as those of Blair in the UK, Clinton in the US and Aznar in Spain (The Economist 1998) represent neoliberalism’s ‘roll-out’ mode. This focused more on the need for government intervention in social development policies such as education and health. But the competitive, disciplining and rationalising effects of the market were still to be admired and utilised to bring about reforms.

This brief overview of neoliberalism has, of necessity, elided national and regional differences and specificities. For example, Olssen and Peters (2005) distinguish between Anglo-American capitalism, European social market capitalism, French state capitalism, the Japanese model and Chinese market socialism, which are based on different cultural understandings of knowledge and learning that may: “not only represent cultural differences over the meaning and value of knowledge but also (...) provide a major index for regional differences in education policy” (p.339).

In the next sections I discuss the implications of neoliberalism for public policy, followed by an overview of its impact on publicly funded HE with a particular focus on the UK experience, since as discussed in Chapter 1, this will serve as a contrast to my case study of Maltese HE.

2.3 New Public Management

Musselin and Teixeira (2014) have noted that the terms New Public Management (NPM) and Managerialism have been used interchangeably and with different meanings. With so many definitions and redefinitions it can be difficult to make use of the notion especially for comparative purposes over time and space. They note: “viewing all and everything as a product of NPM leads to ignoring the nuances, contradictions and (inflections) involved in the processes” (p.10). I have therefore focused on the following narrative that was most helpful in laying the groundwork for my theoretical framework in the next chapter and to interpret my data in Chapters 7 and 8.

The concept and importance of management as an organisational stratum predates neoliberalism and arises from the Weberian notion of the bureaucratization of industrial society or capitalism (Weber, 1978). Ward (2010) distinguishes between management and managerialism; the latter is much more than simply the application of management practices to organisations. It is the neoliberal belief that all entities, regardless of their purpose or functioning, can only be efficient and achieve their goals in a competitive environment if they are run by a cadre of professionally trained ‘objective’ and ‘dispassionate’ managers. Managerialism is the “universal mechanism for *rationaly coordinating and controlling* collective action in a modern society” (Deem et al., 2007 p.6) that is, according to Parker, “both a civilising process and a new civil religion” (cited in Deem et al., 2007 p.49), the solution to any difficulty.

Deem et al. (op. cit.) presented a slightly different taxonomy; they distinguished between i) *neo-corporatist managerialism* that covers the period from the late 19th century and the high point of classical liberalism to the waning of social justice liberalism in the 1970s; ii) *neoliberal managerialism* that is a function of Ward’s ‘roll-back’ neoliberalism as discussed in the previous section, and iii) *neo-technocratic managerialism* that is a function of ‘roll-out/Third Way’ neoliberalism.

As discussed in the previous section, one of the fundamental tenets of neoliberalism is the economisation of social policy, the belief in the inherent superiority of the markets not only in terms of economic growth but as a change driver for all social institutions. The application of managerialist principles to public policy is generally referred to as New Public Management, or NPM (Connel et al., 2009; Lorenz, 2012; Ward, 2012; Bessant, 2015; Gunter et al., 2016). The infiltration of NPM in public policy development and enactment brought about the commodification of what were previously public goods such as water, electricity, social welfare and education.

This teleological transformation of the public sector had profound implications on its management culture. With the introduction of NPM “the discussions in the 1970s about representative bureaucracy and industrial democracy came to a sudden halt, displaced by a new ethos of managerialism” (Connel et al., 2009 p.334). At national level the most important shift was the increased ‘autonomy’ of what were previously civil service departments and state entities, justified by the purported reduction of the state and counterbalanced by increased accountability measures and new structures to enforce them, so that

in reality neoliberalism has led to what Ball called: “a move towards the polycentric state – a shift that is from government to governance” (2008, p. 64), of decentralisation without real devolution.

This has led to a fundamental change in management culture through what Connel et al. (op. cit.) called “fractal organizational logics” (p.334). Not only was each public sector entity to function like a profit-making firm, but each part of the entity was to be considered as a microcosm of the larger unit, accountable for its own targets, budget and outputs:

Individual workers are treated as firms, expected to follow a profit-making logic; and are held accountable to the organization in these terms, through ‘performance management’ schemes. Both organizations and individuals are required to make themselves accountable in terms of competition (p.334).

However, public service outputs are rarely as easily measurable as in the manufacturing or financial sectors. This transformation has thus necessitated the development of ‘objective’ tools by which to ‘measure’ performance and award ‘excellence’: hence the justification for SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely) goals or targets, performance indicators, league tables and other similar mechanisms. Lorenz (op. cit.) comments that this has highlighted an internal contradiction in NPM: whilst neoliberalism champions smaller government and individual entrepreneurship, NPM had led to a proliferation of controls such that: “NPM is the privatized heir of state Communism” (p. 609). Busch (2017) goes so far as to draw parallels between the neoliberal takeover of education and pre-1989 state socialism – a far cry from the genesis of neoliberalism as an anti-communist rallying cry, as we have seen.

These accountability mechanisms are in effect an integral part of neoliberalism’s ‘technology of power-knowledge’ (Foucault, 1991) that I discuss in more detail in the next chapter, and that led to the ‘performatisation’ (Ball, 2004; 2013a) of quality assessment in HE, which I discuss in Chapter 7.

2.4 The Impact of neoliberalism and NPM on HE

Musselin and Teixeira (2014) and Shattock (2014) have cautioned about making generalisations on the effect of NPM on HE internationally: “these interpretations are convincing at an aggregated level but they hardly resist (sic) empirical data and more precise analysis” (Musselin and Teixeira, p.1). Shattock demonstrates this variation by distinguishing between the four different university models: the Humboldtian (Germany, Norway and Finland); the Napoleonic (France and Italy); the Japanese and the historically incorporated model (the UK, Australia and the US), and concludes that:

most central European (and Japanese) scholars (...) regard the characteristic reforms (*they have undergone*) as the product of New Public Management theory, whilst their US and UK counterparts would be more likely to regard them simply as necessary steps to creating more competitive institutions (p.2).

Scott (2015) has also warned that it is far from clear what form the marketization of HE will take in the future. What follows is therefore a general overview that is not intended to gloss over regional or national differences. In any case, the “marginal” reality of universities in small island post-colonial states (Baldacchino, 2011) that I discuss in Section 3.2 is not included in Shattock’s or Scott’s analyses; nevertheless it will still be useful to present a baseline against which my case study of QA developments at the University of Malta in Chapter 8 can be viewed.

There are four main ways how the impact of neoliberalist theory has been felt in HE: i) in terms of the transference of the onus of funding from the state to other sources, including consumers; ii) in the

reformulation of the epistemological function of publicly-funded universities; iii) in the increased vulnerability of HE to consumer perception and university rankings; and iv) in the managerialisation of HE.

In the last decades HE public funding has been hit by a 'perfect storm'. The costs of massification of HE that has vastly increased the numbers and range of students since the second half of the 20th century, has been compounded by mounting costs of teaching and research. Additionally, the general economic downturn since the oil crisis of the 1970s after 30 years of strong post-war growth has stretched governments' capacity in many countries to honour commitments to the provision of free or heavily subsidised HE (Bennetot Pruvot et al., 2012; Shattock, 2014). On a pragmatic level, neoliberalist economics advocating the "retreat of the state" (Kumar and Hill, 2009 p.1) provided the justificatory discourse to start divesting the state of this increasing financial burden, for example through student fees and loans (McGettigan, 2013).

At a deeper level, neoliberalism reformulated the epistemological function of publicly-funded universities, from the creation, sharing and inculcation of 'socialised knowledge' (Ward, 2012 p.87) and learning as a public good, which had previously justified investment through public funds in the post-Second World War period, to the provision of knowledge and learning as a private commodity within the knowledge economy:

neoliberalism has recast the conditions of knowledge production by attempting to privatise vast domains of knowledge and by using market or pseudo-market mechanisms to restructure the organisations, institutions and networks where knowledge has been traditionally produced and disseminated (p.76).

At the same time the emergence of the knowledge economy led to increased government interest in the outputs of universities, justifying increasing demands for accountability not only due to value-for-money considerations but also due to national development needs.

Two important caveats have been made to this argument. Firstly, research with UK university manager-academics by Deem et al. (2007) indicated that in spite of the infusion of neoliberal principles through NPM in publicly-funded universities that was being internalised by manager academics (Deem et al. 2005; Nickson, 2014) and was threatening the public service vocation and professional identity of interviewees (see also Watermeyer, 2016), this vocation and identity were still valued and had not been extinguished. Universities, not just in the UK, incorporate, adapt to and co-opt NPM policies according to a complex interplay that needs to include consideration of the local dimension, including social relations and human culture (Deem, 2001).

Secondly, Scott (2016) points out that in any case, the 'knowledge economy' discourse, that has become almost ubiquitous in neoliberal HE narratives and was disseminated by the OECD and the World Bank in the late 1990s (Olssen and Peters op. cit.) should be used with caution. He states that in reality the links between universities and the economy are not a recent, neoliberal-driven phenomenon, and "were almost certainly stronger in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and reached a climax in the age of mass higher education" (p.195). What has changed is the complex and uncertain nature of that link, largely driven by the innate fluidity of the hyper-capitalist market economy that, despite the neoliberal rhetoric that has certainly impacted how universities operate and 'succeed', has made the 'fit' between HE outputs and the needs of the economy even more problematic (ibid. p.211).

Returning to the original discussion, the third way that neoliberalist theory has had an impact on HE is through the confluence of the commodification of knowledge, the globalising effect of the free market, and the drive to find alternative funding streams. Together, these have driven universities to become more entrepreneurial by promoting their research and consultancy services, and to internationalise their 'product' by pro-actively seeking more international students. This has made universities much more vulnerable to the vagaries of consumer perceptions, and therefore to university rankings (Williams, 2013).

Finally, neoliberalism's economisation of educational policy as discussed previously has led to the 'managerialisation' of HE (Molesworth et al., 2011; Ball, 2012; Brown and Carasso, 2013) by the 'regulatory state' (Tapper 2007): greater university 'autonomy' in exchange for greater accountability and scrutiny (Locke et al., 2011, Shattock, 2014). Output-oriented, accountability-based NPM discourse has infiltrated and is informing both the organisational structures and the management cultures of universities, impinging on the very objectives, processes and outcomes of 'doing' HE in terms of both research and learning (Deem et al., 2007; Tapper, 2007; Canaan, 2008; Shore, 2010; Ward, 2012; Giroux, 2014; Shattock, 2014; Carvalho et al., 2016; Rosser, 2016).

All these influences have had clear knock-on effects on how QA is done by and to universities, which is the central focus of my research.

2.5 The contested meaning of 'Quality Assurance'

In exploring the questions at the heart of my inquiry, it has been important to address the notion of quality. The term 'quality' is itself highly contested. Blackmur (2007, p.15) distinguished between quality as perfection, as excellence, as value for money, as fitness for and of purpose, and as transformation. Until now in this thesis the term 'quality assurance' (QA) has been used in a generic sense. However Williams (2012) has reflected on the difficulty of pinning down a single universally acceptable definition of QA in education.

Tapper (2007) distinguished between three functions and three phases of Higher Education QA in the UK as it developed from 1992 onwards. It could be intended to measure and compare institutional performance, to audit institutional QA mechanisms, or to stimulate quality enhancement. These three interrelated levels of regulation were the site of increasing contestation for control between the universities themselves, who were used to a long tradition of self-regulation with internal quality assessment mechanisms and external examiners, and state or state-dominated (hereinafter conflated to 'state') mechanisms. One reason for this was that whilst research had an established tradition of peer assessment, "the evaluation of teaching and learning in higher education was already entrapped in a well-spun web of ideas and procedures" (ibid., p.168) with managerialist parentage.

Since 1992 HE QA discourse in the UK passed from *quality assessment*, broadly equivalent to the measurement or comparison of institutional performance, to *quality assurance*, broadly equivalent to the auditing of institutional quality assurance mechanisms, to the stimulation of *quality enhancement* (ibid., Chapter 10). Houston and Paewai (2013) assert that:

Quality assurance processes are values laden. The application of methods and measures does not, in and of itself, assure quality (...). Nor does 'quality assurance', in and of itself, lead to quality improvement. Instead, determinations of quality must be situated within a particular context and informed by an open

and honest process of discovery regarding reforms that could lead to improvements in teaching, learning and research (pp.277-278).

In my view “What is QA?” is the wrong question, or at least certainly not the primary one. A more appropriate lead-in question would be “Whose QA is it?”, meaning that the teleological issues of purpose, ownership, agency and power relations are inescapably intertwined with its practice and effectiveness. The ontology and teleology of QA can be strongly contested at all levels, from the transnational macro level to the intra-classroom micro level. Williams (op. cit.) comments in a similar fashion:

What, put simply, are the fundamental purposes of quality assurance? (...) the real answer depends on who wants to know. That is to say, the structure and function of quality assurance are generally determined in order to satisfy political objectives, and both reflect, and help to consolidate, the ownership and control of higher education (p.2).

In this context it is important to note that the meaning of ‘quality assurance’ in the new paradigm as developed in Malta, which I discuss in Chapter 6, is quite different from how this term is generally understood in the UK as evidenced from the literature. The analyses of UK HE developments by Tapper (2007), Land and Gordon (2013) and Nygaard et al. (2013), for example, refer to quality assurance in a derogatory way in terms of the regulatory ‘creep’ of the state justified by neoliberal free market discourse and leading to NPM-inspired quality assurance structures within the universities themselves. They contrast this to ‘quality enhancement’, for reasons I discuss in Chapter 7.

Williams (2016) notes that the relationship between QA and quality enhancement ranges along a spectrum from the oppositional, to the distinctly separate, to scenarios where QA leads to quality enhancement and indeed these are part of the same process. In Chapter 6 I conclude that the Maltese context, at least in terms of its rhetoric, is towards the latter end of the spectrum. Indeed, what in Malta’s 2006 Education Act is referred to as quality assurance in contrast with old-style Maltese educational inspection can be compared to ‘quality enhancement’. However, so as avoid possible dissonances with the prevalent international discourse of ‘QA as neoliberal mechanism’, in Chapter 6 I have preferred to call the new paradigm of Maltese educational improvement the Quality Enhancement Paradigm.

2.6 Concluding synthesis

This chapter drew upon relevant literature to trace the outlines of the development of neoliberalism, its roots in 19th and early 20th century classical liberalism, and its justification as a re-affirmation of personal freedom in response to the totalitarianism of the left and right and, as from the 1970s, as a response to the shortcomings of social justice liberalism or the Welfare State. Neoliberalism retained liberalism’s primacy of the individual and expanded the logic of the marketplace to hegemonise all private and state endeavour and practices. In so doing it reversed liberalism’s minimalist approach to the state and replaced it, especially during the second phase of neoliberalist policy implementation – the so-called Third Way – by a polycentric, ubiquitous presence.

The operationalisation of neoliberal theory in the public sector in the form of New Public Management (NPM) was then explored. Specifically in publicly-funded HE, neoliberalism and NPM have left their mark in four main ways:

- the shift from state funding to other funding streams, including consumer fees;

- the reformulation of the epistemological function of publicly-funded universities through the emergence of the knowledge economy;
- the shift towards more entrepreneurial and internationalised universities, making them much more vulnerable to consumer choice;
- the 'managerialisation' of the organisational structures and management cultures of universities.

All these have clear implications to the purpose and format of both internal and external HE quality assurance mechanisms, which I discuss in Chapters 6 to 8.

Chapter 3

Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, which was the first part of my review of literature, I outlined and defined the key concepts that underpin my exploration of the context and formation of contemporary quality assurance discourse with a particular focus on HE. In this chapter I discuss the conceptual framework composed of three “sensitizing concepts” (Sultana, 2010 p.130) that I use throughout this work as theoretical ‘lenses’ with which to reflect critically on the development of educational inspection and QA in Malta:

- the ‘absolute conditions’ and resilience of small island states;
- paradigm and paradigm shift in the context of the Methodological Research Programme for Education (PMRE);
- the Foucauldian and Weberian conceptions of power and control.

My interest in the small island perspective and in issues of power with respect to educational policy development arises from my own personal-professional identity as a small island inhabitant who has held various senior positions within Malta’s national education establishment. The paradigm perspective adds further clarity to my understanding of the process by which Malta derived its educational QA regime. As Minelli et al. have pointed out:

The adoption of a plurality of analytical frameworks and the possibility of combining them differently in relation to the specific subject of the study results in a bird’s eye view of control activities and a more complex, interperative and dynamic perspective of control activities in public organisations (2015 p.107).

As with the mechanism of a telescopic zoom lens, all three theoretical ‘lenses’ that I discuss in this chapter are required for the object to come properly in focus. To continue with the metaphor, the major ‘lens’ is the Foucauldian and Weberian typologies of power, whilst the variable lenses that allow for a change of focus are the conditions inherent in small island states and the concept of paradigm shift. This tripartite relationship is represented with the Figure 3.1:

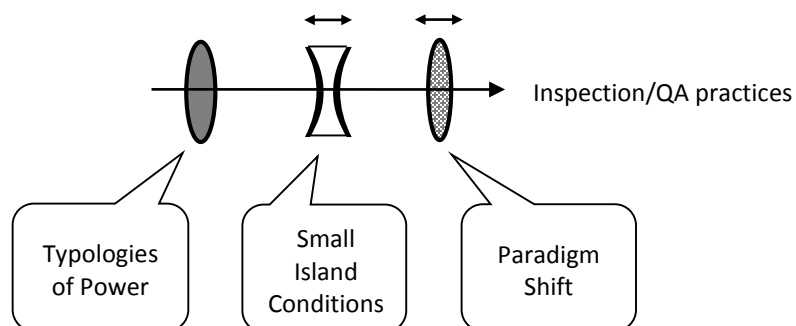


Figure 3.1 The Tripartite Conceptual Framework

The relationship between these three perspectives is explained in the conclusion of this chapter.

3.2 Malta's resilience in the face of its 'absolute conditions'

Malta is a micro-state archipelago in the middle of the Mediterranean with over 420,000 inhabitants and a population density of 1,562 per square kilometre (NSO, 2012), one of the highest in the world. There are various definitions of state 'smallness' (Sultana, 2006; Bray, 2011), and Malta fits within even the most stringent of these, of not more than one million inhabitants.

The definition of 'island' is related to scale, geography, history and identity (Royle, 2007). Péron defined islands as "small enough to render to their inhabitants the permanent consciousness of being on an island" (in *ibid.* p.42). Hamilton-Paterson's definition is: "this unit of land which fits within the retina of the approaching eye" (*ibid.* p.43). Both definitions resonate with me: I can still remember clearly the bitter-sweet moment when, on my first plane flight back to Malta, I could see the whole of my country framed by the porthole at my side.

Warrington and Milne described islands and 'islandness' as arising from the interplay of geography and history:

Geography tends towards isolation: it permits or favours autarchy, distinctiveness, stability and evolution propelled endogenously. *History*, on the other hand, *tends towards contact*: it permits or favours dependence (or independence), assimilation, change and evolution propelled exogenously. An island's character develops from the interplay of geography and history, evasions and invasions, the indigenous and the exotic (2007 p.383).

This interplay engenders what Friggieri considered to be: "the absolute conditions within which the Maltese mind has to operate" (Friggieri, 1995 p.110), and what Briguglio (2014) has called the inherent context of small island states. Amongst these are: **Isolation** and **Smallness**.

We Maltese are **isolated**, both literally and metaphorically, from mainland Europe and Africa. Our rocky shores form the outer ramparts to our bastions that ring the island, from pre-historic walls to the High Renaissance behemoths that enclose the Grand Harbour.

We are **Small**, forever being measured and measuring ourselves against much bigger, more powerful and influential nations. We Maltese find ourselves forever needing to repeat where we come from, apologizing for our interlocutors' ignorance, referencing the very existence of our country by its proximity to its bigger and better-known neighbours. Malta has been in a continuous state of being-as-colony for almost all its recorded history of over two millennia, as the cumulative "invention by the global of the local as native" (Baldacchino, 1997 p.60) by some of the greatest empires in history, with its inevitable effect on national identity. Smallness leads to a reductionist perspective of policy development and implementation by a process of 'personification', the identification of policy with one person or a small group of promoters and implementers, allowing for its trivialisation in the tug-of-war of competing ambitions and agendas.

Baldacchino (1997) had a similar take on the constrictions of an island micro-state, two of which are **Intimacy** and **Monopoly**. Baldacchino's **Intimacy** is a corollary to Friggieri's **Smallness**. In **Intimacy** the healthy separation between public/professional and private is blurred and one's private space shrinks, also because of the effect of monopoly discussed further on. This atmosphere breeds dissimulation, a guardedness that one can never be completely divested of without the fear of negative consequences.

Sutton referred to the dangers of what he called “exaggerated personalism” (Sutton, 2007 p.203). Mayo et al. (2008) discussed the limitations Intimacy poses to adult education provision in small states. In my Institution Focussed Study (IFS) (Spiteri, 2014) I described how the multiple intermeshing levels of networking in a small island community – what Bray called “multiplex relationships” (Bray, 2010 p.47) – act as an inverse social panopticon, within which the inhabitants feel that they are ‘already known’ and have no real anonymity.

Monopoly, which is equivalent to Sutton’s “government pervasiveness” (Sutton, 2007 p.203), refers to the ubiquitousness of the state apparatus in everyday interactions, and therefore the shift in the balance of power that effects all spheres of life: “Small state government is characteristically weighty and omnipresent and, as a result, omnipotent” (Baldacchino, 1997 p.69). Warrington highlighted the effects of the intricate juxtaposition of Intimacy and Monopoly:

politics and government intrude into daily routines, concerns and perceptions of ordinary folk. The tension between rule-based administration and paternalism is revealed in the figures of the minister/patron and the citizen/supplicant. Elected and appointed officials stand at the cross-roads of public and private affairs, at once bureaucrats and kinsmen, the agents of impersonal authority and brokers, confidants and *habitués* within informal affective networks (Warrington, 1997 p.416).

The effects of Monopoly are further exacerbated by Malta’s colonial heritage of paternalistic governance in and panoptic control through state educational provision and inspection, as discussed in Chapter 4. In their typology of seven patterns of island governance, Warrington and Milne gave Malta as a prime example of the ‘fortress’ pattern that is: “replete with paradoxes: economic affluence and vulnerability; competent, benign administration but fractious politics; a cockpit of imperial policies, but a weak sense of domestic interests” (Warrington and Milne, 2007 p.407).

Said (1978) and more recently Shiva (2015) identified colonialism as a historic form of violence justified by the ‘othering’ of the colonised. ‘Othering’ allowed the coloniser to perceive the colonised as in deficit, as ‘not having / not being’ western, white, civilised, educated, thereby “inferiorising and subalternising the ‘other’ in order to ideologically justify and consolidate the project of colonialism” (Carrim, 2009 p.771). Freire called this process “antidialogical action” (Freire, 1990 p.121), and indeed Carrim referred to the “cultural monologue of the colonizer with, or rather ‘at’, the subaltern” (op. cit.). For Freire such action was characterised by cultural invasion: “In cultural invasion it is essential that those who are invaded come to see their reality with the outlook of the invaders rather than their own; for the more they mimic the invaders, the more stable the position of the latter becomes” (op. cit.).

The living legacy of colonialism in Malta’s educational structures, including inspection, persisted even after Malta’s independence in 1964 (Zammit Mangion, 1992; Sultana, 2001), in a mechanism that Quijano (2008) termed the ‘coloniality of power’ and Mok and Lee (2000) called ‘re-colonisation’, which are a perpetuation of Freire’s cultural invasion. This refers to the reproduction and naturalisation of the colonial logic of power and its attendant social asymmetries beyond the formal severance of political ties of a newly sovereign state and into its post-colonial period. Coloniality represents the ultimate Stockholm syndrome. As we shall see in Chapters 5 and 6, colonial and post-colonial Monopoly provided the justification for the form of educational inspection that flourished in the British colonial period and beyond.

The 'absolute conditions' or 'inherent context' of small island states are certainly not unique to Malta, but are a characteristic shared by many similar states across continents and regions. Austin (2002) applied Baldacchino's typology to Tonga, and discussed their implication to educational reform in her island nation. Both UNESCO and the Commonwealth Secretariat have been active since the 1980s in highlighting the situation of small island states. Baldacchino (1997, 2012), Baldacchino and Farrugia (2002), Sultana (2006), Mayo (2010), Crossley et al. (2011), Crossley and Sprague (2012), Jules (2012) and Keating and Baldersheim (2015), amongst others, have explored the 'predicament' engendered by the small island status and, increasingly in the last decade, also the opportunities within. Indeed, Warrington (1997 p.10) asserted that: "it is necessary to look beneath the carapace of dysfunction and other 'so-called' characteristics, at the internal dynamic of micro-states." Jules called this the anamorphic perspective, since head-on the situation of small island states may look distorted and deficit-based (Sultana, 2006; Baldacchino, 2012) and thus requiring external support, but if perceived from a slightly different angle reveals hidden harmonies and potential.

Sutton (2007) also observed that these same small-state characteristics point both to constraints due to context-bound vulnerabilities, but also to possibilities. Briguglio has developed the concept of resilience in the context of the economic well-being of small states. It is defined as "the extent to which an economy can withstand or bounce back from the negative effects of external shocks. As such, it can be considered as the obverse of economic vulnerability." (Briguglio, 2014 p.14). Resilience in this discourse relates to the policy action that a small state may choose to take to address its inherent vulnerability due to increased exposure to external events. During the Peoples' Forum that was part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Malta in November 2015, the concept of resilience was widened beyond its economic origins:

While dominant and hegemonic interpretations and narratives of resilience present it as the capacity to respond to shocks and vulnerability, a more compelling narrative is to consider "resilience as life" – an inherent capacity in all living organisms to adapt to contextual changes without collapsing, and to advance to the next stage of life with the capacity to self-organise and repair the root-causes of vulnerability (Commonwealth Foundation, 2015).

Resilience is therefore about continuous adaptation; in the colonial and post-colonial context, it is a function of the agency of the subaltern.

Malta thrives today as an EU member nation-state republic with its 'own' cultural and linguistic identity that is constructed of the weft and warp of successive colonial cultural transfers. One could argue that the very fact that a Maltese cultural and political identity exists at all, that it has not been substituted wholesale or 'creolized' into the history books, underlines the importance of understanding the process of colonial transfer in education not only as the one-way product of cultural imperialism, but also as the interplay of this with the agency of the subaltern. For, as Carrim (2009) points out, "(the) subaltern condition is not fixed, but is always in a state of flux, presenting the potential of counter-hegemonic ideas" (op. cit., p.768).

The concepts of resilience and anamorphic perspective may allow us to perceive that small island states can have the capacity to use their lemons to make lemonade, to turn unpalatable limitations into

opportunities for growth. So, while as discussed Baldacchino (1997) referred to Intimacy, Lowenthal referred to Managed Intimacy:

Small-state inhabitants learn to get along, like it or not, with folk they will know in myriad contexts over their whole lives. To enable the social mechanism to function without due stress, they minimise or mitigate overt conflict. They become expert in muting hostility, deferring their own views, containing disagreement, avoiding dispute, in the interest of stability and compromise. (...) Not simply the small size of the state but the complexity and durability of most relationships fosters sophisticated modes of accommodation (Lowenthal, 1987 p.39).

Sutton referred to the potential positive effects of what he called “concerted social harmony” (Sutton 2007 p.204). Bray also observes that “the multiplex characteristics and need for managed intimacy in small states may be forces for conservatism, but they may also provide social cohesion and links that promote innovation” (Bray, 2011 p.56).

As examples, Bray refers to the positive potential of Smallness: all the senior administrators involved in tertiary education can meet in one room; and Intimacy: personal connections can facilitate the opening of new tertiary institutions or the reorientation of existing ones. Both examples are true for the Maltese context, as discussed in Chapter 8. As Sultana pithily put it: “Small *can* be beautiful” (2010 p.140).

However it was Sultana herself who sounded an important note of caution with respect to claims about the effects of ‘scale’ on small states, since such effects can also be found in other contexts such as remote and rural regions and communities, and to some degree may also be shared by large states. He took the more cautious position that: “scale is nevertheless a useful prism through which to look at social realities, and potentially valuable in understanding social dynamics and processes in particular contexts” (Sultana, 2010 p.132). Warrington (1997 p.433) defined the micro-state as “any self-evidently small, self-governing polity, a political anomaly thriving because it is an anomaly.” He described the micro-state as first of all a *condition*, rather than a juridical entity or conditional to sovereign statehood.

This is particularly interesting when put in context of the metaphor that Warrington used to investigate the state of governance in three micro-states. He compared Malta, Barbados and Fiji to Lilliput, the fictitious miniscule island that Gulliver first visits in his Travels. Jonathan Swift’s tale was a political satire aimed at the Whig politics of early 18th century England. As Warrington commented in his interview, Swift’s point of reference was not an actual small state but smallness of mind: Gulliver’s Travels originally emanated from the author’s personal gripe at being side-lined from further career advancement by the Whig administration due to his Tory loyalties. It would therefore seem, and Warrington confirmed in his interview, that the micro-state ‘condition’ is in fact the pettiness that is part and parcel of the human condition and that finds scope to flourish because of the particular spatial and socio-political ecosystem of a micro-state. Smallness is, fundamentally, an attitude of mind and heart, rather than simply a question of physical size or strength: “I think that the micro-state ‘condition’ is both cultural (generalised attitudes of mind and heart in relation to authority) as well as a product of a particular political economy associated with diminutive size, resource scarcities, and isolation” (EW6).

Warrington’s Lilliput metaphor is therefore inherently dualistic, with patterns of “tensions and ambiguities, opportunities and constraints that, taken together, describe the micro-state” (Warrington 1997 p.432). Warrington and Milne considered this dualistic perspective to be applicable to a general typology of island governance: “Complexity, not simplicity; diversity, not uniformity; contingency, not

predictability; these should be the watchwords when examining islands” (Warrington and Milne, op. cit. p.396). The characteristics of complexity, diversity and contingency in the governance of small island states create fascinating constructive and destructive interferences with external neoliberal influences, as will be discussed with respect to Malta’s HE policy development in Chapter 8.

In this thesis I shall be taking this Janus-like approach. I find Warrington’s (op. cit.) and Warrington and Milnes’ (op. cit.) approach more nuanced and truer to my own personal experience as a small-islander than Briguglio’s resilience or Jules’ anamorphic more linear perspectives. I do not intend to reject these two useful concepts, but to use them instrumentally and critically rather than being co-opted in their discourse. The concept of paradigm and paradigm shift is useful for this.

3.3 Paradigm Shift and the Methodological Research Programme for Education (MRPE)

The concept of paradigm and paradigm shift that I shall be using is in the context of the Methodological Research Programme (MRP) developed by Lakatos (1980) as adapted by Wain (1987) for the educational context. Appendix 3.1 provides further discussion on the concept of paradigm and paradigm shift. The MRP stems from the seminal work of Kuhn (1970) on the nature of scientific revolutions. Kuhn called the beliefs that underpin the practice of a scientific community its Paradigm; it incorporates the parameters of what should and should not be researched. Popkewitz described Kuhnian paradigms as: “constellations of commitments, values, methods and procedures that shape and fashion research” (1984 p.32). The principal point in Kuhn’s conception of paradigm is that scientific theories start, grow, flourish and eventually become less relevant and are replaced under the impact of socio-cultural developments as much as by materially 'objective' realities and discoveries.

Lakatos (op. cit.) proposed that researchers undertake a programme of work, the MRP, composed of a series of progressive assumptions that evolved according to the interaction between new facts that were a result of the latest hypothesis, and successive real-life situations in which these facts were being tested. The MRP provides a protective belt for the hard core of statements and beliefs which cannot be changed because it is that which gives identity to the MRP. This hard core can be compared to Kuhn’s Paradigm.

Lakatos suggested that the MRP could be applied to areas other than scientific research. Wain (1987) and Glass and Johnson (1991) applied the MRP to the study of education philosophy and economics, respectively. They argued that different theoretical currents also had a hard core of beliefs and a protective belt of hypotheses and explanations. However, they argued that outside its original milieu of the physical sciences, the MRP needed to be adapted. Wain proposed that the MRP for education, or the MRPE, would be considered progressive “if (...) the successive operational definitions explain the historical context or environment better than the one they replace” (1987: 23-24). Glass and Johnson agreed with Wain’s position:

In the teaching of subject areas such as physics and chemistry areas, the research programmes utilised are concerned with explaining a relatively stable physical reality which has proved amenable to relatively conclusive empirical testing and remarkable predictive accuracy. In sharp contrast, in a social science, (...) research programmes are concerned with explaining a changing social reality where it has been exceptionally difficult to achieve decisive empirical results (1991:40).

Glass and Johnson argued that the difficulty of fields such as sociology, politics, philosophy of education and comparative religion to provide and corroborate new facts did not mean the MRPE could not be

applied. If the MRPE is difficult to use in these areas as a tool of empirical research, it can still be useful as a conceptual framework to understand the historical progression and the development of methods and different premises. In fact paradigm shift as a conceptual framework in education has been used in the fields of curriculum inquiry (Schubert and Lopez-Schubert, 1985), QA (Perellon, 2007; Sursock, 2011), distance education (Kesim and Agaoglu, 2007) and mobile learning in higher education (Rajasingham, 2011), amongst others.

The attractiveness of the MRPE for my work is that it implies a particular ontology and teleology of educational reform. It is non-positivistic. Each successive progressive shift has, by definition, the seeds of its own eventual decay as new developments in the field require a new shift in beliefs and related behaviours. It is an antidote to what Ball (2013a) has called the rhetoric of educational reforms, which by definition are future-oriented, that devalues the present and makes it “ugly, abhorrent and unendurable” (Bauman in Ball, *ibid.* p.63). The critical ‘distance’ this conceptual framework allows is all the more important when conducting insider research, as I explain in Chapter 4.

An important caveat is that not every change is a paradigm shift. For example, the literature is replete with claims that the latest technological innovation in education is heralding a paradigm shift (see, for example, Rajasingham, 2011). In adapting the MRP to the MRPE, one has to be very careful to distinguish between using paradigm shift as a conceptual framework, and actually claiming that a paradigm shift has occurred or is occurring. The intention to undertake a paradigm shift is not evidence that such a shift is underway.

Wain pointed out that: “a project as a whole dies if its discourse is abandoned; if these normative principles and commitments no longer attract supporters” (2004, p.43). Conversely, it follows that a particular paradigmatic perspective can be revived, perhaps under a new guise, if it is seen to serve a particular purpose of a particular group. Even the last 100 years have shown just how premature it can be to consign a particular ideology or concept to the dustbin of history. The First World War was originally called the Great War and was billed the war to end wars. Fukuyama (1992) famously proclaimed ‘the end of history’ because he considered the end of the Cold War as signalling the endpoint of humanity’s ideological evolution and the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government. Fukuyama himself pointed out that the concept of the end of history was, indeed, embedded in the dialectical work of Karl Max that over a century ago projected the death of capitalism and the final triumph of communist utopia.

Neither Marx nor Fukuyama got it right. There is nothing inevitable in the ascendancy of a particular paradigm. Nor is the descent into obscurity of its rival necessarily its final act. Historical circumstance and personal/group agency conspire to ensure the incommensurability of the future with respect to the present or the past. This is an important insight when the perceived neoliberal hegemony of NPM in HE is discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

3.4 A framework for power and control

The third set of concepts that I shall be using to frame my thinking and investigations revolve around the teleology and ontology of power. Inspection and QA in education are quintessentially about a wide spectrum of forms of power and control that includes micro, meso and macro levels, from the actions of

the headteacher or inspector with respect to the individual teacher, to the oversight of regional or national systems on schools or networks thereof, to supranational mechanisms that impact on nations or groups of nations. As Apple said: "It is nearly impossible to fully understand why educational policies and practices look the way they do unless one brings to one's analysis a recognition that they are fully immersed in relations of power" (1994 p.408).

My particular interest and the focus of this thesis is the macro perspective at national and supranational levels. To this end I discuss Foucault's analysis of power-knowledge, and Weber's typologies of power and the legitimization of authority.

3.4.1 Foucauldian Power-Knowledge

In his seminal texts *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1991; 1998) traced not only how power is produced by the modern state and its institutions for the control of the individual, but how power itself 'produces' reality. Discipline "does not just control, it 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (Foucault in Wain, 2004 p.284). Panoptic³ power is used by the state and its institutions to ensure the docility, governability and optimal efficiency of its citizens, through a range of practices that include the disciplining of space and time through their surveillance, observation, individualisation and isolation. These mechanisms of power produce different types of knowledge about people's existence and activities, and this knowledge further reinforces the power mechanisms. One could say that today's ubiquitous presence and pervasive intrusion of electronic technology and social media, as uncovered for example through the 2010 WikiLeaks disclosures of the US diplomatic cables and Snowden's 2013 leaks on the NSA, have reinforced the appositeness of Foucault's analysis of the scope of power-knowledge.

To panoptic power Foucault added pastoral power, which refers to the state's power to supervise, define, normalise and control the sexuality, births, mortality and all other aspects of life and death of the population. Together, these two 'technologies' of power-knowledge are subsumed under bio-power, the power over life and death (ibid. p.285). Foucault considered that they pervaded all spheres of life, not just the modern state apparatus, and were indispensable to the development of capitalism. In the final analysis:

their object (is) the promotion of self-regulation as the most efficient economy of control; more invisible than the gaze of the panopticon, though the subject renders herself no less invisible. A self-regulation in conformity with norms that are set by others, their insidiousness lies in the illusion of personal freedom and control, of autonomy, they permit the subject (ibid. p.287).

Or, as in Orwell's (1949) ironic twist, until Winston learnt to love Big Brother. Foucault's dystopian state, much like Orwell's in 1984, is all-powerful and all-pervasive. Rebellion can only be private and spontaneous, a "pessimistic activism" leading to "genealogical insurrections" (Foucault in Rowan and Shore, 2009 p.69). There is however, one critical difference. Orwell's state is inevitably bent on its own self-destruction which through double-think it views and projects as a triumphal march to victory or at least a constant state of war, in which the quality of life of its citizens is effectively in an unending downward spiral. Orwell's tale was intended as a cautionary *reducio ad absurdum*, and a call for an

³ The term is derived from the panopticon (all-seeing) design of English institutional buildings in the late 18th century that were intended to ensure that a central watchhouse could keep an eye on all inmates.

alternative polity. Foucault on the other hand argued that bio-power was indispensable to the successful functioning of the capitalist state, and by extension the neoliberal structures and processes that now pervade and invade our lives (Ball, 2013a p.134). The technologies of power-knowledge are always already present (Foucault, 1980), even unto our innermost thoughts and private actions: 'Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere' (Foucault, 1998 p.93).

In this conception there is no scope for any further theorising of a future utopian society. "(Foucault) tells us, in particular, to forget the ideal of a truly rational learning society or public transparent and free from power where information circulates openly, aspired for by liberal modernists, as a dangerous pipe dream with totalitarian implications" (Wain, op. cit. pp.313-314).

The all-pervasive and absolutist nature of Foucault's genealogical depiction of the state and its technologies of power seem to lead to a "paralysing impasse" (Prado in Ball, 2013b p.143). As Jimenez-Anca has observed:

In (Foucault's) conception of power as a ubiquitous strategic force, there is no room for an enquiry into the limits of power and how individuals may trespass those limits. For, if power is ubiquitous, then the idea that social agents can step outside of its influence becomes utterly ludicrous, as do all the questions that might be posed thereafter (2012 p.37).

This reminds me of Marx's and Fukuyama's lapidary dicta discussed earlier that were ultimately frustrated by the unpredictability of history. Habermas essentially accused Foucault of being a *de facto* functionalist by reifying the state and its technologies of power-knowledge (Kelly, 1994), although Kelly and others such as Wain (op. cit.), Ball (op. cit.) and Jimenez-Anca (op. cit.) would dispute this categorisation. Jimenez-Anca observed that although Foucault was very much aware of this risk, in effect his narrative of the history of humanity was reduced to one system of domination superseding the previous one. "Even if power is understood historically, the Foucauldian genealogy rests on the idea that there *only* is power, so there *was only* power, and so there *will be only* power" (ibid. p.39).

Having said this, there are a number of features in Foucault's earlier work which I find attractive. It was Foucault himself who stated that "if one or two of these 'gadgets' of approach or method that I've tried to employ with psychiatry, the penal system or natural history can be of service to you, I shall be delighted" (Foucault, 1980 p.65). He was keen to avoid having his work being seen as a "general system, an overarching theoretical framework or worldview" (Foucault in Mifsud, 2016 p.444). Indeed, Foucault went even further: "if people want to (...) use this sentence or that idea as a screwdriver or a spanner to short-circuit, discredit or smash systems of power, including eventually those from which my books have emerged...so much the better!" (Foucault in McLaren, 2009 p.2). My intentions however are not so anarchic. In line with McLaren (ibid.) and Mifsud (op. cit.), I shall be taking a "piecemeal approach to his work" (Allen in Mifsud, op. cit. p.444), making use of elements of Foucault's toolkit to "interrupt the familiar" (Hill, 2009 p.310), and to "question, probe, and identify weaknesses, contradictions, assumptions, and problems" (Mifsud, op. cit.).

Foucault explored the rise of power in the modern state through an 'archaeological' investigation of history, that is by examining the discursive traces left by the past so as to write a 'history of the present'. As Sultana put it: "it (is) necessary to go back to the past where political, economic and cultural currents and processes intermeshed to form the institutional matrices that (are) now the subject of inquiry"

(Sultana, 1992 p.17). Foucauldian archaeology is therefore about looking at 'unofficial' history as a way of understanding the underlying processes that have led to what and where we are today in Maltese educational policy. I shall be using this approach in exploring the historical development of different paradigms.

I am also drawn by his description of the technology of disciplinary power through surveillance, knowledge and the invasive singling out of the individual, which I consider to be at the core of what in Chapter 4 I call the Panoptic Paradigm of Inspection.

Finally, as writers such as Morley (2003; 2008), Ball (2013b) as well as Houston and Paewai (2013) have indicated, Foucault's narrative of the nature and purpose of power and performativity is relevant for understanding the rise of the neoliberal marketization of higher education world-wide, and the implications of the power-knowledge narrative to the teleology and ontology of QA in higher education. The exploration of the competing forces on the new quality paradigm in higher education within Europe and in the EU post-colonial small island state that is Malta in Chapters 7 and 8 respectively is informed by this Foucauldian narrative and simultaneously problematizes its relevance and applicability to both European and Maltese contexts.

3.4.2 Weberian Typology of power

Weber (1978) defined power as the ability of an individual or group to achieve specific aims when others were trying to prevent or hinder their fulfillment. Intrinsic in this definition is the struggle of different groups or classes competing to achieve their own interests, in terms of the distribution of power in society with respect to their positionality in different 'life spheres' which included social class but, in contrast with classical Marxist approaches, was not limited to it.

Weber contrasted coercive power with power emanating from accepted authority. He presented three categories of authority legitimation: rational-legal authority, traditional authority and charismatic authority. Rational-legal authority is based on a system of rules that is applied administratively and judicially and which limits the power of rulers in societies underpinned by bureaucratic organisation. Traditional authority is based on inheritance, custom and tradition, whilst charismatic authority is based on the perceived unique qualities of the leader.

Owens and Valesky (2007) elaborated these categories into a five-point typology of power in authority. **Reward power** and **coercive power** are both based on the ability to force others to comply, by rewarding to threatening to punish respectively. **Legitimate power** comes from a formally accepted position within an organisation. **Expert power** relies on knowledge that is so valuable to others that they will comply to acquire it or benefit from it. **Referent power** is situated within the personal charisma, values or beliefs of the power holder such that it stimulates the desire to emulate him or her. These five sources of power are on an ascending scale of legitimacy, defined by Moore and Kelly as earned professional credibility (2009 p.394). In my IFS I proposed that this legitimacy scale ranged from the extrinsic to the intrinsic. Physical power, the application of brute force to coerce others, has of course no legitimacy. Legitimate power and expert power have increasing degrees of legitimacy that verges on the intrinsic but is still based on compliance, whilst referent power has intrinsic legitimacy that is based on moral commitment.

The Weberian theory of power has had contrasting fortunes. Blackledge and Hunt (1985) presented the Weberian perspective as the happy medium between micro-narratives that focus only or predominately on the individual, such as symbolic interactionism, and macro narratives such as functionalism and Marxism that leave little individual agency. Neo-Weberian sociologists such as Collins (1979), King (1980) and Archer (1984) adapted it to the educational context and used it to show how different stakeholders and interest groups within this eco-system can have real agency that is not limited to Foucauldian spontaneous subversion, and brings about changes that affect policy and practice. As Campbell noted when discussing Weberian agency: “there (is) no necessary contradiction between claiming that individuals are autonomous, creative agents on the one hand, and that their conduct is largely determined by social and cultural factors on the other” (Campbell, 2009 p.417). Thus, in the Weberian theory of power there is place for both agency and structure.

On the other hand, Giddens (1982), citing many examples that indicate that different interest groups and classes, even the most seemingly powerless, do have leverage to bring about real change, disagreed with what he considered to be Weber’s fatalistic conclusion that the developing complexity of societies, regardless of how democratic they may be at the start, produces a bureaucratic creep that inexorably shifts power away from the lower levels in what Michels called the “iron law of oligarchy” (in Giddens, 1982 p.84).

Jimenez-Anca (2012) has noted that many sociologists and political theorists in the late 20th and early 21st centuries saw strong parallels between Weber’s and Foucault’s narratives of power and even saw the former as the precursor of the latter (ibid. pp.36-37). However, he has pointed out that: “contrary to implicitly accepting such a theoretical enclosure (Foucault’s ubiquitousness of power), Weber seems to be obsessed with its subversion” (ibid. p.37). Jimenez-Anca has concluded that the key difference between Foucault’s geneology of power and Weber’s typology of power is that whilst both considered, with marked scepticism, the possibility of resistance and subversion to the dominant power, the former failed to “consider alternatives that may have differential ontological value in themselves” (ibid. p.39).

This is what gives Weber’s typology of power the capacity to be reinterpreted in ways, as with the education-related research of Collins, King and Archer, that goes beyond Weber’s original conception. The complexity afforded by the Weberian perspective and its modern variant Neo-Institutionalism can be very useful in deciphering the nature and purpose of the power(s) and authority inherent in educational inspection and quality assurance, as I discuss in Chapters 6 and 7. It explains best why the shift occurred from the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm to the new Quality Enhancement Paradigm, and the particular form that the new paradigm took in the small island EU state that is Malta.

3.5 Concluding synthesis

In this chapter I presented my theoretical framework in the form of a triple theoretical lens, with the Weberian typology of power as the primary lens. This is in line with the determination by Minelli et al. (2015) that in the theoretical framework they have developed to compare the evaluation processes of different universities, Neo-Institutional sociology could serve as the common background for the other theoretical perspectives they had selected: “which broadens and sharpens their vision” (2015 p.124).

Figure 3.2 summarises the concepts and theoretical tools discussed in the chapter and which I shall be using in the rest of the thesis.

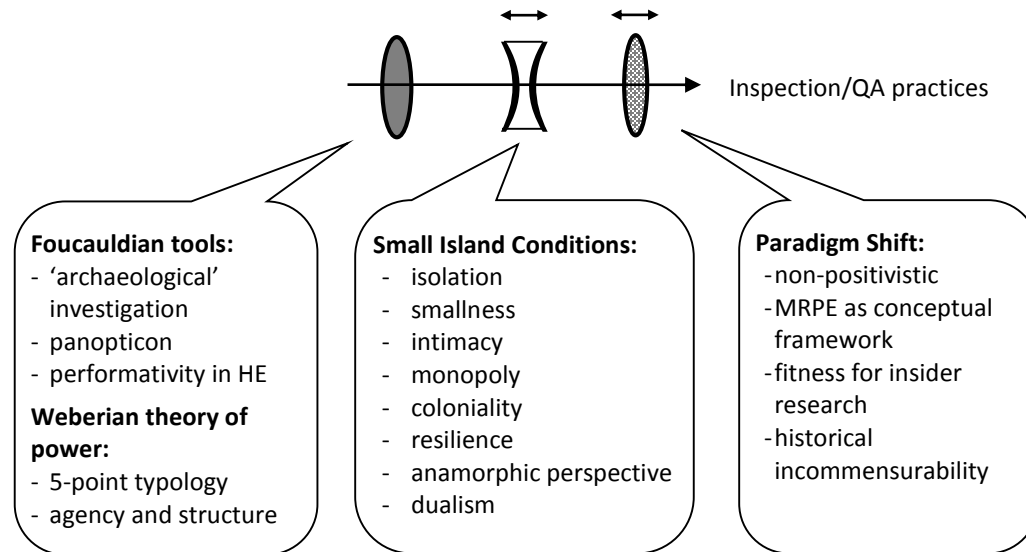


Figure 3.2 Framework concepts and tools

I have discussed how four inherent characteristics of small island states namely Isolation, Smallness, Intimacy and Monopoly can be powerful drivers in the shaping of the educational provision of such communities particularly in the context of colonialism and coloniality. On the one hand, this can lead to near-schizophrenic coping strategies. On the other, these characteristics can point to innovative strategies that allow small island communities not only to cope with their realities, but to show resilience in making best use of them to improve their well-being. In Chapters 5 and 6 I discuss how this applies to the development of educational inspection in Malta during the British colonial period, and in Chapter 8 I discuss how it applies to the development of HE QA in Malta.

However, the concept of resilience does not sufficiently explain how the coloniality of power in educational inspection made way for an educational quality culture perspective. I have therefore discussed the concept of paradigm and paradigm shift as it is applied to educational development, namely through the MRPE which is particularly apposite for insider research. In Chapters 4 and 5 I use this conceptual device to understand how educational inspection gave way to quality enhancement in Malta. In Chapters 7 and 8 I use this device to uncover the QA mechanisms in HE in Europe and Malta. In Chapter 9 I then discuss to what extent all this constitutes a paradigm shift.

To answer the question why this paradigm shift occurred, I have looked at two different theories of power, authority and control: the Foucauldian and Weberian narratives. Whilst the former provides certain helpful methodological and theoretic insights with respect to archaeological investigation, the panopticon and performativity in HE, the Weberian 5-point typology of power and authority and its complex

perspective that allows for both structure and agency seems to provide the best-fit theoretical framework for educational inspection and quality enhancement in the Maltese context. The non-predictability of a paradigmatic perspective of history and development coupled by the complexity afforded by the Weberian perspective enables the theorisation of novel projects of possibility. This is explored in more detail with respect to European and Maltese QA in HE in Chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 4

Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

It was Wright Mills who in 1959 coined the term Sociological Imagination, meaning that to think sociologically is about making the familiar strange. This requires thinking critically about the social world, adopting a different way of seeing and challenging conventional wisdom. The need to have a sociological imagination is especially apposite, and at the same time a particular challenge, in the case of insider research, which is what I engaged in for this thesis.

This chapter discusses the research design and the main data sources I used to address my research question, followed by a discussion of insider research, ethical issues and the implications these have to the discursive style of my thesis.

4.2 Data sources

My research question required that I source my data starting from the beginning of the 19th century up to the recent past with a particular focus on the last decade, for the reasons I discuss in Section 4.6. The former was elicited from an in-depth analysis of primary archival sources and documents most of which have been studied for the first time, or for the first time in terms of inspection and quality assurance, as well as from a range of key secondary sources. The school documentation included inspection registers, school and teacher inspection reports, class registers, visitors' books and headteachers' daily logbooks. Other primary documentation included correspondence between the Colonial and Imperial governments, official reports by the Directors of Education and the various Commissions and Committees, the minutes of the Malta Union of Teachers and University of Malta statutes. Appendix 4.1 gives more information on the primary archival sources and documents.

Data on the recent past was sourced mainly from 'elite' interviews, that were methodologically 'triangulated' (Denzin in Cohen et al., 2007 p.142) with documentary evidence where applicable. My interviewees were 'elite' in the sense that they were involved in their official capacity, without anonymity. My choice for 'elite' interviews was driven by considerations of Intimacy and Monopoly discussed in Chapter 3, as well as of insider research. My original list of six Maltese interviewees held most of the key positions and roles in the educational reform I analyse, and I had interacted with them regularly in my various previous roles. So, their anonymity could not be guaranteed, and I did not consider it to be ethically correct to obfuscate in any way my working relationship with them and thus imply some spurious 'objectivity' in my data gathering and analysis, an issue I discuss further in Section 4.4. Some of my foreign interviewees was also in key international positions, and I wished to have their views as officials of those entities. It was not practicable to have just a few anonymous interviews when the rest could not really be anonymous, so I opted, after seeking permission, for named interviewees across the board.

The interviews covered the development of QA in Malta with a special focus on further and higher education, as well as the role of QA in further and higher education in Europe. My interviewees are given as Appendix 4.2. My access to most of them was due to the fact that they were involved in some way in

the ESF Project on QA in further and higher education I was leading as discussed in Section 8.4, either in allowing access to other QA Agencies, or in providing feedback, advice or services at various stages of the Project. As can be seen, all my Maltese interviewees are men, and only two of the foreign group are women. The possibilities for further research from a gender perspective are discussed in Chapter 9.

The intended purposes of the interviews were as follows:

- to elicit information on the development of the national quality paradigm in Malta for both compulsory and post-compulsory education: interviews no. 1-7 (Maltese interviewees);
- to elicit information on the QA scenario in other countries in Europe, with special reference to the English, EU and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) perspectives: interviews no. 8-12 (foreign interviewees);
- to elicit background information and perspectives on small island state issues: interview no. 7 (Maltese interviewee);
- to elicit information on the perceptions of key transnational stakeholders with respect to QA in higher education, with special reference to the EU and EHEA perspective: interviews 13-15 (foreign interviewees).

The original intention was to conduct interviews 1 to 6 and 8 to 15, plus an interview with a representative of a HE QA Agency of a small island state within the Commonwealth. However, after initial positive contacts this communication thread was not maintained by the interviewee. The need for interview 7 arose during the course of my reading and writing. The international interviewees came from different countries, and with experience of QA in a wide range of countries across the EU and the EHEA. They represented further or higher education institutions that undertake external evaluations, QA agencies that conduct them, as well as individual evaluators and a student. I traced and contacted interviewee no. 7 due to his particular expertise.

All the international providers involved in the ESF Project were contacted for the purpose of this thesis after their contribution in the Project had been concluded, and so there were no conflicts of interest in this sense. In any case, in all the 'elite' interviews the terms of participation and the right to withdraw from the research at any stage was established by written consent prior to the interviews proper. In the case of the Pro-Rector of the University of Malta and the Deputy Principal of MCAST, the interviews specifically focussed on the historical development of QA in the respective institutions and their perceptions of QA developments internationally, and not on current QA developments in their own institutions. This was done to avoid any conflict of interest since both entities were undergoing an external QA procedure.

The interviews were carried out in a mix of ways; nine of them were face-to-face interviews. Five interviews were carried out by Skype. Interview number 7 was originally an informal discussion, followed by written questions and answers that reiterated and developed on the issues discussed face-to-face – the data came from these written replies.

Each interview was recorded and detailed notes were taken for each interview therefrom, with relevant quotations included where applicable. One example, that of Prof. Alfred Vella, is given as Appendix 4.3. Throughout the thesis reference to an interview is made in the following format, that refers to the initials

of the interviewee and the number of the note from which the quotation or reference is taken: (JP {for John Portelli} 3).

The range of interviews as well as their use in conjunction with documentary research allows for methodological triangulation (Cohen et al., 2007 p.142). The intention was to have a greater measure of qualitative reliability in terms of the accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage (Bogdan and Biklen in *ibid.* p.149). Levin has cautioned against reading too deeply or uncritically into official policy documents: “policy documents may embody a rhetoric that gets turned into something quite different through the political process, and even more when implemented” (2012 p.229). This is why the triangulation between official documentation and other primary sources such as schools’ Inspection Registers and Log Books, Parliamentary debates and the ‘elite’ interviews can be so fruitful. Whilst I am not making any positivistic claims that the triangulation automatically affords greater ‘validity’ or ‘objectivity’, as discussed by Cohen et al. (*op. cit.* p.144), I consider that the research design and data collection methodology were fit for purpose given my insider status and research-discourse focus, as I discuss in Sections 4.4 and 4.6.

4.3 Designing and undertaking the Interviews

As Walford (1994), Smith (2006), Cohen et al. (*op. cit.*), Harvey (2010; 2011) and Dalton (2011) indicated, ‘elite’ interviews have particular dynamics with respect to the power relationship between interviewer and interviewee that need to be taken into consideration in gaining access, ‘scripting the interview’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009 p.130; Cohen et al., *op. cit.* p.357) and analyzing the data. Mikecz has pointed out that: “the researcher’s positionality is fluid and is not solely determined externally in the context of an insider/outsider dichotomy but is on a continuum that can be controlled by the researcher to a certain extent” (Mikecz, 2012 p.483).

My personal/professional relationship with all the Maltese interviewees and almost all the foreign ones addressed many of the issues of access and elicitation of information that is discussed in the literature. Of course, this relationship did not mean that the power differential between the ‘elite’ interviewee and interviewer, some form of interviewee resistance in jockeying for control of the semantics of the interview, was not present. I was constantly aware of the *caveat* related to the interpretation of such data, coming from ‘named’ interviewees who were often representing their organisations and/or talking about their past achievements for posterity – Ball referred to ‘elite’ interviewees’ temptation to validate themselves as they told their stories (Ball, 1994 pp.96-97). This care with interpreting the data was true not only after the interview/conversations but also during the episode itself, as I had to assess what I was being told and decide on which line of inquiry to proceed.

A core interview schedule was developed on the basis of my reading in the sector pertinent to the type of interviewees. However the interviews were purposely semi-structured, resembling a conversation, with a flexible format and the possibility to follow particular leads and new lines of inquiry as the conversation developed (Dowling and Brown, 2010 pp.78-79).

The interviews and data handling were conducted according to British Educational Research Association guidelines (2011). The interviews were broadly divided in two: i) those related to the history of inspection in Malta and the development of the new quality paradigm; and ii) those related to QA in further and higher education.

I used interview notes rather than full transcriptions, in line with Nisbet (2006) who questioned the necessity of transcribing every word in handling interviews, since when interrogating and interpreting interview data the researcher's responsibility is to select extracts which support key points to be made. In my case I needed to edit out interactions that were not relevant to my research question – indeed, two Maltese participants and one foreign one told me, after making a particular comment, that it was 'off the record'; that they felt comfortable discussing certain 'hot' issues frankly is in itself a sign of the measure of confidence these interviewees had in the data-gathering process. The possibility given to the interviewees to review the interview notes, as I explain later, was part of the confidence-building procedures around the data-gathering process.

The difference between the face-to-face and Skype interviews was essentially one of convenience: I interviewed them face-to-face when they were in Malta, and conducted the interview by Skype when this was not possible. However, the use of Skype did have its advantages. Hanna (2012), Sullivan (2012), Deakin and Wakefield (2014), Janghorban et al. (2014) and Moylan et al. (2015), amongst others, have agreed that it has the potential of ensuring that: "the interview can remain, to a certain extent at least, a 'face-to-face' experience while preserving the flexibility and 'private space' elements offered via telephone interviews" (Hanna, op. cit. p.241).

All interviewees signed a consent form, given as Appendix 4.6; this allowed participants to request sight of the interview notes so as to suggest corrections, since the interviews were not anonymous. It is interesting to note that four out of the five interviewees who requested sight of the interview notes had been interviewed via Skype. This may point to evidence of a difference in power relationship between a face-to-face and a Skype-mediated interview. As Deakin and Wakefield point out: "more research is required to more comprehensively understand how technologies challenge the basic assumptions of the traditional face-to-face interview" (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014 p.603).

In Appendix 4.4 I discuss in more detail how the interviews were designed and undertaken, and how the main data themes thereof were elicited.

4.4 Ethical considerations

The major ethical consideration in conducting my thesis research was my own positioning within the Maltese educational system. This affected not only the possibilities and limitations I had for the gathering of data, but also for the type of analysis and authorial 'voice' throughout the thesis.

From 2009 to the present I have been intimately involved in the development and implementation of QA procedures at both compulsory education and F&HE. Since November 2015 I have been working on the development of the quality culture and IQA structures and processes of the University of Malta. Prior to that from 2013 as Head of the QA Unit within the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) I was responsible for the development and implementation of the IQA and EQA systems in this sector. Between 2009 to 2012 as Director for QA and head of the national inspectorate for schools in the compulsory education sector I developed and implemented the external QA systems for the sector. Prior to that, I was part of the Ministerial team that worked on the process that led to the new Education (Amendments) Act of 2006 and launched the new Quality Enhancement Paradigm.

As Head of the QA Unit within the NCFHE I led ESF-funded Project 1.227 entitled 'Making Quality Visible'. In this Project I was personally responsible for the inception and development of the National QA Framework for Further and Higher Education, and for the undertaking of the first three pilot external quality audits that implemented the Framework, as I discuss in Chapter 7. Another important deliverable of the Project was the evaluation of the Framework, the pilot audits and Net-QAPE with its related Award, which I did not do myself but for which I had oversight as project leader. Since this was an ESF project, the three external audit reports and all processes and outcomes related to Net-QAPE are in the public sphere and so there are no issues with my accessing this information for the purposes of my research.

I was therefore in a privileged position to look at the genesis, development and implementation of this new paradigm, with a special focus on the further and higher education sector. On the other hand I was keenly aware of the implications of my insider status. My ontological stance is that the very act of research 'creates', to a degree, the knowledge it is researching. As both Brown (2004) and Mercer (2007) clearly indicate, with insider research there is always the temptation to imagine that one knows the 'true' nature of the 'object' being studied because it is being viewed from the 'inside'. "What insider researchers gain in terms of their extensive and intimate knowledge of the culture and taken-for-granted understandings of the actors may be lost in terms of their myopia and their inability to make the familiar strange" (ibid. p.7).

Dowling and Brown (op.cit) called this the Epistemological Paradox: "the act of making your experience explicit of necessity entails its transformation" (Dowling and Brown, 2010 p.7). This is really the social sciences equivalent of Heiselberg's Uncertainty Principle, where the more precisely the position of an atom is determined in a particular instant, the less precisely its momentum is known, and vice versa: "What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning" (Heiselberg, 1958). Kvale and Brinkmann (op. cit.) refer to the "miner metaphor" that is underpinned by the classical positivistic expectation that the researcher can somehow dig nuggets of objective knowledge out of the subject's pure experiences. To put it another way: the closer you are to your sources, the more self-critical you should be of your perspective and conclusions, to preserve your capacity for 'sociological imagination'.

My IFS underscored the all-pervasive 'inverse panoptic' nature of the professional, social and cultural networks that enmesh the inhabitants of a microstate such as Malta (Spiteri, 2014), with its 'absolute conditions' of Isolation, Smallness, Intimacy and Monopoly, as discussed in Section 3.2. The ties that bind are tighter in inverse proportion to the size of the community, and the microcosm that is the milieu of further and higher education provision in Malta is truly small. I therefore had to be very careful not to take action, or be seen to take action, that could in any way impinge on the integrity of this process, both for the sake of the process itself and for the entities involved.

Keeping all this in mind, I needed to come to terms with my *persona* as researcher. Rather than trying to 'hide' my persona, the solution was to integrate my role into the research. As Walkerdine said: "instead of making futile attempts to avoid something that cannot be avoided, we should think more carefully about how to utilise our subjectivity as a feature of the research process" (in McLaren, 2009 p.4). I originally took up this EdD as an integral part of my professional roles; this meant that I needed to be

eternally aware that my *persona* could not be airbrushed away from the research exercise; I would always be visible to my data contributors.

However, I felt that my role as from November 2015 as an employee of the University of Malta did not allow sufficient distance from the 'subject' to permit ethical gathering and use of data. I have thus applied Wittgenstein's famous dictum: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (1922 p.90). My reflections with respect to the University stop with the data I had available up to October 2015 which marked the effective end of the ESF Project 1.227 'Making Quality Visible'. As I discuss in Chapter 8 I hope that one day the tale can be told, from a small island state perspective, of what happened after the three pilot external audits, including of the University, were carried out. For the QA nerd, it would be a thrilling read!

All this reinforces the need to position myself as a reflexive researcher every step of the way. Although my role when I was undertaking the 'elite' interviews was unambiguous and therefore both I and my contributors were mutually aware of the rules of the game in the delivery, collection and interpretation of data, this did not absolve me from the necessary vigilance to strive for the "avoidance of harm" that Dowling and Brown (op. cit. p.33) insist on. I believe that to imagine that the element of power within the interview dynamic can be eliminated from research interviews is to operate within the methodological positivistic illusion.

4.5 Data analysis

The biographical/autobiographical discursive counterpoint I have just described is mirrored in the analysis of the data derived from the 'elite' interviews. Dowling and Brown (2010) remark that:

qualitative data analysis of necessity entails a janusian attitude (...). With your problem in mind, you will engage with your information set inductively, generating categories and organising them (...). You will then cast your gaze into the theoretical field and do some developing of your conceptual variables (...). The analysis then proceeds as a dialogical movement between the problems and the findings, tightening up their respective structures and closing the discursive gap between them to generate the highest level of explicitness and coherence that is possible given the conditions under which you are working" (p.108).

This was my approach in the analysis of data. I undertook an iterative journey that had four main stages: reading the literature; critical reflection on my own professional experience; coding of data; referring to documentation under review as per Appendix 4.1, where applicable. My on-going reading sharpened my understanding of my own professional experience and led me to identify the preliminary data categories that informed the selection of my interviewees and the formulation of the interview schedules, and at later stages, to re-visit and refine the coding of the 'elite' interview data. This was possible since all my interviews were recorded and I could thus listen again to the original data at leisure.

My on-going analysis of the data led me also to revisit earlier interviews already coded, and to widen the horizon of my literature review. For example, as I reviewed the data I expanded my reading to gain a better understanding of the role of the OECD with respect to HE QA, and of different quality management systems such as ISO, CAF and PROSE (discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 and Appendix 7.1). At a later stage I did the same with respect to paradigm shift and the Methodological Research Programme for Education (MRPE) to help me make sense of the emerging contrasts in the data.

Each interview was divided into 'episodes' that could be one sentence or a couple of sentences in length that related to the same 'topic'. These topics were coded in small phrases. Appendix 4.3 gives an example of one set of interview notes for which each episode was given a code phrase. Codes related to inspection and QA for compulsory education were 'removed' from the main corpus and treated as additional artefacts in the archaeological investigation of the paradigmatic development of educational inspection and QA in Malta. In the example in Appendix 4.3, the episode coded as 'Old-paradigm inspection in compulsory education' is one instance of this.

For the rest of the codes that now related exclusively to QA in HE both in Malta and internationally, from the Constant Comparative Method I borrowed the three-level coding of interview data reduction and interpretation: open, axial and selective (Glaser, 1965; Cohen et al., 2009 p. 493). These codes were compared across the interviews, leading to the axial coding of the four movements of QA choreographies in European HE and the selective coding of the two major paradigms, as explained in Chapter 7 and 'mapped' (Thomas, 2013 p.237) in Figure 7.1 therein.

During the coding I took note of 'negative cases' (Kolb, 2002 p.85) i.e. the episodes that were at variance from the emerging theorisation of the QA networks in HE. Such cases were not discarded but integrated into the discussion, as can be seen in Section 7.7, on the changing ontological and teleological status of the ESG.

4.6 Discourse implications

There is a further twist to the interaction between my *persona* and my 'material'. Not only do I change what I observe; what I observe changes me, and this affects my writing. Ball has noted that:

I am part of the history I seek to rework, situated within it in complicated ways. (...) I am also rewriting myself. Foucault said that any time he tried to carry out a piece of theoretical work, "it has been on the basis of my own experience; always in relation to the processes I saw taking place around me; (I was undertaking) a few fragments of an autobiography" (2013b p.88).

This thesis is the confluence of two personal journeys. One journey was from the inside out, to understand the 'givens' and hidden drivers and forces in the national and international contexts that underpinned and influenced the changing rhetoric of educational development from the 19th century to the Education Act of 2006 to which I had contributed. The other journey was from the outside in, to understand my role in this reform in terms of these external influences on my work in QA from 2009 to date. So, the text is both a critical 'biography' and an autobiography.

These two journeys correspond to two distinct 'moods' of the thesis and the two different types of data sources. In terms of the critical 'biography', the intention is to conduct a Foucauldian archaeology as discussed in Section 3.4.1, and certainly not a hagiography of the system I helped to construct. This archaeology relies on the analysis of the primary archival material and documents.

On the other hand, the reflective journey is aided by the 'elite' interviews that provide both background and foreground, in the sense that they provide information and perspectives that give added texture, colour and context to the narrative, and they also open up new avenues for the journey itself. As my text and I re/construct each other, I hope to be able to engage critically with what I allow myself to discover about myself and my work, whilst simultaneously remaining open to learning lessons for the future.

This change of mood from archaeology to autobiographical journey, a “researcher self-dialogue (that brings into ‘plain view’ the discursive formations that undeniably shape all facets of inquiry” (McLaren, 2009 p.6), explains the change of voice which becomes more exploratory and ‘authorial’ from and across Chapters 5 to 8. It also explains why this thesis does not have the traditional chapter dedicated to ‘presentation of data’ – the data, analysis and reflection are intertwined in a narrative across Chapters 5 to 8 that develops according to a chronological/sectoral logic.

As a matter of writing style, I have used the past tense in referring to data from my ‘elite’ interviews and to literature that is more than five years old, and the past continuous for more recent references.

4.7 Concluding synthesis

In this chapter I discussed the research design and the methods used to gather the required data, namely through document research and ‘elite’ interviews. This methodology is itself a reflection of a shift in authorial voice in this thesis that becomes more introspective and tentative as the narrative comes closer to the present, as the advantages of insider research start becoming increasingly counter-balanced by the caveats. True to the spirit of anamorphic perspective discussed in Section 3.2 in the previous chapter, I have attempted to turn this lemon into lemonade, this limitation into a fruitful avenue of analysis and reflection.

The next chapter investigates the history of educational inspection in the 19th and early 20th century, using a Foucauldian archaeological approach to perceive the first paradigm of inspection in Malta.

Chapter 5

The Rise of the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm in Malta

5.1 Introduction

Throughout most of the British colonial rule that lasted from 1800 to 1964, education was not simply caught up in the politics of the times, but was part of its very fabric. Education – the language of instruction, the quality and extent of elementary and secondary education, the constitution of, access to and teaching in the University of Malta – was a key battleground for the soul of the nation. Malta was plunged into constitutional crisis several times because of Maltese obstructionism of the Colonial government's educational policies (Laferla, 1938; 1947; Vella, 1969; Frendo 2012). Education was where the irresistible force of the 'civilizing' project of the Empire met the immovable wall of resistance of the Catholic Church and the Maltese legal-nobility-ecclesiastical class that sheltered behind it – with unexpected results.

In this chapter I undertake a Foucauldian 'archaeological' investigation as discussed in Section 3.4.1 to explore the nexus of educational provision, inspection and power during the British colonial period. I first explore this nexus in the elementary and the secondary education sector. I then discuss in the same way the University of Malta, which for most of the period also had responsibility for the Lyceum, its preparatory school. Finally I bring these two sectors together to discuss the role of inspection and the development of the inspection paradigm in this period. As I discuss in the next chapter, this paradigm is far from dead and still casts its shadow in the 21st century.

Throughout this discussion to avoid confusion I refer to the Department of Education although its name changed a number of times from 1843 onwards, according to the extent of its remit. This evolution in remit will be clear in the text. For the same reason I always refer to the top civil servant that headed the Department of Education as the Director of Education, although the formal nomenclature changed from time to time.

5.2 The Empire accommodates the Church

From the very beginning of the British colonial period in 1800, the position of the Crown in Malta was not the relatively straightforward one of control by conquest. The Maltese were not 'colonized' by the Crown but had "spontaneously placed themselves under the protection of the British Crown" (Savona, 1870 p.13) after the French occupation of 1798-1800 (Laspina, 1966). However, the British effectively rode roughshod over the expectations of the Maltese. The Maltese ruling classes felt betrayed and ignored (Frendo, 2012), and found refuge and support around the two values that distinguished them from their new rulers: the Catholic Religion and the Italian Culture (Brincat, 2000).

The British in Malta found a well-established system of intersecting politico-legal, landowning and clerical circles who viewed the British presence with increasing suspicion and disaffection. This Maltese ruling class were rooted in a culture, in the widest sense of the word, that was so different from that of the British that they called Valletta, the capital city, "the most tranquil city in Italy" (Hull, 1993 p.6).

This is why Thomas Maitland, the first British Governor of colonial Malta, was instructed in 1813 to undertake the promotion of “every method by which the British Language could be brought to replace Italian” (Zammit Mangion, 1992 p.17). The primary strategy for such action was the dissemination of popular education. The justification for this was not only the Empire’s interest in fostering new ‘subjects’, new colonial identities, that did not threaten the social order of the colony and thus the interests of the Empire, but also its self-narrative of the perceived educational benefits of membership in the British Empire, its “civilizing mission” (Brendan, 2007 p.xix; McCulloch, 2009).

However, the British also understood that their successful presence in Malta depended on respecting the rights and privileges of the Catholic Church. They knew that because of the fear of Protestant proselytism, the Catholic Church viewed the increased provision of education to the masses, and especially the teaching of English therein, with deep suspicion, as evinced from the following extract of a letter of 1833 by Governor Ponsonby to his superior the Rt. Hon. E. G. Stanley, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies:

Considerable difficulty has always existed on this important subject (the general introduction of English), from the circumstance that the Government of this Colony is Protestant and the Population Roman Catholic, and from the jealousy of the Clergy that education was only another word for conversion, and this jealousy has been increased by well meant though, I must think, indiscreet exertions of Individuals who have attempted to form Schools, no doubt for the latter purpose. I mentioned this to account for so little having been done by the Government for the furtherance of so desirable an object as the education of all Classes in these Islands (NAM, 1833).

On the other hand the Catholic Church in Malta had got a bitter taste of the French Republic’s revolutionary anti-clericalism during its occupation of Malta from 1798 to 1800, and by comparison could countenance the establishment of a wary *modus vivendi* with the High-Church Anglican land-owning politico-military establishment of the Imperial government and its representatives in Malta, with whom they could forge a “community of practical interest” (Vella, 1969 p.73).

Thus, the Maltese colonial government’s paramount need to co-exist and co-operate with the Catholic Church in Malta was met with the Church’s desire to re-establish its pre-eminent position in society. The 1833 letter by Governor Ponsonby quoted earlier goes on to describe how he had managed to convince the Bishop to support his, the Governor’s, efforts on educational reform. The Church was “the one Maltese body which treated the British overlords on a basis of something like equality” (ibid. p.73.), and milked this situation for all it was worth.

It was this *realpolitik* engendered by the ‘agency of the subaltern’ (Carrim, 2009) that led to the colonial government taking a pragmatic, laissez-faire attitude to the development of education, whilst at the same time keeping a steely grip on Malta’s political, military and economic levers of power. Not only did it protect the Church from Protestant proselytism (Bezzina, 1988; Chircop, 2001). In spite of repeated complaints by both Maltese and British contemporary writers (Savona, 1870; Laferla, 1947; Chircop, op. cit.; Ciappara, 2014; Staines, 2015 p.352), the British colonial government either took steps to actively prevent the spread of popular education (Bezzina, op. cit. p.49) or acted sluggishly to implement needed reforms (Staines, op. cit. Chapter 4). The 1836 Royal Commission confirmed this approach:

in order to keep the inhabitants of this strategic island quiet, the colonial authorities had to conserve the prevalent culture and customary social relations. (The Commission) also affirmed that the *status quo* in

the domestic social terrain could only be kept with the support of the Catholic Church (Chircop, 2001 p.124).

Additionally, the Colonial Government of Malta in the first British period up to 1880 allowed the Catholic Church, which already had an almost monopolistic position in private elementary schooling, exclusive control over the curriculum, textbooks and training of teachers for state elementary schools, whilst the Church ensured that these schools taught their pupils the advantages of belonging to, and deference towards, the Empire. The top civil servants who were in charge of elementary education for 79 of the first 80 years of the British period were all clerics, although of course they were selected directly by the Governor of the time (Chircop *ibid.*).

The last thirty years of this period were dominated by Canon Paolo Pullicino, who became Director of Education in 1850. “Instead of admitting to any difference between his duties as priest and as moderator of schools, (he) admirably tied these two together” (Farrugia, 1890). Pullicino was the sole inspector of the elementary schools during his tenure (Keenan, 1879 p.47); the school inspection regime he set up was to be retained and amplified well into the 20th century. Pullicino exerted complete control on every aspect of school life and learning down to its smallest minutiae. Teachers needed his personal permission on practically everything, even the disposal of broken writing slates that were the precursors of learners’ copybooks, as can be seen from his written instructions in the Inspection Registers in Appendix 5.2. Additionally, the teachers in charge of the elementary schools were themselves expected to inspect their teaching assistants and send in monthly reports on their attitude and efficacy, upon which depended the continued employment of the latter (NAM, 1855). This instruction was to be echoed by successive Directors. Further information on Pullicino’s inspection regime is provided in Appendices 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4. However, his seemingly unassailable position was to change dramatically in the last years of Pullicino’s tenure, as discussed in the next section.

To provide a checks-and-balances mechanism to these (clerical) top civil servants and to justify the introduction of limited reforms, Government made regular use of Commissions and Committees, and required these civil servants to produce regular reports that often referred to their inspections. The British were the first of Malta’s colonial masters who made frequent and systematic use of Commissions and Committees to inspect and report on the various sectors of life in Malta, including educational provision. Indeed, from the Royal Commission of the Poor Law of 1832-34, commissions of inquiry were the main instruments of social investigation in the UK (Norris, 1990) – it is therefore not surprising that this tool was also used in Malta. The intermeshing of faith, language and colonial politics in the educational context gave added impetus to the use of such inspection mechanisms in Malta. During the 19th century two Royal Commissions, of 1836 and 1878, and six government Commissions or Committees in 1823, 1824, 1850, 1865, 1888 (two) and 1898 undertook what were in effect external audits that went into greater or lesser detail according to the remit provided. Further information on the Commissions and Committees that undertook an inspection and/or audit function during the British period is given in Appendix 5.1.

5.3 The Empire strikes back

The balance of opposing interests that led to the *laissez-faire* attitude of the colonial government with respect to the Anglicization of Maltese education in the first half of the 19th century was upset by the advent of the unification of Italy in the second half of the century and its attendant increase in Italian

nationalism. During the unification struggle Malta hosted hundreds of Italian exiles, including Francesco Crispi, who later became Prime Minister of the newly unified Italy; Garibaldi himself visited the Italian exiles in Malta (Frendo, 2012 p.4). The Italian poet Giovanni Pascoli would later call Malta “the spiritual colony of Dante under the British flag” (Brincat, 2001 p.143).

This Italian nationalism had a galvanic effect on Maltese nationalist aspirations: the formal constitution of the Nationalist Party in the 1880s, the oldest political party in Malta and today representing the centre-right of Malta’s political spectrum, sprang from this energy (Ganado, 1977 p.55). Concurrently, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the much more aggressive imperialism characterized by armed antagonism between the European colonial powers, that would ultimately lead to the Great War of 1914, meant that the colonial policy of the British Empire in Malta as from the 1870s became much more interventionist.

This new interventionist approach also directly affected educational policy and its implementation. The previous calculus had changed. It was now certainly in the best interests of the Empire, notwithstanding the objections of the Catholic Church, to ensure the effective Anglicization of Malta. Indeed, the Catholic Church was now blamed by leading imperialists and their Maltese proxies for being largely responsible for retarding the mental culture of the Maltese and the deplorable state of public schooling (Chircop, 2001). What was politically expedient in the first half of the 19th century was now unacceptable.

For this “colonial cultural project” (ibid. p.130) to be implemented a complete overhaul of the education system was seen to be required, as well as a much more hands-on approach to its monitoring to ensure its fulfilment. The hatchet job was carried out in 1878 through what was essentially a nation-wide review of educational provision, by an appropriate heavy-weight: Sir Patrick Keenan, a Privy Councillor and Resident Commissioner of national education in Ireland, who had conducted a similar evaluation in 1869 in Trinidad (Quamina-Aiyejina et al., 2001). His observations and conclusions could not be brusquely brushed aside as with the 1865 Commission by Pullicino, for whom the Irish educational system had been one of his inspirations for local reform.

Keenan observed that Pullicino’s “conception of the fundamental principle of the system dictated to him, as he conceived, by official authority, but enthusiastically cherished by himself, was that the Italian language should predominate in the instruction of schools” (Keenan, 1879 p.4). What is fascinating in this passage is how Keenan in the same sentence acknowledged that the primacy of Italian was originally official, and then shifted the blame onto Pullicino by casting doubt on whether Pullicino had, in fact, understood this policy properly and implying that he had done so wilfully to suit his own agenda!

Keenan admitted that Canon Pullicino had inherited an unfortunate legacy: “a chaotic organisation of badly equipped school-rooms, of unqualified teachers, and of ill-regulated and ignorant children” (ibid. p.3), and had not been sufficiently supported in terms of funds by the Colonial government. But whilst acknowledging Pullicino’s commitment and contribution, Keenan damned him with faint praise for being a jack-of-all-trades: “the administrator, the inspector, the guide and the mainstay of the whole system of Primary Schools” (ibid. p.47), however with little positive results.

Indeed, Pullicino was damned both ways – he had been previously condemned as a collaborator by the Maltese anti-colonialists (Sultana, 1992 p.49), and was now dismissed as an impediment to the new

imperialist educational policy agenda. He must have seen the writing on the wall; of the eight reports he wrote as Director, the last one of 1878, the year Keenan started his investigation, is by far the shortest and most perfunctory. It also contains the only public criticism he levelled towards 'his' teachers;

if some of the other Schools are not in as good a condition as might be expected, the fault is not in the system, which is the same for all the Schools, nor in any lack of supervision, which is equally given to all, but I am sorry to say, in the disposition of the Teachers, who sometimes fail in that diligence and energy in the performance of their duties, which is indispensable for complete success (Pullicino, 1878 p.4).

This last-ditch attempt at self-exculpation failed. In 1880 Pullicino was pensioned off, the new post of Director of Public Education created, and the first of a series of anglophile (and secular) Directors selected.

It must be said that, whilst one cannot but acknowledge Pullicino's education vision and achievements (Camilleri, 2001) especially in the first half of his tenure, a dispassionate reading of Keenan's report leads to the conclusion that Keenan was documenting real inadequacies of contemporary educational provision. However, the point here is that similar and stronger complaints had been made in the past, without leading to significant improvements beyond the incremental changes that Pullicino had managed to eke out of the limited resources he had available. Savona had complained that:

The Report of the Commissioners, presented in June (1865), was most unaccountably shelved, and nothing whatever has since been done towards improving a department so unmistakably censured by a Commission appointed by Government, after the most careful and attentive deliberation (1870 Preface).

What had now changed was the political willingness of the Colonial Government to address the educational situation. School inspections had a key role in monitoring the implementation of the new reforms. Even before the Keenan Report Savona was insisting that:

the other indispensable requisite to guarantee, and, at the same time, to promote, the efficiency of the primary, as well as of all other schools, is a rigorous system of inspection (...) We cannot do better, if it is intended really to educate the people, than to follow the example set by the Mother Country, in a matter of such paramount importance (ibid. p.19).

In Section 5.6 I briefly outline the trajectory of school inspection in Great Britain in the 19th century to highlight the points of transfer to and diversion by the Maltese system.

5.4 The Post-Keenan inspection regime

Post-Keenan educational provision and inspection was suffused with the rhetoric and practice of paternalistic oversight to ensure that the imperial cultural project was implemented. The University of Malta and the Lyceum were incorporated into the Education Department, with four successive Directors functioning also as Rectors from 1880 to 1914, with "almost absolute powers" (UOMS, 1967 p.5). The Maltese colonial government underwent an aggressive school building programme (Chircop, 2001). Under the new anglophile Directors of Education textbooks, school events and even the classroom learning space itself were transformed to implement the imperialist cultural programme of the state. "What counted as knowledge was what worked in securing consent for domination" (Said, 2001 p.198). Schooling was intended to produce literate (primarily in English), loyal and industrious imperial subjects, and was "highly efficient in engendering social control and fostering consent to the social order" (Chircop, op. cit. p136). Truly, education played "an important role as a hegemonic apparatus" (Mayo, 2012a p.96) of the Colonial state to impose its Imperial project.

The Maltese Colonial government’s insistence on introducing English in schools, coupled with increasing inducements such as making entry into the civil service conditional to English fluency, paid off. In 1912, for example, at a time when parents could opt for their children to take English or Italian in the Elementary schools, 99 percent chose to learn English, and 99.6 percent chose to do their exams in English only or in English and Italian (MGG, 1912 p.x). The 1920-25 Log Book of Qormi Primary (NAM-SSM2) includes the paper-clipped business card of a Dr P.A. Galdes with the following note at the back, dated 24th September 2014, requesting – in Italian – that his son would be taught English “in preference to Italian”.

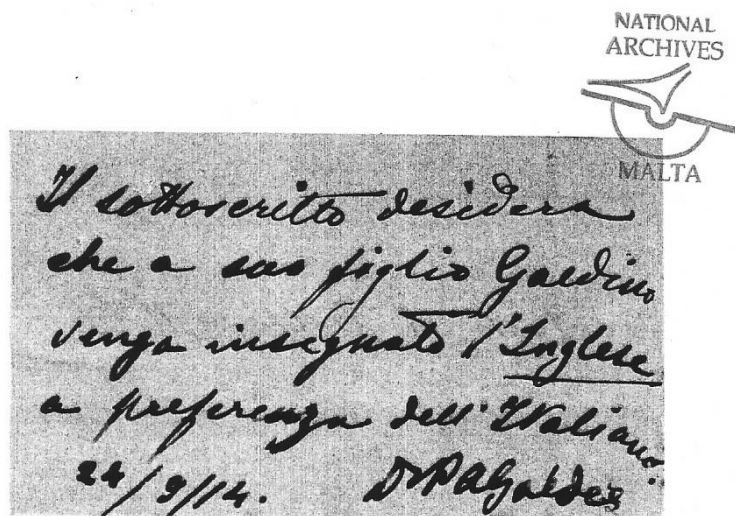


Figure 5.1: Parent’s note in Italian requesting that child learns English

The frequency of school inspections spiked to new highs in the immediate post-Pullicino years. These included *ad hoc* ones by British ranking servicemen and personalities: further information is provided in Appendices 5.4 and 5.7. Their purpose and methodology remained essentially the same. In the ‘General Regulations relative to the Government Elementary Schools of 1898’, the first duty of the Director of Elementary Schools was:

- “a) To inspect as often as possible the schools of elementary instruction;
- b) To carefully enquire into the progress of the instruction imparted and into the observance or otherwise of the regulations” (Appendix to OUMS 1898).

Keenan (1879) had proposed that each Primary School be run by local School Management Committees. This proposal was based on the British model, as is discussed later on in Section 5.7. These were in fact constituted and led by the local parish priest, but with watered-down roles. Savona reported that their duties in 1883 were intended to be: “to visit the schools weekly and to submit to the Education Department quarterly reports as to the conduct and efficiency of the teachers, the observance of the rules of the department, the attendance of pupils etc” (Savona, 1883 p.11). However, these did not seem to have lasted long – by 1910 they had certainly been disbanded (NAM, 1910). It is likely that Savona, like Pullicino before him and Laferla after him and the other Directors in between, preferred to concentrate all power in his hands. The Inspection Registers attest that the all-important annual examinations in elementary schools, an exhausting exercise in which each student was tested individually at least until 1914 on the same general lines as those set up by Pullicino, and upon which the promotion prospects of

both pupils and teachers rested, were almost always undertaken or at least signed off *in situ* by the Director himself.

Teachers in charge of schools (sometimes called Masters and Mistresses) were still expected to contribute to the inspection process by sending confidential reports “on the conduct, ability in school management and zeal” (NAM, 1888b) of the staff under their charge.

In parallel with the Inspection Registers inspectors also wrote their comments in the School Log Books, in which headteachers kept a daily diary of events, in the Schools’ Visitors Books and in individual Class Registers. The data in Appendix 5.5 indicates that School Log Books started being used in the beginning of the 20th century, and Visitors’ Books a few years after. Since the Inspection Registers were no longer used (except for night schools – see Appendix 5.3) after 2014/2015, there is an overlap of little less than a decade between these three forms of documentation. Inspectors’ comments in these documents tended to be more specific than the general judgements in the Inspection Registers, but the tone and purpose of inspection remained the same. The Visitors’ Books were also used to record the impressions and judgements of third parties.

From the data in Appendix 5.5 Class Registers seem to have been introduced in the second decade of the 20th century. The Class Registers included pages for both the headteacher’s and the inspector’s comments after visits. Again, the tone and purpose of inspectors’ comments match those on the other documentation mentioned above. Further information on the use of School Log Books, Schools’ Visitors Books and Class Registers is given in Appendix 5.9.

The National Archives also conserve school and teacher inspection reports for some schools in Malta and Gozo, that cover in an intermittent fashion the years from 1905 to 1975. As can be seen in Appendix 5.8, there is hardly any change of the purpose and tone in these inspection reports when compared with the tone and purpose of 19th century inspections.

Dr Laferla was the paragon of the anglophile director of education. He served from 1920 for twenty three years, and was as dedicated to his educational ‘mission’ as Canon Pullicino and Sigismondo Savona before him. Under his energetic leadership the scope and authority of the school inspectorate was greatly strengthened (Ganado, op. cit. p.288). Laferla himself visited schools frequently, as evidenced from the Log Books; his inspectors “terrorised many a teacher” (Said, 2001 p.194) and were “the eyes and ears of the Director (...) (they) picked at the faults of those who did not follow their set instructions” (Zammit, Mangion 1992 pp.64-65). Zammit Mangion explained, without any discernible irony whilst mimicking Savona’s (1870) words more than a century previously:

Dr Laferla was a strict disciplinarian and he ran his Department on military lines (...) the Director, ably aided by a small group of Inspectors (...) was in constant touch with educational developments in the Mother Country which the Maltese system began to follow as closely as possible (ibid. pp.51-52).

Laferla’s inspectors wielded great power: “(...) teachers had to carry out (Laferla’s) instructions to the letter; they were regularly inspected and on the Inspectors’ reports often depended their promotion to the next higher grade.” (ibid. p.52). One example of how under Laferla the proverbial screw that bound inspections to teachers’ promotion prospects was given an extra turn was his scheme of promotion by competitive inspection. By Circular No. 101 of the 3rd May 1926 (NAM, 1926a) Head teachers were

required to indicate “which class they would like to be examined in their respective schools in view of its efficiency and progress during the year.” The inspectors then visited the schools to produce a short-list, and these shortlisted teachers were inspected again. The results of this promotion by competitive inspection were also announced by circular dated 23rd July 1926 (NAM, 1926b). Not only did the circular name the winners; it also named the losers and why they had not won the coveted promotion. A certain Mr Curmi “was very erratic during (the inspection) and possibly owing to extreme nervousness, used bad methods and faulty English.” (ibid.) Laferla was quite explicit about the purpose of this competition:

It is hoped that (the winners’) example will be an inspiration to others who will start preparing for a similar competition from the very beginning of the year.
It need hardly be pointed out that no class will stand any chance of success unless the whole syllabus is covered (ibid.).

Just like his predecessors, Director Laferla expected headteachers to undertake their own inspections to monitor their staff. Through the circular of the 20th November 1933 (NAM 1933b) headteachers were instructed to copy the inspection reports in the respective class registers, and to inspect the respective classes within a fortnight, focussing on the weak points brought out in the Inspection report. The Headteachers were then expected to note in the same class register whether these weak points had been overcome.

More information on the post-Keenan inspection regime up to Laferla is given in Appendix 5.4.

The Second World War transformed the relationship of the old Empire with its colonies. They had spilt blood together for a common cause, in fulfillment of the Empire’s vaunted ‘civilising mission’. This, along with the physical and financial exhaustion of the Empire and the United States’ insistence on self-determination for the colonies (Ferguson, 2004; Brendan, 2007; Toye, 2010), meant that those who were militating for greater autonomy, in Malta as in the other colonies, were really pushing at a rapidly opening door. Malta was granted self-government 1947 with universal suffrage. Thereon for all intents and purposes educational policy and strategy was a Maltese affair – even the suspension of the 1947 Constitution in the late Fifties due to civil unrest did not lead to a return to any form of colonial interventionist policy in education. The tussles on education between the Maltese and UK governments in the pre-independence years were largely restricted to the latter resisting the former’s insistent demands for more funds (Pirota, 1991).

As is discussed in the next Chapter, this does not mean that the colonial mindset of education inspection, through the politico-cultural process of coloniality as discussed in Section 3.2, did not continue to hold sway.

5.5 Inspection and power at the University of Malta

Up to now I have explored the connection between power and inspection during the British period mostly in relation to elementary and secondary education in Malta. The relationship between power and inspection with respect to the University changed over the 164 years of colonial rule, much more so than with Government schools. Mifsud Bonnici comments that:

The university has enjoyed and suffered, throughout the years, foreign and extraneous influences and intrusions, to a much greater extent than the rest of Malta’s and Gozo’s scholastic institutions. Suffice it

to remark that every time that Malta was 'granted' a new Constitution the Imperial Government saw fit to exclude the university from the jurisdiction of the Maltese Government, and since independence, every change of ideology in the conduct of the government has produced quite substantial changes in the structure of the University (Mifsud Bonnici, 2013 p.59).

To chart this change the available Statutes or equivalent of the University throughout its history to the present day and the Government legislation that enacted them were perused. Appendix 5.10 provides a comparative analysis of these University Statutes and enabling legislation in terms of the status of the Catholic Religion and language use at the University, the form of governance and the roles of the different bodies, the Rector's method of selection and role, and information on the inspection regime within the University and the degree of autonomy it had from the government of the time. As with the rest of this Chapter, this Section focuses on the British period.

The name of the University of Malta has changed over the centuries, from the Public University of General Studies (1769), to the University of Malta (1800), the Royal University of Malta (1937), the Old and New Universities (1978), back to the University of Malta (1980), the University of Studies of Malta (1988) and finally the University of Malta (2006). Unless specifically indicated, the reference that is used in the section and throughout this thesis is 'the University'.

The University traces its origins to the founding of the Collegium Melitense in 1592 by the Jesuits, and was established in 1769 by Manuel Pinto de Fonseca, Grandmaster of the Knights of St John who ruled Malta from 1530 to 1798. From its inception it was wholly state-owned and controlled, with the top posts selected by the Grandmaster. Its first statute, the Constitutions that were promulgated in 1771, included reference to inspectorial duties of the Rector and the Protector, a senior knight of the Order equivalent to today's university chancellor (Vella, 1969 p.44).

The British continued with the tradition of the Rector being directly appointed and answerable to the Head of Government, who was also directly responsible for any change in the University statutes and regulations. However, the relationship between the University and the Colonial government was quite different from that with the Grandmasters. Whereas the University had been created by the latter to serve their needs, during British rule it became essentially a bastion of the dominant Maltese politico-legal, landowning and clerical classes. Its key function had become to reproduce these classes and defend their sectoral interests and socio-cultural identity (Agius, 1968; Vella, 1969), which as discussed in Section 5.2 was Italianate and anti-British. Successive Commission and Committee reports, such as Royal Commissions of 1836 and 1878, lamented the narrow focus of the University courses and their reproduction of the traditional professions far beyond the actual needs of the nation. Lord Derby, the Colonial Secretary of the Imperial Government, admitted as much in his 1883 letter to the Governor of Malta:

The cost of maintaining the University and Lyceum, amounting to nearly one half of the education vote, is an unfair burden on the whole population for the exclusive advantage of the well-to-do classes (NAM 1883).

But the Colonial government sought to gain control over the University not only to increase the knowledge base and fitness for purpose of its graduands for the economic viability of the country. The struggle for control over the University was in effect an extension of the struggle over which world view and cultural

ecosystem would predominate in Malta – a struggle for the hearts and minds of the Maltese. Whilst ensuring that the successive University statutes at least until 1943 (see Appendix 5.10) reiterated the primacy of Catholic orthodoxy in teaching and learning so that the Church’s hackles would not be raised, it tried to ‘anglicize’ the University following the 1879 Keenan Report.

But breaking the University’s obdurate pro-Italian *modus operandi* was far more difficult for the Colonial government than with the elementary and secondary schools, over which as discussed in the previous Section it had complete control from 1880 onwards. It was only when Italian opera was replaced as the soundtrack of Italianate culture in Malta by the whistle of the bombs dropped by the *Aeronautica Italiana* in the beginning of the Second World War, that this cultural struggle was finally won. The supreme irony is that the war did not just sweep aside Italianate culture but also ultimately the British Empire (Ferguson op. cit.; Brendan, op. cit.; Toye, op. cit.), leading to national independence and, in tandem, greater relative autonomy (not without struggles, as discussed in the next Chapter) for the University.

Two key tools that the Colonial government used in its struggle for control of the University were: a) the internal inspection mechanisms of the University as mandated in the successive statutes and entrusted to government placemen, principally the Rector; and b) the external educational audit function of the various governmental Commissions and Committees throughout this period. It is not a coincidence that, as can be seen later on in Figure 5.2, the changes in and of the University statutes – including changes in internal inspection mechanisms – were often the outcomes of such Commissions or Committees, and often accompanied a revised form of national government for Malta.

I shall now look at the functions of and changes in the internal inspection mechanisms as evidenced in the University statutes during the British period, and their interaction with successive Commission or Committee reports. The changes in the statutes were not simply a function of colonial government policy and will but, in line with the Weberian perspective of power, also a result of the agency of the University itself that at various periods protested vigourously, sought ways to subvert government oversight and negotiated actively to achieve better conditions, such as with the 1921 statute (Vella, 1969 p.93).

All the University Statutes referred to in Appendix 5.10 stipulated that the Rector was in charge of compliance and discipline. The Rector was also explicitly charged with carrying out class inspections as often as possible. The 1838 and 1871 Statutes included precise instructions on how the Rector was to carry out such inspections:

in such visits he will sit on the right of the Professor or Preceptor, and will take note, although in silence and without interrupting the course of the lesson, all that could be subject to his consideration (UOMS, 1871 Art.15 p.7).

One can only speculate on the tortuous intra-University dynamics that necessitated the need for the Rector not so much to inspect lectures, but to do so in silence and even stipulating where he was allowed to sit! More information on the University inspection regimes is provided in Appendix 5.4.

In sum, the references to the University teaching staff and to the inspection thereof in the successive University statutes up to 1915 are more reminiscent of elementary and secondary education rather than tertiary education. This is partly because the statutes referred as well to the Rector’s responsibility to the Lyceum, the University’s preparatory school which catered for secondary school-aged students. Also, as has been alluded to earlier in this chapter, there was a very close connection throughout the 19th and the

beginning of the 20th century between Government schools and the University. This statutory relationship is depicted in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Statutory relationship between University and government schools during the British period

1800 – 1838	University involved in supporting and overseeing elementary education
1838 – 1843	Upon recommendation of the 1836 Royal Commission, University becomes formally in charge of elementary education
1843	Education Department set up, responsible for elementary and, later on, secondary schools (not Lyceum, which remains under University oversight)
1880 - 1914	Directors of Education are also <i>de facto</i> Rectors of the University
1915	Lyceum is separated from University. The Headmaster of the Lyceum is also Director of the Secondary Schools. Elementary schools have their own Director
1934	Education Department reconstituted and becomes responsible for both Elementary and Secondary schools, including the Lyceum

The University was involved in or formally in charge of elementary education for the first 43 years of British colonial rule. For another 35 years from 1880 the tables were turned: it was effectively part of the Department of Education, with the latter’s Director functioning also as Rector.

However, the constricting references to the roles of teaching staff and to inspection in the statutes were not simply limited to the years when the University and the government schools had the closest statutory relationship, but were present throughout. In the available Statutes from 1838 to 1915 the term ‘teacher’ was used as a generic reference for all teaching staff covered by the remit of the respective statute (see, for example, UOMS 1906 Articles 46 to 49 p.12). The term ‘school’ was used to refer both to the individual University faculties, as well as to the Lyceum and the elementary and secondary schools.

This reductive perspective of university teaching staff in the 19th Century was at least partly a symptom of the serious doubts that the Colonial authorities and their Maltese proxies had about the quality and viability of the University. The 1836 Commission considered that: “given its limited resources and potential the University of Malta could not set its sights by, or be expected to match up to, European universities of front or even of second rank” (Staines, 2015 p.355). 50 years later, Keenan’s Royal Commission Report (Keenan, 1879) was scathing about the Faculty of the Arts, which had no defined curriculum of studies, had not awarded a Masters in 40 years, and whose Council had not met in three years, not even for examinations. He quoted senior civil servants who also felt that the University was not viable. Savona (1870) felt that the University could never attain expected standards since Malta was too small and so its graduands would have an inferior education; it was better to do away with the University altogether and send students to be trained abroad.

The Colonial government in fact did not close down the University, but decided to tighten its hold both to have greater control on the quality of provision and also, as discussed in Section 5.4 previously, to ensure the implementation of the Imperial cultural project namely a greater presence of English. Indeed, it was on Keenan’s suggestion that the whole of the educational affairs in Malta were amalgamated under one Educational Department. When the Rector of the University, Dr Schembri, died in post in late 1879,

Downing Street sent instructions to the Governor of Malta not to make any recommendations for his replacement before “fully considering Mr Keenan’s Report on Education in Malta” (NAM, 1879). However, whereas Keenan’s proposal was a variation of the overarching role of the Rector until 1843, the Colonial government used it as justification to impose an anglophile top civil servant as Director of Education that also functioned as Rector. In return the University got a slight degree of autonomy in the Statutes of the 1887 and ‘89, which mirrored the greater scope for popular representation in the new 1887 Constitution.

But even this was removed when in 1898 the outgoing pro-British Director-cum-Rector complained in his final report of obstruction by the University Senate. The Governor set up a Select Committee within five days “to inquire into and report upon the organization of the Education Department (including the University) and to report on any necessary reforms in the same” (Agius, *op. cit.* p.165.) Apart from the original complaint the Committee also looked at the standards of teaching and of exams (*ibid.* 171). The upshot was that the little autonomy the University had gained was removed in the Statutes of 1898 and 1906.

From the beginning of the 20th century the University started gaining increasing status: its courses were recognised by its UK counterparts (UOMS, 1906 Appendices 5, 7). As from the Statute of 1921 the tight control of the Colonial government over the running of the university started to gradually recede. This Statute declared the University to be the sole institution in Malta that was empowered to matriculate students and confer awards up to degree level (UOMS, 1921 Art.2). The University got its coat of arms in 1922 and its motto, ‘Ut Fructificemus Deo’, in 1923 (Kunsill Studenti Universitarji, 2004). The partial devolution of power in this Statute to elected academics mirrored the 1921 Constitution that for the first time granted Malta self-government.

From this Statute onwards there was an important change with respect to internal inspection – it disappeared as an overt function with dedicated clauses referring to the Rector or any other body or officer of the University. This remained the case even when the Colonial government reasserted its control was in the Statutes of 1935 (MGG, 1935) and 1943 (UOMS, 1943), in the prelude to and during World War II. The government could not treat the University any longer like a glorified school as it had done for most of the 19th century. The 1935 Statute included for the first time the title of ‘Royal University of Malta’ that had been granted by King George the VI (Vella, *op. cit.*).

The increase in autonomy continued with the 1947 Statute (UOMS, 1947), which was the first one in which the University Council, the supreme organ of the University, could enact and amend statutes, appoint staff and control expenditure. It also created a new body, the Senate, which focused on all academic matters, so that the Council could focus on general governance and administration. The Statute of 1961 was the first one in which the representative of government did not dominate the University Council (UOMS, 1961); it was promulgated in the same year that Malta received a new Constitution that was intended as a precursor to Malta’s Independence in 1964.

Figure 5.2 illustrates the changing fortunes of University autonomy during the British period that have been discussed in this section. It maps the proximity of successive statutes to either a Commission/Committee Report or a revised form of national government, or both, and gives a notional graphical relationship to the extent of Colonial government control of the University over time, in terms of the governance of the university itself and the explicit references to inspection and the duties of

teaching staff in the successive statutes. The values for both X and Y axes are notional, and are intended simply to give an approximate pictorial representation of the relative difference in Colonial government control over time.

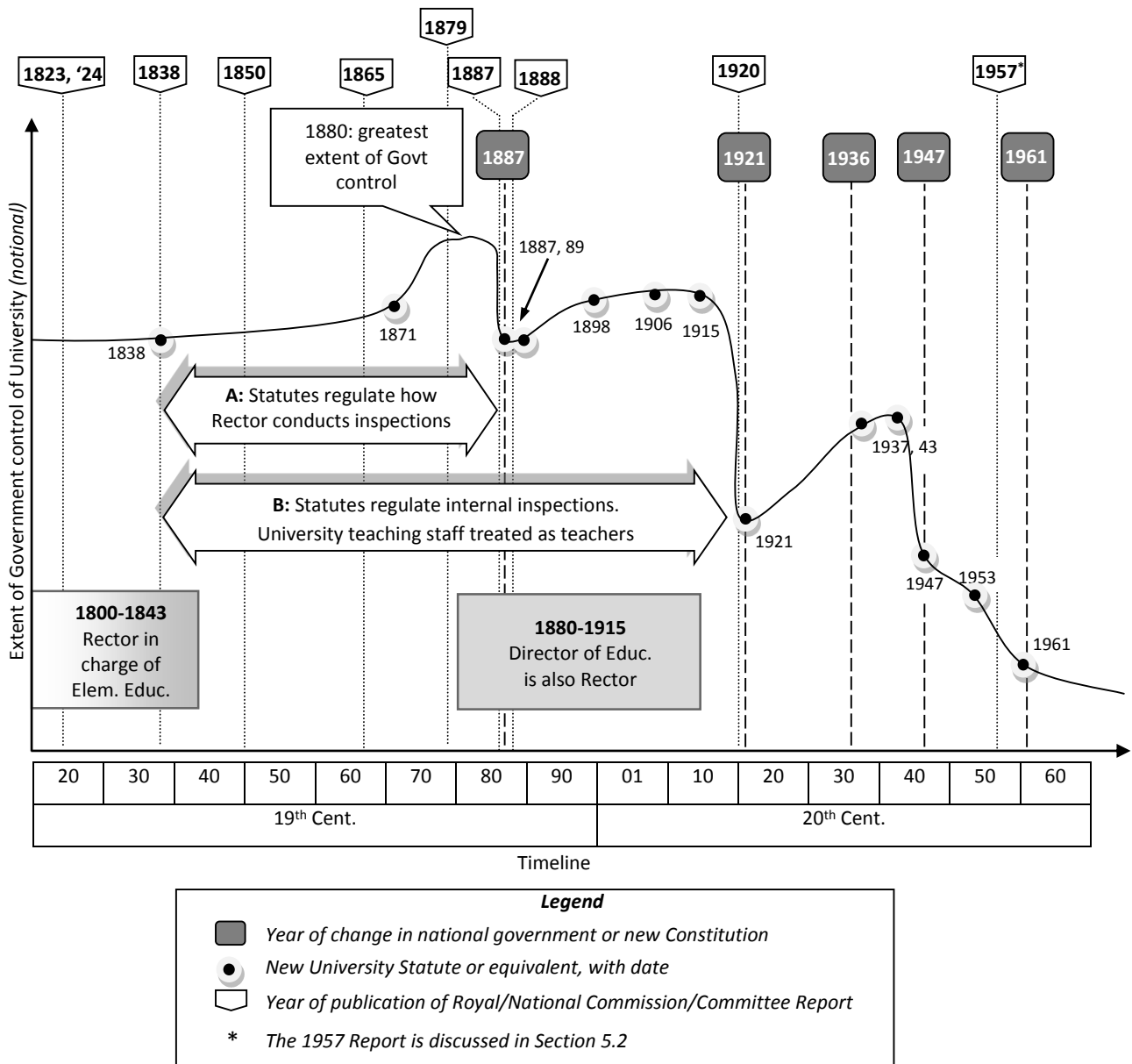


Figure 5.2: Change in University autonomy during the British period

The double-headed arrow A indicates the time period during which the Rector was statutorily empowered to conduct inspections, and B the period when the statutes regulated internal inspections. The Figure also indicates when the University was linked most closely to Government schools. The greatest extent of government control was just after the Keenan Report in 1879 when the Director of Education took also the role of University Rector and when the statute was still at its most prescriptive and restrictive, before the slight easing off of the statutes of 1887 and 1889.

5.6 The Panoptic Inspection Paradigm

In this Section I bring together my findings from the previous two sections for both elementary education and the University, and propose a single unifying theoretical construct to account for the role of educational inspection during the British colonial period.

Figure 5.3 brings together the mechanisms for educational inspection and audit, or what in Foucauldian terms, discussed earlier in Section 3.4.2, could be called the technology of inspectorial power, that were constructed and in operation during the British period. It indicates which inspection/audit mechanism reported on which entity, to whom the report was made, and how the report was disseminated. It also indicates the hierarchy of inspection mechanisms, with for example the Director of Education inspecting the Head of School, whilst being themselves audited by the Commissions and Committees.

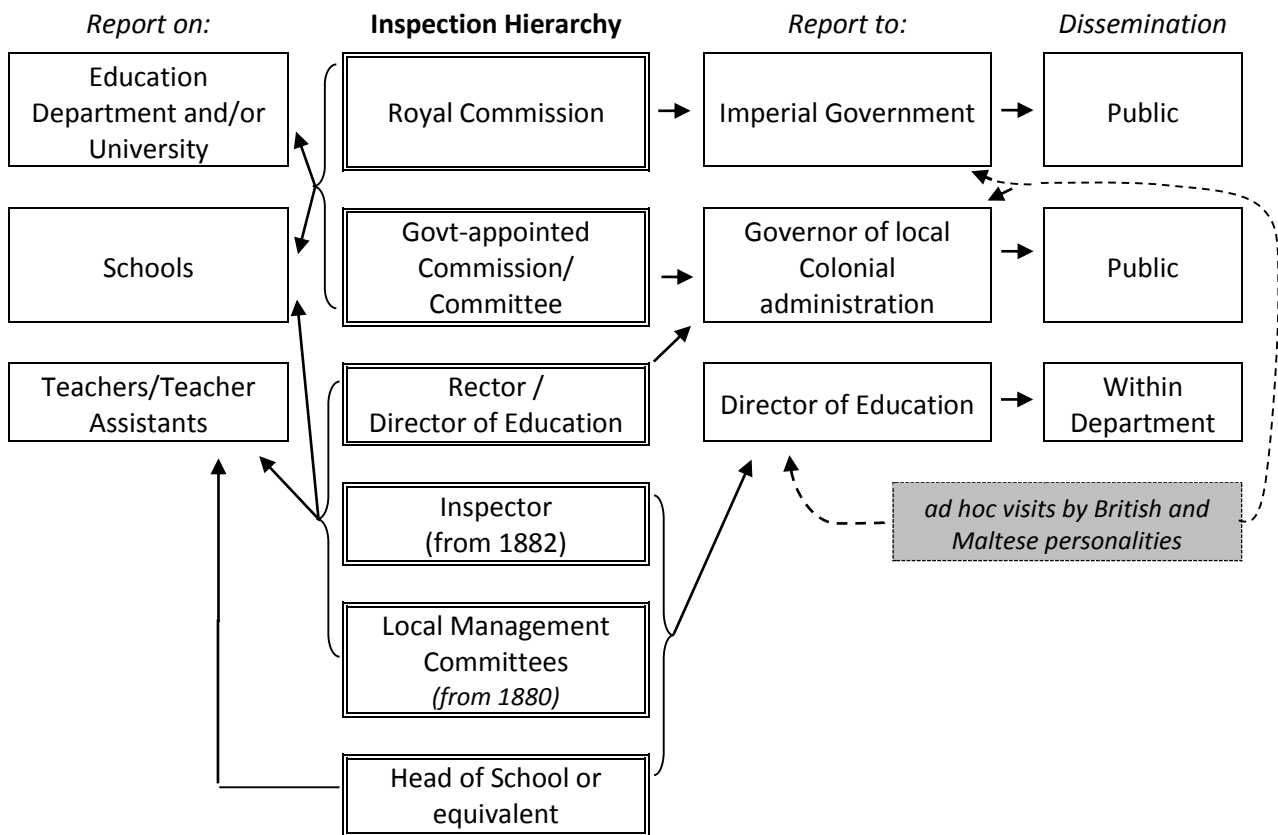


Figure 5.3: Educational inspection mechanisms during the British period

Further information on the *ad hoc* visits referred to in Figure 5.3 are given in Appendix 5.4. This Figure indicates that teachers in government schools during the British period were subject from time to time to between two and four separate and simultaneous formal inspection regimes, that ranged in intensity from several times a week to once a term. Government schools themselves were subject to formal inspection or auditing by between three and four different roles or entities. Both the Education Department and the University were subject to several external audits at Colonial or Imperial government level throughout the

British period. The frequency and sharpness of tone of pre-university external inspections increased in the last decades of the 19th century.

This cacophony of overlapping and scaffolding high-stakes inspection mechanisms is a classic example of Foucault's principle of compulsory visibility, "the fact of being constantly seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined subject in his (sic.) subjections." (Foucault in Ball, 2013b p.107), that underpins panoptic power. Ball quotes Youdell: "The student, teacher and school are each subject to the gaze of the next, and all subject to the gaze of the state" (in *ibid.*). By today's standards, this Foucaudian technology would be considered a case of educational strangulation by inspection. Although these mechanisms had different foci and stated objectives, and the pre-Keenan inspections entailed a much greater involvement of the Catholic Church than in the post-Keenan period, they were in fact on one continuum, with the school-based inspections an extension of the external inspections or audits. They were all high-stakes affairs for their recipients and significantly affected their future. They directly impacted job retention, pay increases, promotion prospects, and whether schools were opened or shut, University Chairs and faculties increased or decreased, and heads of school and even Directors retained or removed. They all had a common understanding of the role of inspection that emanated from a shared set of beliefs about the nature of society, Empire, Church, and learning.

Maltese society in the 19th century was highly stratified in terms of rigid class structures and feudal demarcations (Sultana, 1992 Chapter 2). And in spite of the influence of illuminism (Ciappara, 2014; Montebello, 2013) and nationalism (Frendo, 1979; Mallia-Milanes, 1988) on some exponents of the ruling classes and groups (Bluet, 1989 p.164), these demarcations were still largely operant up to the beginning of the 20th century. The well-known contemporary Anglican hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' was applicable just as well to Catholic Malta:

the rich man in his castle
The poor man at his gate
God made them high and lowly,
And ordered their estate.

A key function of schooling was the reproduction of this stratification (Sultana, 1992; Johnson, 2000). Even Savona, the great 'reformer' of post-Keenan education, did not question this. He proposed that Maltese and Italian should to be taught in the "remote" village elementary schools, since these schools were intended to equip the learners with a rudimentary but sufficient education. On the other hand the schools around the Grand Harbour, which included Valletta and was the centre of Maltese political and economic life, catered for the 'higher' classes and therefore were 'naturally' the feeder schools for the Lyceum and the University. Their students should be thought English, English literature and English history (Savona, 1870).

In this stratified world-view, it was the Roman Catholic Church and the Empire, as the twin summits of Maltese 19th century political, cultural and social life, that as discussed had the power to select and validate the knowledge to be taught and the teaching methods to be used in schools. And if the Empire's self-justification was its 'civilising mission' towards the 'natives' in the colonies as discussed in Section 5.2, the Catholic Church had an even higher calling: the saving of souls by the safeguarding and inculcation of Truth in the education of the young. Indeed, the 1929 Papal encyclical 'Divini Illius Magistri' stated that:

For in this work the teacher, whether public or private, has no absolute right of his own, but only such as has been communicated to him by others. Besides every Christian child or youth has a strict right to instruction in harmony with the teaching of the Church” (Pius XI, 1929 clause 57).

This set of core beliefs about Class, Race (in terms of the Othering of the ‘natives’ by the Empire) and Religion can be considered the ‘inner core’ of the educational paradigm within which both the Catholic Church and the British Empire were operating in the 19th and early 20th century in Malta. In terms of the implications of this inner core for the inspection of government schools and the University during the 19th century, there was no difference in practice whether the dominant force was the Catholic Church, the British Empire, or the Empire through its Maltese Civil Service Catholic proxies, loyal to both the Church and the Empire. This paradigmatic perspective explains the pro-British/pro-Maltese dualistic dilemma that Said (2001) explored in her biography of Laferla.

Within this paradigm, the function of educational inspection was primarily to ensure comprehensive surveillance, control and enforcement over every aspect of educational endeavour, and complete compliance to externally mandated norms, procedures and expectations over which teachers and schools had neither influence nor control. The external audit aspect of the technology of educational inspection which was carried out by the various Commissions and Committees had an overt political function. It was justified not simply by the state of educational provision and the duty of the Colonial government to improve it, but especially from 1880 onwards by the Government’s politico-cultural agenda. It often led to reforms the impact of which went well beyond the strictly educational and touched upon issues of Imperial acculturation and political power.

This mechanism was operated by a few strategically located personnel: the Director and, from 1882, his inspectors. More information on the inspectors is given in Appendix 5.4. Through their own actions and observations, the mandatory reporting of their subordinates in charge of the schools and the feedback/direction from third-party players such as VIP visitors, Commissions and Committees, the power of the Director and his inspectors over the lives of teachers and schools was absolute. They selected the teachers, retained and promoted them according to criteria and procedures of their own devising, designed the curricula, chose the teaching materials, provided resources, examined and promoted students on the basis of success criteria and procedures they developed, and judged their teachers accordingly. These Directors and school inspectors can be seen as successful products of the Freirian cultural invasion discussed in Section 3.2, the imperial effort to construct congenial colonial subjectivities that would ‘interpret’ the conjoint will of the Empire and the Catholic Church to their subjects.

The technology of inspection also had a less overt economic function. It was far cheaper for the authorities to cover the costs of the Director and his few inspectors, than to provide the appropriate level of both capital and recurrent expenditure to properly address educational needs for the ‘masses’. This technology ‘responsabilised’ teachers in the sense that it placed the overt responsibility of the outcomes of schooling on them, without however allowing them the resources and empowerment to fulfil such a task. The constant refrain of the Directors and their inspectors in the Inspection Registers and the yearly reports was that more and better school space was required, more resources for teachers and teacher training, and better pay to retain good teachers. Perhaps the cruellest irony was that the Directors and inspectors who constantly complained about lack of funds were themselves the primary instrument of the

surveillance, control and enforcement mechanism that provided justification for and perpetuated this state of affairs.

The technology of educational inspection during the British colonial period in the 19th and early 20th century can be seen as a panoptic apparatus of power, all the more powerful because of Malta’s ‘absolute conditions’ of Isolation, Smallness, Intimacy and Monopoly as discussed in Chapter 3. This technology can be seen as operating within the **Panoptic Inspection Paradigm**. The Paradigm had four phases, the first two of which have been explored in this chapter. In the first phase, Clerical Paternalism, educational inspection was mainly constructed and driven by the interests of the Catholic Church in Malta. In the second phase which I am calling Imperial Construction, inspection was driven by the will of the coloniser to implement the Imperial cultural project. This phase was when the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm was at its strongest.

The third phase, that of State Paternalism, saw the technology of inspectorial power being retained by the Maltese state. The fourth and final phrase, that of Diminishing Oversight, pertained only to compulsory education; during it the state inspectorial apparatus gradually dwindled under the onslaught of increasing teacher professionalism and disenchantment with the state. The third and fourth stages of the Panoptic Paradigm are discussed in the next Chapter.

Table 5.2 gives the four phases of the Panoptic Inspection paradigm.

Table 5.2: The Four Phases of the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Compulsory Education</i>	<i>University</i>
1. Clerical Paternalism	From 1800 to 1880 (<i>when Director Pullicino was pensioned off</i>)	
2. Imperial Construction	From 1880 to 1947 (<i>with granting of 2nd self-Government⁴</i>)	
3. State Paternalism	From 1947 to 1970s, with brief attempted resurgence in 2005-07	From 1947 to 1987 (<i>with change of government</i>)
4. Diminishing Oversight	1970s to 2006	NA

5.7 Distinctive Paradigm or colonial policy transfer?

As discussed earlier in Sections 5.2 and 5.5, Directors Pullicino, Savona and Laferla amongst others were influenced and inspired by educational developments in Great Britain, the ‘Mother Country’. Was the trajectory of educational inspection in Malta therefore simply a transfer of similar developments in England? This is an important question since the claim for the existence of a distinctive paradigm as has just been argued can only be upheld if it is shown to be, in fact, sufficiently distinctive from what was happening in England.

The British Empire was not a monolithic entity with a single colonial policy. It resembled more a heterogeneous diaspora: Brendan (2007 p.96) characterized it as “a gallimaufry”. The governing elite in each colony had wide latitude of initiative to introduce educational reform or to let things be, in the context of its constant interaction with the contextual factors that shaped education development in the

⁴ The first was in 1921.

respective colonies (Ferguson, 2004; Brendan, 2007). So, the distributed nature of the administration of the British Empire coupled with the agency of the subaltern, as discussed in Section 5.2, could allow for a Maltese flavor to these developments.

As can be seen, the history of educational inspection in Malta in the 19th century had some points of contact with the English experience but diverged significantly in key aspects. The setting up of elementary schools for the poor in Malta was certainly influenced by similar endeavours in England, but in Malta this was mainly a government initiative especially after the 1936 Royal Commission report, and the Maltese inspectors were certainly not under the kind of constraints that formed the ethos of the HMI. Whilst Payment-by-Results, which as discussed in Appendix 5.4 transformed the nature and scope of school inspection in the UK from 1862 to 1895, was not introduced as such in Malta, its spirit was certainly operating in the way the Maltese Directors and Inspectors interacted with teachers and schools. Whilst Payment-by-Results brought about what was later considered an aberration of the 'true' nature of the HMI, the power relationship that it signified, with all its negative and disempowering connotations for teachers and schools, was the unproblematic identity of Maltese education inspectors from the outset. The powers of the Maltese school inspectors eclipsed even that of the English Factory Act inspectors, as discussed in Appendix 5.4.

Another important distinction is that HMI never had a remit with respect to higher education, whilst as discussed the University of Malta was subject to external inspection and for a long period had as its Rector the Director and *de facto* Chief Inspector of Maltese educational provision.

Thus, it can be concluded that the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm had its roots in the history, society and politics of British Malta. This does not of course exclude English and other European influences on Maltese educational inspection; neither am I claiming that the Panoptic Paradigm is endemic to Malta – that would have to be ascertained through comparative colonial research that is beyond the remit of this study.

5.8 Concluding synthesis

This chapter analysed how the nature and purpose of educational inspection in the 19th and early 20th centuries in Malta was informed and bounded by the Malta's particular realities: its micro-state characteristics of Isolation, Smallness, Intimacy and Monopoly, and its colonial heritage that included the interplay between Empire and Malta's elites foremost of which was the Roman Catholic Church. The technology of educational inspection during the British colonial period can be seen as a panoptic apparatus of power operating within the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm based on core beliefs about class, race and religion. This Paradigm had four distinct phases which distinguished it from parallel developments in England.

Figure 5.4 represents the development of the Panoptic Paradigm during the part of the British Period discussed in this chapter. The X-axis represents the decades from 1800 to 2010, whilst the Y-axis represents a continuum from 'Inspectorial oversight and power' to 'Quality Enhancement and self-regulation'. The two axes meet at a T-junction so that the elements below the timeline represent the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm. The figure illustrates that the Imperial Construction phase of the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm was when inspectorial oversight and power was at its strongest. I shall be adding to

this figure as the discussion progresses in the successive chapters. The elements that will subsequently be placed above the timeline and which are discussed in the next chapter represent the new Paradigm.

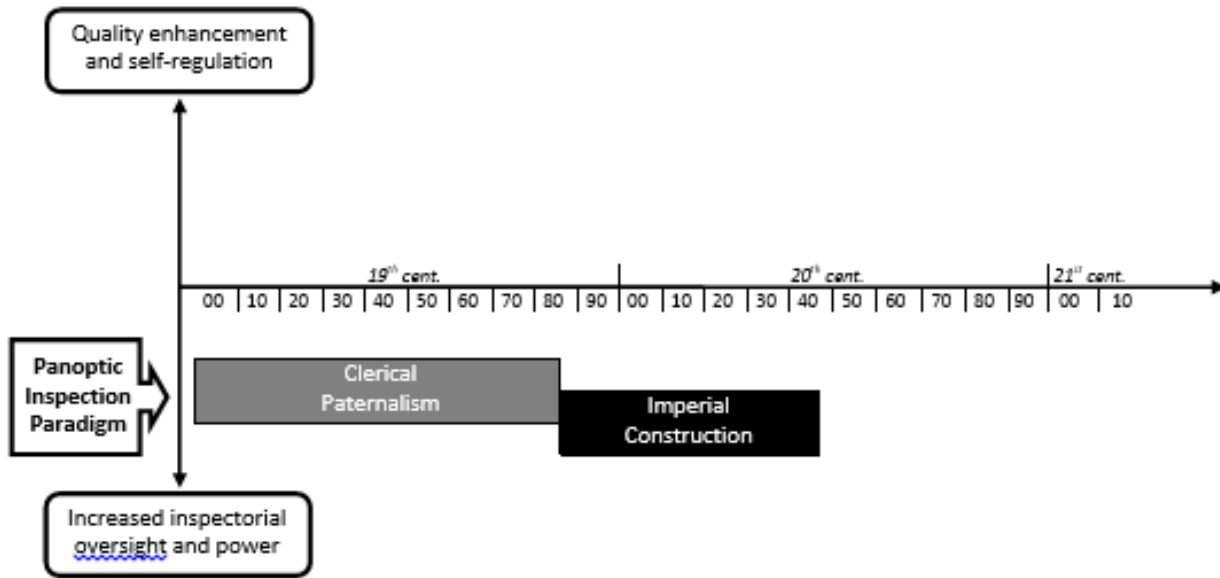


Figure 5.4: The first two phases of the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm

The next Chapter discusses how the decay of the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm had its roots in its third phase, that of State Paternalism, and gathered pace in its fourth and final phase, that of Diminishing Oversight. This phase coincided with the emergence of a rival paradigm that attempted to shift the focus from the responsabilisation of teachers to their empowerment.

Chapter 6

The New Quality Enhancement Paradigm in Education

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5 I traced the development of educational inspection in state schools and the University of Malta until the 1940s. Afterwards for all intents and purposes inspection did not remain driven by the Colonial Government but was the responsibility of the Maltese. But this does not mean that the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm faded away. In this chapter I discuss how it remained operating in different ways for the compulsory sector and the University, until its internal contradictions and negative outcomes led to the rise of an alternative paradigm that replaced the logic of inspection with that of quality enhancement.

6.2 The coloniality of the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm

In spite of the dissolution of the British Empire and the repudiation of the Imperial cultural project with the end of the Second World War, the living legacy of colonialism in Malta's educational structures, including inspection, persisted after the achievement of Self-Government for internal affairs, including education, with the Constitution of 1947, and even after Malta's independence in 1964. In 1971 J.P. Vassallo, the then Director of Education, was stating that "so far Maltese Education has been traditionally modelled on the English pattern. It is to be remembered that for hundreds of years England has educationally (...) meant to Europe what culturally Athens has meant to the world." (Vassallo, 1971 p.14). The role of the colonial master was taken up by the centralized bureaucracy of an all-pervasive national state, exacerbated by Malta's micro-state characteristics. The evidence of this 'coloniality of power' as discussed in Section 2.2 comes from the teacher and school inspection reports up to the 1970s held by the Maltese National Archives. Appendix 5.8 gives representative samples of teacher and school inspection reports for the decades between the 1920s to the 1970s. They provide ample evidence for the continued pervasive oversight and paternalism of the school inspectors.

The concept of school inspection was enshrined in law in the Education Act of 1974, the first comprehensive law on compulsory education, and retained in its successor, the 1988 Education Act. The Minister had the right to approve school licences, impose regulations and, for the first time, inspect both state and non-state schools. The National Minimum Conditions of 1994 established the obligation of a three-year school inspection cycle for all state and non-state schools. This inspection was almost wholly intended to monitor regulatory compliance; the Conditions included just a single reference to inspections also reviewing non-specified "standards of education imparted" (Ministry of Education, 1994 regulation 10.2). The Minister of Education under whom these Conditions were issued commented wryly that they were evidence that: "the centralizing spirit of Dr. Albert Laferla (...) was still present in the Department, which was adorned by his life-size portrait (...) these minimum conditions might be redolent of his style and manner" (Mifsud Bonnici, 2013 p.229). "The Department of Education had a tradition of excessive, indeed obsessive, centralization" (Mifsud Bonnici, 2015 p.414).

However, as discussed in the next Section, from the 1970s onwards the rigour of school inspection started to fade. A last-ditch attempt to re-assert the panoptic paradigm of education inspection was made when the Education Division, the successor of the Education Department, and the Malta Union of Teachers

(MUT), Malta's main union in the sector, agreed by an exchange of letters on the 2nd February 2004 to the start of a school inspection programme intended for state, Church and independent schools. Education Officers, which is what the old-style inspectors started to be called from the Reorganisation Agreement of Teaching Grades of 1975, were required to participate in such inspections, along with selected Assistant Directors and Heads of Schools, against a slight increase in emoluments. A new grade, that of Principal Education Officer, was created to lead such inspections.

These school inspections were based on an industrial total quality management model and started operating in 2005. They ran for two years and 24 inspections, until the increasing resentment in schools (MUT, 2007) led to industrial action that blocked any further inspections since they were seen as intrusive, demeaning and unhelpful. The MUT insisted that: "the PMP (Performance Management Profile by which teachers were assessed on a yearly basis) and (school external) auditing had to be completely revised so as to ensure a professional procedure that respected the profession and well as ethics" (MUT, 2008).

As discussed in Section 5.6, from the 1920s the University did not retain overt measures of internal inspection, and from 1947 it had a substantial measure of autonomy. However, the Maltese government continued the policy of oversight and control through external inspection. The incoming government of 1955 looked coolly at the recently-acquired autonomy of the University, and wanted more control over the direction the University was taking to better address the country's economic and manpower needs. It even withdrew its subvention to the University for academic year 1956-57 (Agius, 1968). It is important to note the rumour I heard from a number of independent and informed sources that part of the trouble was also that Prime Minister Mintoff, an architect and civil engineer by profession, was frustrated that his request to be admitted as an external lecturer to the Faculty of Architecture had been denied by the University – more evidence of the intricacies of Intimacy in micro-state educational politics, as discussed in Section 3.2.

This stand-off was followed by the now time-honoured administrative 'solution' of the Government commissioning a review of the University by a British expert (Crichton-Miller, 1957), thus following on the footsteps of the erstwhile colonial masters. Crichton-Miller visited Malta for eleven days. Predictably, he found that the University was below standards in many respects, and:

at the present moment the University appears to be quite incapable of making any adjustment to meet new demands. Already the prestige of the University is dangerously low, and it is not overstating the case to say that the situation is critical" (ibid. no. 48).

Crichton-Miller did not pull his punches. He considered that the reform at the university was difficult because: "the (anti-Government) political enthusiasm amongst (academic staff) would defeat any attempt at reform through general consultation." (ibid. no. 51). He stated that a University funded by the public purse needed to deliver courses that clearly fit with the educational system and the future economy of Malta:

If the state can formulate its requirements, and if the University is willing to adjust its arrangements to meet them, that is all that is wanted. Such adjustment, of course, represents a measure of subservience, and for that subservience the State must pay (ibid. no. 55).

Not even Keenan 68 years before had laid out quite so baldly the *quid pro quo* relationship between the piper's paymaster and the tune.

The Crichton-Miller report led to the setting up of a Joint Government-University Committee to advise on the development and financial needs of university. As a result of the Hetherington Report issued by this Committee later on in 1957 a permanent Royal University of Malta Commission was set up by Royal Ordinance in 1958. The first Commissioners were all British. The University would receive block-grants every three years, and the Commission would help the University to identify needs and update courses, and advise Government as to the grant the University required (Agius, op. cit.; Vella, op. cit.; Mifsud Bonnici, 2013).

This Permanent Commission was an important innovation in the governance of the University, since it established a third-party 'honest broker' that had the potential of addressing the limitations of micro-state Monopoly:

the Prime Minister (saw the Commission) as a modernising tool, the University staff as their mentor and sponsor, and the Inter-University Council (for Higher Education in the Colonies) as a means of maintaining and improving standards in line with other at first colonial and then Commonwealth universities (Mifsud Bonnici, 2013 p.139).

However, events proved otherwise. The 1970s and early 80s saw a resurgence of Monopolistic state pervasiveness in higher education in Malta. The University went through several upheavals which were intended to break the hegemony of the ruling classes, expand the range of University courses and make them more responsive to national economic needs, and increase access to working-class students (Camilleri, 2014). These changes included the suppression of a number of 'non-utilitarian' faculties and of the research function of the University; the introduction of education and management degrees amongst others, and the abolition of students' fees. Student enrolment was decided by a Student Selection Board external to the University and subject to the availability of work placement for 50 percent of the course which was mostly provided by state entities, leading to even stronger state patronage and control. The Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), the nation's further education vocational college, was transformed into a second university, which two years later in 1980 was amalgamated with the original University leaving Malta without a comprehensive vocational college for the next 20 years (Zammit Mangion, 1992; Mifsud Bonnici, 2015).

The last Chair of the Permanent Commission, Prof. Ralph Dahrendorf, resigned in protest in 1978 against this reform (Mayo, 2012b), which in his opinion "adds nothing to education, or to social integration." (Mifsud Bonnici, op. cit. p.68). Mifsud Bonnici asserted that these legal guillotines were "in fact a continuation of the tendency, begun during the British period, of trying to subdue the spirit of independent, perhaps anti-government, things in the institutions of higher learning" (ibid. p.68).

On the one hand these reforms resulted in a gradual increase in student numbers, including the percentage of female students (Mayo, op. cit.), and the modernisation of the University through the expansion of courses. On the other however, the reductionist utilitarian approach that excluded research and suppressed faculties, and the heavy-handed reforms and their effects on academics – many had to find alternative employment and the Rector of the (original) University was removed – meant that the resultant upheaval caused great resentment.

From 1987 onwards the situation improved significantly, with the University returning to its previous holistic identity and autonomy with its re-foundation with the 1988 Education Act (Government of Malta,

1988). This set the scene for an explosion in provision that has led to an almost fourteen-fold increase in students from under 800 in 1987 to over 11,000 in 2015, the opening of new faculties and an upsurge in research and outreach activities (University of Malta, 2016). So for the University the third phase of the Panoptic Paradigm, that of State Paternalism, extended to 1987 until the change of government, but was not followed by the fourth and final phase, that of Diminishing Oversight. The QA developments at the University from 1987 onwards are discussed in Chapter 6.

However, the reforms and upheavals that the University was submitted to in the 1970s and '80s still rankle; the institutional memory of the University has coloured the perception of further state intervention through any form of external QA.

Mifsud Bonnici, who as Minister of Education piloted the 1988 Education Act, was very much aware of this institutional memory: he stated that he did not re-instate the Permanent Commission because: “the whole operation was redolent of the colonial and post-colonial era. That was in 1988, by 2006 the colonial and postcolonial haze had lifted” (Mifsud Bonnici, *op. cit.* p. 140).

6.3 The Panoptic Inspection Paradigm for compulsory education starts to decay

By the 1990s the panoptic inspection paradigm was in rapid decline in the compulsory education sector. In practice few non-state school inspections as mandated by the 1994 regulations were actually done, and they did not have the scope and ‘bite’ of the old Laferla-inspired inspections – they were little more than advisory visits, in continuation of the tacit policy of the previous two decades that: “inspection in Church and private schools was purposely eased during the disputes with the Labour Government (in the 1970s and 80s) so as not to exacerbate the already tense relationship” (Mifsud Bonnici, *op. cit.* p.90). In the state sector teacher inspections continued but were limited to a focus on the teaching of specific subjects, not on the comprehensive teaching/learning experience (*ibid.*).

Even in this restricted format inspections were of hardly any consequence, to the frustration – for different reasons – of schools, teachers, and education officers. Schools and teachers were increasingly irked by any form of external monitoring and dictat. Education officers felt impotent⁵. The Minister was reduced to making weekly surprise visits himself, although he was convinced that “inspection should be resorted to by the Minister personally as rarely as possible, and should not be relied upon” (*ibid.*). The teachers’ growing intolerance of old-style inspections was channeled through their union. To give one example, in November 1992 the MUT took note of the actions of a particular Education Officer who was collecting samples of students’ exercise books without teachers’ knowledge (a staple exercise for colonial and post-colonial school inspectors):

(...) his attitude bordered on harassment. Council reiterated that while an Education Officer has every right to enter the classroom his (*sic*) role should be that of an advisor and not of an inspector. It was also made clear that newly appointed Education Assistants had no right to enter classrooms, not even if accompanying an Education Officer (MUT, 1992b).

Appendix 6.1 compares the power Inspectors had in the beginning of the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm, with what they were left with in the final phase of the Paradigm in the years before the 2006 Education

⁵ Information from discussions with my staff, who had been involved in this school inspection regime, when I was Director for Quality Assurance within the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.

Act. The former is based in the data discussed in Chapter 5, whilst the latter is based on my own senior management experience of compulsory education provision as explained in Section 4.4. This visible contraction of power can be partly explained by the greater specialization of professional roles in the intervening years within the Department of Education and its subsequent reincarnations. However, there is more here than meets the eye; to understand the reasons behind this decline of the old panoptic inspection paradigm in the 1990s in compulsory education one needs to look at two historical developments that precipitated it:

- the disenchantment felt by teachers towards central senior educational personnel due to the turbulent effect of educational reforms in the 1970s and '80s, and
- the increase in the professional status of teachers.

The governments of the 1970s and '80s embarked on a series of educational reforms in compulsory education that paralleled those seen in further and higher education, and which were intended to increase opportunity, access and employability as well as decrease social inequalities (Sultana, 1991; Zammit Mangion, 1992; Mayo, 2012b). These reforms included the introduction of comprehensivisation in 1972 and the consequent abolition of streaming, summative assessment and differentiated state secondary schools (Zammit Marmarà, 2001), followed by an about-turn in 1981 with the re-introduction of the 11+ exams and a tri-partite system of state secondary education (Grima and Farrugia, 2006). Government also entered into a protracted struggle with the Catholic schools which then catered for about 25 percent of primary and secondary students, with the ostensible aim of increasing access to these schools and creating a more level playing field for working-class prospective students (Zammit Mangion, *op. cit.*; Camilleri, 2014). This struggle included affirmative action for entry into university through positive discrimination in favour of state school students, the mass mobilisation of state and Church school parents into two opposing camps, the temporary closure of the Church schools, and underground classes organised by Church school parents. This was followed by an all-out strike in September 1983 by both state and non-state teachers that delayed the opening of all schools by almost two months, and led to the victimisation and mass-transfer of thousands of teachers (Scerri, 2000; Cassar, 2009).

In spite of the good intentions of these reforms, many were ill-concieved and hastily implemented, with little or no consultation with or preparation of the key stakeholders: parents, teachers and social partners. Discipline in state schools degenerated markedly. Parents were used as strike-breakers and the government's response was accompanied by verbal, emotional and sometimes even physical violence by its political supporters. At the height of the strike a very senior member of the leadership of the MUT reported being offered a bribe from an emissary of the Prime Minister of the time, in the form of a prestigious ambassadorship, which would of course have meant the resignation of this person from their central role within the union at this most critical time (MUT, 1990).

One result was that parents with cultural and financial capital voted with their feet and migrated from the state sector to the Church and independent schools, which ironically reinforced the school population social asymetries that the Government reforms had been attempting to address. Many teachers emerged traumatised from this period, which greatly strengthened teachers' mutual solidarity and prejudiced their perception of the role of central education authorities and viability of educational reform in general (Zammit Mangion, 1992; Cassar, 2009; Spiteri, 2009; Casha, 2013). Perhaps unsurprisingly the attempts

to re-establish state school inspections in 2005 were met with hostility and were soon successfully rebuffed.

Partly as a result of these reforms, from the 1970s onwards the old paradigm started to be subjected, at first just notionally but then with increasing force, to an ideological challenge that problemized the old notion of teachers and schools being limited to the mindless and disempowering reproduction of centrally mandated and outdated practices, and posited a model of teacher professionalisation. Added to this was an increasing international recognition of teaching as a profession (UNESCO-ILO, 1966). The ideological challenge grew in proportion to the growth in expectations over the years of what constituted appropriate pre-service training of teachers, and mirrored increasing expectations of teacher professionalism in the rest of Europe (Crook, 2009; Whitty, 2008). Furlong et al. (2000) and Freidson (2001), amongst others, identified specialized training as one of the distinguishing components of professionalism. Indeed, the slow rise in the status of Maltese teachers from the first quarter of the 20th century to the granting of professional status in 1988 described in Appendix 6.3 matches ever-increasing pre-service training requirements. The 1988 Education Act referred for the first time to the 'Profession of a Teacher' (Government of Malta, 1988), requiring a teaching warrant to be given by the state. The Act also included the first Teachers' Code of Behaviour. This achievement was hailed with a "shout of jubilation" (Mifsud Bonnici, 2013 p.97) by teachers.

But what did this recognition really mean? Let's take, as a point of reference, the common features of what Hargreaves and Goodson (1996), Crook (2009) and Whitty (2008) consider constitute a traditional approach to professionalism. This was the model the authors of the 1988 almost certainly had in mind – Zammit Mangion (1991), who has Deputy Director General at the time, referred to it. These are: a specialised body of knowledge, a code of ethics exemplifying a strong ethic of service, and self-regulation. An attentive reading of the 1988 Law (Government of Malta, 1988) and the 1989 collective agreement between Government and the MUT (MUT, 1989) that effectively fleshed out the Law reveals a number of lacunae with respect to this three-fold categorisation.

On the one hand, teachers got a significant raise in pay, now equivalent to that of other professional grades in the civil service. A recently published history of the MUT (Cassar, op. cit. pp.332-333) indicates clearly that the 'professionalization' of teachers was essentially an administrative sleight-of-hand to bring about the much-desired pay increase without causing friction with other civil service categories. The MUT Council minutes stated that: "in referring to the salary claim, the Minister has confirmed the Government's agreement with the claim for a professional status of teachers" (MUT, 1987). This is not to say that the MUT did not have a professionalization project for its members. The MUT did state repeatedly over the years that the Government should set up a Council for the Teaching Profession (MUT, 1992a). But on the scale of priorities there was never any doubt what was important and what was merely desirable. Nor, as discussed in more detail in Appendix 6.3, was there any doubt what was really important for teachers. Saliba (1998) concluded that: "it may be argued that Maltese teachers' understanding of 'professional status' relates more to the attainment of an honorary title rather than a dynamic evolution in occupational development" (p.176).

A disappointing element in the 1988 Law was that almost anyone could get a 'temporary' teaching warrant that could be renewed every year. Graduate teachers, teachers with a set amount of years teaching

experience, and any Masters or Ph.D. holder could get a permanent warrant. So much for specialist knowledge. In reality, as a mark of professional distinction the warrant requirement was watered down to be practically meaningless.

The Code of Ethics enshrined in the Law was also essentially toothless, a top-down wish list of do's and don'ts, drafted and administered by the Ministry; "it really resembles the codes of discipline issued by heads of departments for their underlings rather than a code of ethics for professionals" (Wain, 1996 p.4). There was no reference to an independent Council for the Teaching Profession, which would have been the appropriate body to develop and administer such a code of ethics and would have addressed the self-regulation requirement mentioned earlier. Yet, when Parliament passed the Education Act of 1988 the MUT considered this a generally positive development, except for a number of problematic provisions that did not, however, include the Code of Ethics, which the Union history refers to as: "this Code of Behaviour (Ethics)" (Cassar, op. cit. p.337). This was approved unanimously and without minuted discussion by the MUT Council (MUT, 1988).

Another aspect of self-regulation mentioned previously is the degree of professional autonomy. The 1988 Law did open the doors to a series of internal measures that over the years decentralized a number of financial and administrative procedures to Heads of school. In 1995, seven years after the 'recognition' of the professional status of teachers, the Consultative Committee on Education set up by the Education Minister of the time to review compulsory education complained that:

Heads of schools have increasingly been asked to carry out new tasks related to a reconceptualisation of their role at the helm of the school, but more often than not these new demands are administrative and even clerical in nature, with more time being dedicated to financial auditing and management, rather than with real educational leadership as we understand it to be (Consultative Committee on Education 1995 p. 34).

Heads of school themselves echoed the frustration of being encumbered with what they felt was not their primary role as education leaders:

The only autonomy they give us is in the way we spend our money, nothing else. That is why headship hasn't changed at all. They loaded us with work we shouldn't be doing, they added to our role in finances, which was a big headache to the education authorities and then they just landed it over to us (Bezzina, 2003 p.45).

Unsurprisingly, the primary and secondary curricula enacted by the 1988 Law were "greeted with the silence of the grave" (Wain, 1991 p.2). Wain concluded that this silence was due to 'political paternalism': "the stifling style of authoritarian control carried over from colonial days and still practiced by the Ministry and the Department of Education over the schools and the teachers" (ibid. p.20), that presupposes uncomplaining obedience. True professionals, Wain was saying, would have risen up to respond to and discuss such key documents as the curricula. The silence, in other words, at the very least undermined any claim to teacher professionalism.

All in all, what the 1988 Education Act actually did was to bestow what I would call 'paternalistic professionalization' on teachers, rather than recognize their true professional status to which teachers would have been active agents, a view espoused also by Farrugia (1992). The latter would have led to a reconceptualisation of the power relationship between central educational authorities, schools and teachers, to the striking of some kind of balance between self-regulation and accountability as with the

more established professions. The paternalistic professionalisation of 1988, coming after Government's heavy-handed reforms during the 1970s and 80s, simply reinforced teachers' rejection of educational inspection altogether. Inspection was a yoke to be thrown off, a reminder of inferior status best forgotten.

In this Section I have discussed how the decay of the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm had its roots in its third phase, that of State Paternalism, and gathered pace in its fourth and final phase, that of Diminishing Oversight. Figure 6.1 builds on Figure 5.3 and represents all four phases of the Paradigm. The final phase, State Paternalism, had a brief resurgence in 2005-07.

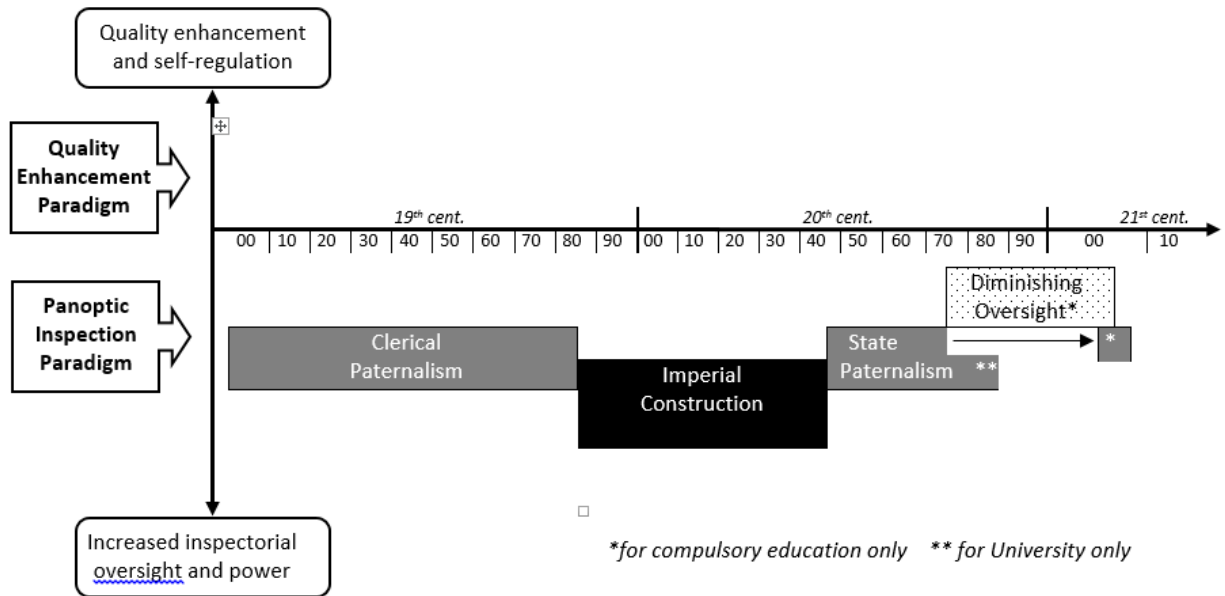


Figure 6.1: The four phases of the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm

During the 1970s and 1980s, two core beliefs of the old Panoptic Inspection Paradigm with respect to compulsory education were irrevocably challenged: that central education authorities 'knew best', and that teachers should simply follow their instructions and implement blindly centrally mandated one-size-fits-all programmes.

However, two other aspects were as yet unchallenged: a) the educational structures, both administrative and curricular, and the power relations inherent in them were still framed in terms of their colonial roots as discussed in Section 5.7; and b) the education system remained fundamentally aligned to the Darwinian belief that the segregation of learners through differentiation within and between schools mirrored 'natural' differences in social stratification and children's abilities.

The new Paradigm would challenge precisely these two assumptions, by problematizing the first in function of a rejection, at least in the official rhetoric, of the second.

6.4 Challenges facing a new Paradigm

I have now discussed the experiences of the tertiary education sector in Section 6.2, and of the compulsory sector in Section 6.3, between the end of effective colonial control after the Second World War, and the decay (but not the terminal decline) of the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm in the last decade or so of the 20th century. These were reviewed through the lens of Malta's colonial and post-colonial heritage of paternalistic governance and panoptic control, exacerbated by Malta's micro-state characteristics of Isolation, Smallness, Intimacy and Monopoly. Any attempt to replace the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm faced a three-fold interlocking challenge:

- the history of state intervention in both compulsory and tertiary educational provision as a result of Monopoly had resulted in extreme wariness and scepticism with respect to any further reforms;
- any sort of state educational oversight would be seen as a vestige/reprisal and marker of colonial legacy, and interpreted as an act of state panoptic control against autonomy and professionalism;
- the lack of anonymity and psychological 'distance' between a prospective external reviewer and the reviewed institution due to the Intimacy of Malta's social networking.

As the shadow of the coloniality of state power that had lingered beyond Independence in 1964 and the Republican constitution of 1974 finally waned, it was now time for a transformational, or anamorphic, perspective of educational provision that would also affect the scope and purpose of educational inspection. The drivers for this change in compulsory education were different than those for further and higher education; whilst the former sprang from local developments, the latter emanated largely from international ones.

6.5 A new Paradigm emerges in compulsory education

It was the 1995 report 'Tomorrow's Schools: Developing Effective Learning Cultures' by the Consultative Committee on Education (Consultative Committee on Education, 1995) set up by the Minister of Education at the time, that served as the manifesto of the new Paradigm in compulsory education. The report replaced 'supply-centred' discourse with 'learner-centred' discourse. It advocated for the administrative and curricular autonomy of schools that functioned as learning communities of reflective practitioners. 'Tomorrow's Schools' turned the Pullicino/Savona/Laferla notion of the relationship between the centre and the schools on its head, since it shifted the locus of decision-making from the centre to the schools and classrooms: "Such decentralization should stress the role and expertise of educational leaders in schools to develop curricula, choose textbooks, engage staff, prepare school evaluation packages, organize staff and parent development programmes, and so on" (ibid. pp.10-11).

This new paradigm of educational development also had clear implications for educational inspection. In assigning to schools the onus for curriculum development and effective learning, 'Tomorrow's Schools' replaced the concept of inspection with that of 'developmental accountability', from extrinsic centralized control to intrinsic professional self-regulation:

(this) is not intended to introduce a measure of control for the sake of it, but rather to tackle school failure and success in as systematic a manner as possible, with various evaluative measures being introduced to ensure that learning stages and challenges are adequately dealt with. We would wish to refer to this as **developmental accountability** (*original emphasis*), to distinguish it clearly from the inspectorial and control connotations that the word might have (ibid. p.40).

Within this concept of developmental accountability, the role of the Education Officers would be changed to that of curriculum and school improvement advisors to teachers and schools. They would also have the role of “constantly evaluating teaching programmes and learning outcomes (ibid. p.6)”, but the report did not give any further details on how this was to come about.

Thus, ‘Tomorrow’s Schools’ addressed the challenges of replacing the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm by proposing a core set of alternative beliefs and practices that articulated a radically different discourse from that of the old Paradigm. I shall call this rival paradigm – with some caveats that will be discussed in Section 6.7 – the Quality Enhancement Paradigm.

‘Tomorrow’s Schools’ was the ideological precursor of the National Minimum Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999) with its focus on quality education for all, differentiated teaching and learning, teacher agency, and school development. However, a reform of the curriculum was not sufficient – a reconceptualisation of the whole educational system was required. The 2005 government consultation document ‘For All Children to Succeed’ (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005), also known by its acronym FACTS, proposed a radical re-foundation of state educational provision and of the relationship between state and non-state provision to give operational substance to the vision of ‘Tomorrow’s Schools’. It proposed, amongst other things, the transformation of the Education Division into two complementary Directorates: one with a regulatory and QA role for all schools in Malta, and the second with a support services role mainly for state schools. All state primary and secondary schools would be networked into ten autonomous Colleges that would have the capacity to generate new energies through College-based curricular control and resources, and greater technical and administrative support. Non-state schools would also have the option to participate in these networks.

‘Tomorrow’s Schools’ and FACTS differed in one important aspect: whilst ‘Tomorrow’s Schools’ located the locus of change in the individual school, FACTS placed it within the College, the network of primary and secondary schools. The corollary to this was that the proposal in ‘Tomorrow’s Schools’ to replace the inspectorial function and its implied external control with school-based developmental accountability was in marked contrast with the re-introduction in FACTS of the Inspectorial function, although this now came packaged as ‘Auditing and Quality Assurance’. Apart from inspections and audits, the functions of the proposed inspection entity included the identification and promotion of good practice, the provision of educational support, and “assist(ing) educational stakeholders in ascertaining the strengths and weaknesses of the system” (ibid. p.32). The implication to this difference is discussed in Section 6.7.

6.6 Prelude to the Quality Enhancement Paradigm in Further and Higher Education

The point of departure for the Quality Enhancement Paradigm in Further and higher education in Malta can be found in the Europe-wide discussions leading up to the Bologna Declaration of 1999 (OMCU, 2016a), the first European inter-ministerial document to make explicit commitments with respect to quality assurance. Appendix 6.4 situates the QA milestones in F&HE in a broader timeline for the implementation of QA in the sector in Malta. The Bologna Declaration itself was founded, at least rhetorically, on the principles of the Magna Carta Universitatum that was signed in Bologna in September 1988 by 388 rectors and heads of universities from all over Europe and beyond, and up to the writing of this thesis had been signed by 802 Universities from 85 Countries (OMCU, 2016b). Inspired by the

proposed abolition of borders in the 1985 Schengen Agreement (Europa.eu, 2009), the Magna Carta recalled the academic freedom that established universities had enjoyed for centuries, and called for universities and governments to guarantee these freedoms and promote: “as in the earliest years of their history,(...) mobility among teachers and students, (and) a general policy of equivalent status, titles (and) examinations” (OMCU, 2016c).

The Bologna Declaration led to the eponymous Process that was launched in 2000. This led to the setting up of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010 and the development of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG) in 2005 (ENQA, 2016), that have been revised in 2009 and 2015. The influence of the Magna Carta on the conception of QA in higher education as promoted by the EHEA and enshrined in the ESG cannot be underestimated (Oosterlinck 2013). The Magna Carta situated the justification of QA in higher education in terms of guaranteeing the freedom and autonomy of universities, and this spirit was retained even up to the 2015 revision of the ESG. It provided a strong alternative narrative to performativity-driven QA underpinned by the neoliberal marketisation of higher education that predominates internationally and which I discuss in Chapter 8.

Scott has considered that the Bologna process: “was not simply a ‘top-down’ process imposed on the universities (by the Ministers of the signatory countries); it was also to a significant degree a ‘bottom-up’ process building on their common values and traditions and the shared reform agendas of the universities themselves (as enshrined in the Magna Carta)” (2012 p.2). Kauko has even claimed that “universities stopped worrying and learnt to love quality assurance” due to the “reshaping of power relations” (2001 p.23), although the former statement may be a claim too far. The durability and relative success of the Quality Enhancement perspective of the Magna Carta and the Bologna Process is much better explained in terms of Weberian rather than Foucauldian approaches to power and authority, as I discuss in Chapter 7.

Of course, not everyone agrees with Bologna’s counter-cultural vocation. Schriewer, amongst others, claims that:

The process that the Bologna Declaration of 1999 set in motion to redefine the structures of European courses of study in higher education is regarded by actors and observers alike as a profound break in European university traditions (...) There are good reasons to interpret this process as a particular example of much larger processes of worldlevel interconnection and standardization in education (2009 p.32).

The status and significance of the Bologna process and the tools that were derived from it are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

The success of the Bologna Process for higher education led to similar moves for the vocational sector within the EU: the Copenhagen Process (Europa.eu, 2011) that was approved in November 2002. As is discussed in Chapter 8, these Europe-wide QA processes in further and higher education clearly influenced the inculcation of the beginning of a QA culture in MCAST and the University of Malta, Malta’s main further vocational and higher institutions respectively. The University of Malta was one of the founding signatories of the Magna Carta in 1988 (Um.edu.mt, 2016b), and Malta was one of the founding signatories of both the EHEA and the Copenhagen Declaration.

6.7 The 2006 Education Act heralds the new Quality Enhancement Paradigm

The 2006 Education (Amendments) Act (Government of Malta, 2006) brought together the vision of 'Tomorrow's Schools' and FACTS for compulsory education and the insights coming from the Bologna and Copenhagen processes for further and higher education respectively. The key unifying element in all the amendments of the 2006 Act, and which distinguished it from its two predecessors, the 1988 and the 1974 Education Acts, was the focus on quality education and quality assurance, which was confirmed by the then Minister of Education who was one of my interviewees (LG1). These were presented as the justification for the changes and new structures that were being set up. The quality culture heralded by the 2006 Act had a coherent ideology across all sectors: the onus of ensuring quality in teaching and learning was on the providers through their internal developmental processes; the external oversight through inspections and audits was justified inasmuch as it supported these internal processes.

Of course, the concept of a quality culture in all sectors of education is not a new one. The 2015 Eurydice report 'Assuring Quality in Education' highlighted the policies and approaches to school evaluation in countries around Europe that, amongst other things, are intended to develop a culture of self-evaluation in schools: "QA systems need to be based on principles that go beyond a mere 'checklist' approach: we need to foster a culture that strives to constantly improve the quality of teaching and learning" (Eurydice European Unit, 2015 p.3).

With respect to higher education, the European University Association led two important projects to promote a quality culture in the sector in 2002 and 2012 (EUA, 2006; 2012). The ESG from its first version in 2005 was clearly premised upon the development of a quality culture that placed the primary locus of improvement within the provider. The 2014 'Report on Progress in Quality Assurance in Higher Education' by the European Commission has highlighted the importance of a quality culture in higher education and has referred to the need for "a genuine culture of continuous quality improvement" (European Commission, 2014b, p.4). This has been echoed by Bollaert (2014b).

In the next section I first discuss the part of the 2006 Act related to compulsory education and teacher professional status, and I then focus on the part related to further and higher education.

6.7.1 The compulsory education sector

As the FACTS document had proposed, in the compulsory education sector state schools were networked in ten Colleges of secondary and feeder primary schools, and two new Directorates were set up one of which, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) had a national remit that included a reconstituted Educational Inspectorate. One of the justifications given in Parliament during the debate on the 2006 Act was that this would allow for appropriate checks and balances by separating the service provider from the regulator (PTM, 2006c p.140, the Hon. L. Galea).

In Section 6.4 previously I referred to the paternalistic professionalization of teachers in the 1980s and 90s. The 2006 Education Act attempted to address this with the creation of the Council for the Teaching Profession that had a much wider remit than the old Warrants Board and was also intended as an affirmation of the importance of a continually upgraded professional cadre of teachers and school leaders to ensure effective teaching and learning.

The officers of the new Education Inspectorate had the legal right to enter all schools and inspect all relevant issues. However, the then Minister of Education Dr Louis Galea stressed in Parliament that the QA that would be carried out by the Directorate would be:

and I wish to emphasise this, in support of the evaluation and internal verification processes of every school. This is a clear message (...). The responsibility for quality assurance belongs first and foremost to the school or College. The verifications, inspections, evaluations and external verification will all be carried out to support the internal process because the most important process is the internal one (ibid. pp.127-128).

He explained why the DQSE needed to have an Educational Inspectorate. It would not function like the old-style inspectors; both in Malta and in many other countries over the last 30 years the concept of inspection had moved away from this to 'softer' concepts, although: "when I look at the inspectors of the old days I find that they had a lot of advantages and positive things" (ibid.). The Inspectorate was needed to ensure that the planned reforms did have a positive effect on classroom teaching and learning. In the then-current situation the Minister did not have strong enough tools to see what was happening and to ensure that it was better implemented (ibid. p.140). After all: "A doctor cannot know what is wrong with a patient unless they visit. (...) So it is important that we have surveillance and inspection, which leads to evaluation" (ibid. p.130). Dr Galea reiterated this position during his interview (LG2,4).

In this parliamentary debate the difference of opinion between the Government and Opposition on the role of the inspectorate was related to the degree of autonomy that the new College system was going to provide for schools. Government held that the scope of the Colleges was nothing more than to be a better tool for schools to improve (PTM, 2006d p.208, the Hon L. Galea). The Minister for Education stated that:

We are going for a College system because we want to have more decentralisation, more autonomy, more support to and synergy between schools. If one looks at the proposed set-up in its entirety one finds that this (decentralisation etc) can be improved by creating this type of networking between primary and secondary schools (PTM, 2006g p.348).

The Opposition insisted that the focus should be the empowerment of individual schools through school development plans rather than on new national structures (PTM, 2006e p.242, the Hon. E. Bartolo), and accused Government of missing the wood for the trees (PTM, 2006b p.56, the Hon. A. Sant). Similarly, Bezzina also warned that "the networks, or a system of networking, on its own does not necessarily bring about change in the way we view leadership, power or governance, unless we work towards developing such networks into inclusive learning communities" (2006 p.92).

The parliamentary arguments on the purpose of the new Educational Inspectorate echoed the difference discussed in Section 6.4 between 'Tomorrow's Schools' and FACTS: would not the inevitable effect of external audits on schools and teachers dilute the primacy of school-based review that both Government and the Opposition agreed on? The Opposition was sceptical (PTM, 2006a p.757 the Hon. C. Abela), and felt that the Inspectorate could even overlap with the role of the Council for the Teaching Profession (PTM, 2006f p.320 the Hon. A. Sant) that was also being set up with this Act.

In my IFS I posited that what might look like "a policy 'square peg' in a theoretical 'round hole'" (Spiteri, 2014 p.28) with respect to the appropriation of the UK-centric discourse on school networking to justify the Maltese Colleges might in fact be, from an anamorphic perspective, an attempt at "a Maltese solution to a Maltese reality" (ibid. p.29). I would suggest that the same could be said for the formulation of the

remit of the Educational Inspectorate in the context of the Quality Enhancement Paradigm of the 2006 Education Act. From this perspective, the difference between the conceptualisation of ‘Tomorrow’s Schools’ of 1995 and that of FACTS or the 2006 Act about the role of school inspection discussed earlier in Section 6.5 can be seen as the latter attempting to address the ever-present reality of micro-state issues.

In his interview, Dr Galea explained that although the education budget was substantial and increased from year to year, there was a limited concept of the outputs of the education system, except how many students passed and failed. Added to this was the concern that the quality of the output was not standard – it was too dependent on the individual. So Galea wanted to achieve a system that would allow all children to succeed – he insisted that for him this was not just a slogan. The QA system in compulsory education was intended to parallel the setting up of the Colleges for a seamless educational journey from primary through secondary, so that the output would be assessed based on particular criteria. The issue of quality, he concluded, was intimately tied to the foundational concept of accountability. He believed that you cannot make someone accountable in terms of the inputs, because many of these are beyond the control of the professional, so you need to tie accountability to the outputs, as well as to the processes needed to achieve quality in education (LG1-4).

Thus, government was proposing a different balance from that of the Thatcher-Blair English school model of autonomy and accountability: instead of a high degree of school autonomy and OFSTED-like high-stakes inspection, it opted for a measure of school autonomy with partly decentralised control through the Colleges coupled with a lower-stakes QA regime. The Inspectorate was expected to exercise both a monitoring and a supportive function; to encourage as well as to admonish; to identify and celebrate good practice as well as to report to the Directorates on non-compliance, sub-standard services and ineffective teaching and school leadership. This is a classic example of the Janus-like “tensions and ambiguities, opportunities and constraints” (Warrington, 1997 p.432) that characterize micro-states as discussed in Section 3.2. Appendix 6.1 provides further information on the QA structures and systems that were set up with respect to compulsory education as a result of the 2006 Act.

6.7.2 The further and higher education sectors

With respect to the post-secondary sector, the 2006 Act re-founded the University of Malta with new powers and functions. It also formally founded MCAST, Malta’s main vocational education institution after a 20-year hiatus (it had re-started operations in 2000), and re-affirmed the role of ITS, the state education institution addressing the vocational needs in the tourism and catering sector. For all three institutions, QA was included for the first time as a key function (respectively: Government of Malta, 2006 Articles 72 and 89; and Government of Malta, 2012b Regulation 10).

The 2006 Act also set up the new National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) which was intended to advise Government on all issues related to further and higher education, including recommending “systems and policies for the evaluation, approval, accreditation, authorization and recognition of institutions and programmes that will ensure their quality” (Government of Malta, 2006 Article 65(c)). It was also tasked with: “pushing institutions to have quality assurance programmes and mechanisms (...)

with systems, policies and regulations to first undertake internal QA and then the external audit of this quality assurance” (PTM, 2006h p.511 the Hon. Minister L. Galea). In the words of its first CEO:

the first reform (the 2006 Education Act) establishing the NCHE gave it an interim mandate and legal basis for it to give an opinion to a Minister in the phase where laws did not exist as yet (...) We were already one step away from a Minister because of the structure and nature of the entity. (...) Remember this was all starting from scratch (JS3, 5).

Even in the area of further and higher education there was debate in parliament as to the extent that external review should impinge on the autonomy of the internal QA processes. (see, for example, PTM 2006h p.534 the Hon. C. Abela). However, it was finally agreed that the less than satisfactory experience in internal QA within the University, as discussed in Chapter 6, warranted an external independent player with national oversight functions. The Minister was empowered to make regulations to establish benchmarks, standards and processes, including for internal QA and external auditing, in all educational entities (Government of Malta, 2006 Article 135):

Thus the commission will ensure that what the institutions do is reviewed and this will put people’s minds at rest since, as (Opposition member) the Hon. Bartolo said, who will guard the guardian? The commission’s task is to be the guardian in the national interest (PTM, 2006h op. cit. p.537).

Such regulations for further and higher education providers were in fact issued in 2012; Legal Notice 296 stated that: “Providers shall have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its quality assurance” (Government of Malta, 2012b). To implement these regulations the NCHE was transformed into the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) that now had the powers to recognise qualifications, accredit new programmes and undertake the functions of a national QA agency (Government of Malta, 2012a).

6.8 Synthesis

This chapter has shown how the old Panoptic Inspection Paradigm decayed and gave way to the new Quality Enhancement Paradigm which was based on the concept of reform for compulsory education embraced in the 1995 ‘Tomorrow’s Schools’, and the concepts of autonomy and academic freedom of higher education enshrined in the 1998 Bologna Declaration. Although as discussed in Maltese educational discourse Quality Assurance was intended to signify a break away from traditional educational inspection, internationally and especially in the UK context the meaning of this term is contested, as I discuss in Section 2.5. This is why in naming the new paradigm I chose the term Quality Enhancement to signify what is understood by Quality Assurance in the Maltese context.

The new paradigm as developed in the Maltese context was an overarching one that addressed both the compulsory and post-compulsory sectors. The Quality Enhancement Paradigm has had two broad phases. For compulsory education the first phase can be dated from the publication of ‘Tomorrow’s Schools’ up to the 2006 Education Act, whilst for further and higher education it can be generally dated from the end of the 1990s leading up to the Bologna Declaration. This can be termed the phase of Rhetorical Development. The second broad phase for all education sectors can be termed that of QA Implementation of the Act itself. Table 6.1 shows these two phases:

Table 6.1: The Two Broad Phases of the Quality Enhancement Paradigm

<i>For Compulsory education:</i>		
1.	<u>From 1995 to 2006</u> (<i>from 'Tomorrow's Schools'</i>).....	} Rhetorical Development
	<i>For the University:</i> <u>From end of 1990's to 2006</u> (<i>from Bologna Declaration</i>).....	
2.	<u>From 2006 to date</u> (<i>from the 2006 Education Act</i>)	QA Implementation

Figure 6.2 builds on Figure 6.1 and represents the old Panoptic Paradigm as well as the two phases of the new Quality Enhancement Paradigm.

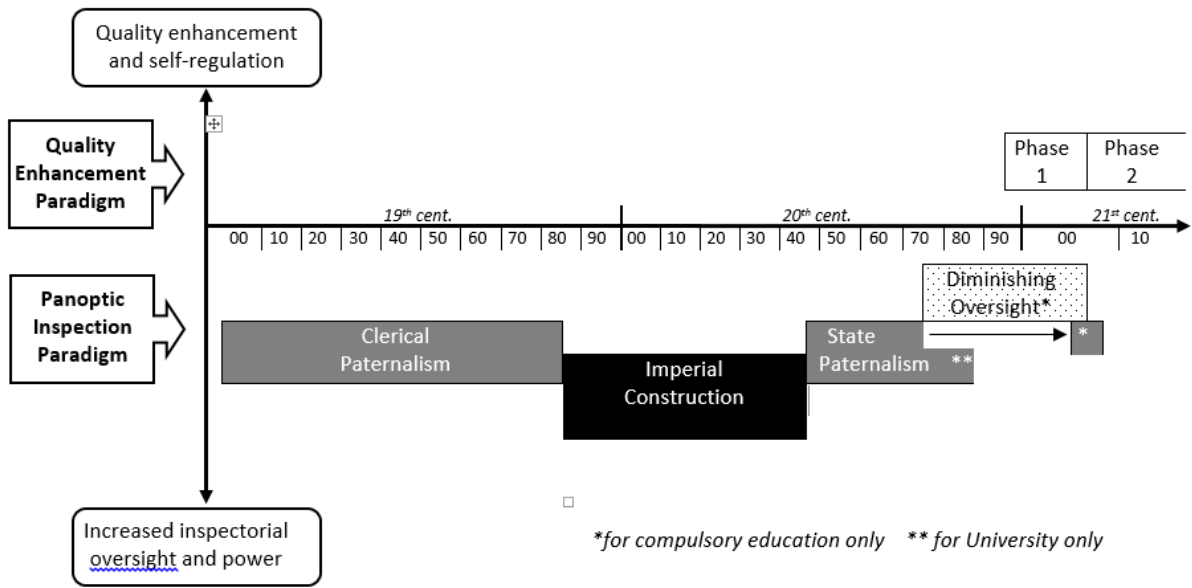


Figure 6.2: The two Paradigms

Chapter 7

Quality Assurance Choreographies in European Higher Education

7.1 Introduction

My thesis is composed of two scaffolded parts: whilst Chapters 5 and 6 develop the inspection and QA narrative with respect to both compulsory and post-compulsory education provision, Chapters 7 and 8 focus mainly on higher education and specifically the University of Malta. In Chapters 5 and 6 I explored the emergence, apogee and decay of the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm using the imperial and colonial context to highlight and contrast the Maltese narrative. In the same way, in this chapter I situate the Quality Enhancement Paradigm within the current network and vectors of power and influence of QA in higher education (QA in HE) within Europe. In doing so I focus in particular on developments in England partly due to its historical affinity and academic proximity to the Maltese HE scene, partly because of the disproportionate influence HE developments in England have internationally as one of the lingering legacies of empire.

Chapter 7 provides the context for the case study I undertake in Chapter 8 of the positionality of Maltese further and higher education regulation and higher education provision within the European QA network since the 2006 Education Act. My main data sources for both chapters are the 'elite' interviews with Maltese and European QA operators and stakeholders.

7.2 The HE QA regulatory panorama of Europe

The QA regulatory panorama of higher education in Europe is highly complex and multi-layered. From my experience and reading in the field, corroborated by the testimonies of my interviewees, the key institutional players include:

- universities in Europe, represented by the European University Association (EUA);
- the countries where they reside, which have multiple identities as sovereign states, members of the EU and/or of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA);
- the EHEA and its main support structure, the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG);
- the European Commission;
- QA agencies in Europe, represented by the European Association for QA in Higher Education (ENQA);
- higher education institutions in Europe that offer professionally orientated programmes and are engaged in applied research, represented by the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE);
- the European Students Union (ESU);
- the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR);
- the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD);
- the International Standards Organisation (ISO) 9001 Standard, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) adapted for educational providers and other more localised quality management systems such as the PROSE model developed in Belgium and the EFQM Excellence model adapted for HE by the Sheffield Hallam University;
- the various international rankings of universities.

Only players that affect universities as whole entities have been included. Discipline-specific transnational QA mechanisms such as the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAAE, 2016) and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, 2016) are important players in their sectors, but have not been considered for the purposes of this exercise.

The BFUG is made up of all members of the Bologna Process, the European Commission and social partners as consultative members. These include ENQA, EUA, EURASHE and ESU which are referred to collectively as the E4 Group. The E4 Group were called upon by the EHEA to develop and update the European Standards and Guidelines, the first version of which was approved in 2005, and in 2008 were the founding members of EQAR at the request of European Ministers of Education (Eqar.eu, 2016a). EQAR was set up by governments to promote their agenda, which may not be the same as that of the QA agencies', as discussed later on. More information on the stakeholders of HE QA in Europe is given in Appendix 7.1.

Figure 7.1 illustrates the major vectors of influence and Movements of power between the key institutional players in a panorama of European HE regulation on QA. The arrows indicate the major directions of influence, although of course other more complex connections at lower levels are not shown here, such as in the intra-institutional context. The unbroken lines indicate stronger influences than the dotted lines; however, the diagram is intended to be broadly notional and does not imply any comparative accuracy between different types of influence.

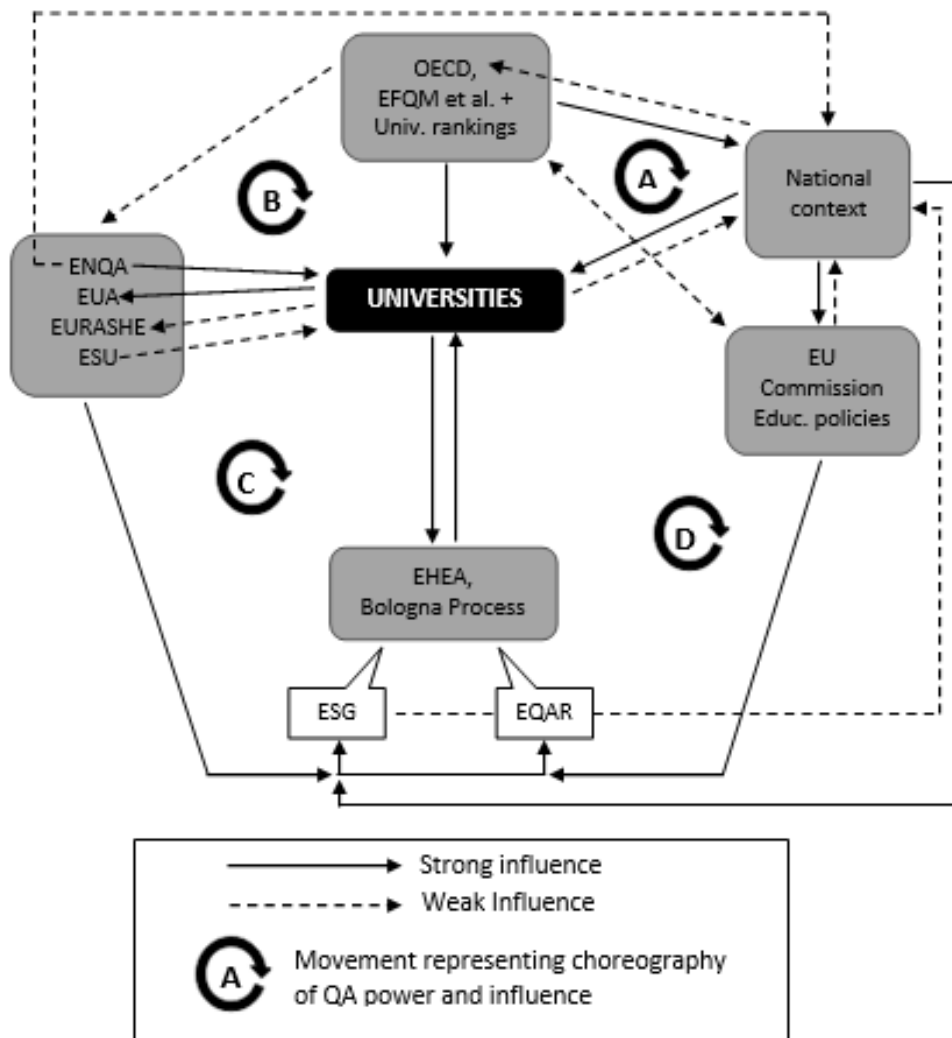


Figure 7.1: The Four Quality Assurance Choreographies in European HE

The network of mechanisms revolves around the universities, who are ultimately the administrative focus of the European QA mechanism. I have purposely not used the Foucauldian term ‘technology’, as I did in discussing the school and University inspection mechanism in 19th century Malta in Section 5.8, to describe the vectors of influence and Movements of power of the Figure. This is because as discussed in Section 3.4 Foucauldian technology implies a concerted and pervasive exercise of ‘top-down’ power by the state and its institutions and emanations, whether direct or indirect, to control the subject. Figure 7.1 represents an altogether different, Weberian, dynamic: competing actors that in their social interactions together form: “the sum of actor perceptions, preferences and capabilities (...) which then plays out dynamically through actor interaction in the policy formulation process” (Witte, 2009 p.228).

Within this scenario the actors are involved in complex social interactions with one or more partners, in some cases taking different roles in different interactions, or ‘choreographies’, to advance different and often contrasting agendas. As with contemporary dance, these choreographies do not have fixed or established movement patterns but combine set moves by and between actors in new and sometimes unpredictable ways. This does not exclude that some actors may be more powerful ‘dancers’ than others

and attempt to 'lead the dance', but it leaves space not only for resistance by the 'minor' dancers but also for orchestrated and unexpected counter-moves and alternative movements.

'Choreographies' is being used in the plural to indicate that there is not one coordinated choreography, but multiple intersecting movements. The agency of the Subject, in this case the universities, as one of the stakeholders is very much in evidence, and is not limited to Foucauldian spontaneous localised resistance. Four distinct choreographies of power can be identified which are labelled as Movements A to D in Figure 7.1.

7.3 Movement A: International Neoliberal influences and the national context

Movement A represents the interaction of international/supranational providers of services related to QA in HE with European countries and the universities themselves. Indeed: "The changes in national education policy in isolation or within the borders of the nation-states cannot be understood without taking into account the impacts of supranational organisations" (Rinne, 2008 p.665). The national context of these European countries includes the power and influence of society players such as prospective and actual university students and their families as well as the world of work, and the HE QA regulatory structures at regional or national/federal levels. International rankings impact directly on the universities themselves to the extent that the latter are dependent on student choice and international prestige.

OECD documentation and the international rankings of universities need to be distinguished from EFQM, CAF, PROSE and ISO 9001. As discussed in Appendix 7.1, the latter are used by a particular type of university or HEI with respect to their internal quality mechanisms of universities, and could conceivably be used for the development of a collaborative quality culture in HE institutions – that at least is the point made by my Belgian interviewee who developed PROSE (AV5, 9), and by Bollaert (2014a pp. 63-75) in discussing EFQM, CAF and other similar models.

However, I consider this to be a potentially ontologically naive reading of the power of the underlying ideology of QA mechanisms in setting the purpose and tone of QA processes and expected outcomes. It is like saying that a knife could be used to pick food in lieu of a fork; but it is much more likely to be used to cut, and is likely to cause harm to its user if used as a fork. One of my UK interviewees with extensive experience as an EQA reviewer around Europe commented that: "a lot of the European Frameworks have many roots in ISO 9001 and I am not sure that necessarily higher education can be measured in that way" (CH66). One of my Maltese interviewees with extensive QA experience around the world concurred; he commented that the pressure felt by universities for international recognition was pushing them towards QA regimes that, very much like the ISO model, was based on the performativity of procedures rather than developing an authentic quality culture (JP4, 5).

I have therefore put the OECD, the international rankings of universities, EFQM, CAF, PROSE and ISO 9001 together because they are all, in effect, derived from neoliberal business models (Holmes, 1993; Giaque, 2003; Rinne, 2008; de Vries, 2010). The outputs of the international/supranational providers of QA services are all imbued with the neoliberal globalising perspective discussed in Section 2.2 and are important tools for its dissemination.

NPM, which as discussed in Section 2.3 is the operationalisation of neoliberalist politico-economic theory in the public sector, underpins the 'choice, transparency and accountability' discourse of the marketization

of publicly-funded HE that transformed educational provision, inspection and QA in England from the 1980s to today (Morley, 2004; Molesworth et al., 2011; Shattock, 2012; Williams, 2013) and that is, indeed, a dominant paradigm internationally (Bridges et al., 2007; King et al., 2011; Ball, 2012; Rolfe, 2013; Shah and Nair, 2013). McGettigan (2013) has decried the 'gamble' with UK universities that the Cameron government took from 2010 onwards with pushing for what was effectively their partial privatisation. Dill concluded that this gamble, which in more general terms predated the Cameron government and was not limited to the UK, has failed:

the indicators used for academic quality in the commercial league tables in both the United Kingdom and the United States are of questionable validity (...) the information from (such) tables has not influenced universities to take actions that improve academic standards. (...) the effects of market competition on academic behaviour compromise the capacity of universities to maintain and improve academic standards (2007 pp.64-66).

Brown and Carasso have considered that whilst the marketisation of HE in the UK has brought new financial resources to universities and made them more efficient, entrepreneurial and responsive to external stakeholders, they have cautioned that "this has been at considerable cost in terms of quality, cohesion and, probably, equity" (2013 p.163).

Having surveyed 15 years of research in QA in HE, Harvey and Williams (2010) also concluded that QA practices that focussed on accountability were not effective at encouraging improvement, with an essential aspect of that failure being the dissolution of trust. QA industrial models and Total Quality Management is particular (on which CAF and PROSE are based) were regarded as of little use in HE settings. Similar overviews by Houston and Paewai (2013) and Surssock (2011) have come to analogous conclusions.

Ball (2004) characterised the denaturing effect of NPM on HE as an increase of performativity and fabrication, of educational 'delivery' to fulfil performance indicators and present a 'successful' Potemkin façade. This warped the internal QA processes of educational institutions and vitiated the EQA processes:

Within all this (some) educational institutions will become whatever seems necessary to become in order to flourish in the market. The heart of the educational project is gouged out and left empty. Authenticity is replaced by plasticity. (...) Indeed, the particular disciplines of competition encourage schools and universities to fabricate themselves – to manage and manipulate their performances in particular ways (2004 p.149).

Morley (2003), Canaan (2008) and Berg et al. (2016) have documented the cost of the undue pressure of such QA regimes in terms of unhealthy organisations, the production of anxiety and occupational stress. Morley went a step further: in a neoliberal state quality becomes a "policy technology" (Morley, 2004 p.1), where panic is "manufactured" (p.8) to justify the imposition of the "myth of measurement" (p.26) and fulfil political/ideological imperatives. Ball and Morley's critiques are perhaps amongst the most trenchant examples of the deep suspicion and cynicism that a neoliberal approach to HE and the manipulation of QA thereof has generated in academia, certainly in the UK, over the last decades. It is not surprising that, as discussed in Section 2.5, the term 'quality assurance' has acquired such toxic connotations, certainly in UK-oriented HE literature.

On the other hand, Levin (2012) disputes the alleged ubiquitous influence of the OECD. He points out that the agenda and activities of the OECD are shaped by its paying members (and their electorates), which

accounts for the minor influence of National context on the OECD in Movement A. He cautions that the extent to which national policy formulation, and even more so its implementation, is informed by such international sources should not over-estimated. Then again, Levin may have overlooked the reality of smaller states; Rinne rightly pointed out that:

in principle, small nation-states like Finland also have their say in (...) organisations (e.g. UNESCO, the OECD and the EU) that are more strongly and directly connected with educational policy-making, although the voice of a small country like Finland is rather difficult to hear (2008 p.666).

Clancy (2016) also reports on the influence of the OECD on Irish HE policy development, leading to its 'isomorphism' to the OECD neoliberal positions. The concept of isomorphism and its application to QA in HE is discussed further in Sections 7.8 and 8.3.

Additionally, Levin may also not have given sufficient importance to the capacity of the OECD secretariat to develop and drive its own neoliberal agenda. A good example of this is the determination of the secretariat to proceed with its study on HE learning outcomes, ALEHO, in the face of strong and ultimately successful resistance from elite universities and key countries (Altbach, 2015).

Governments and universities have much less influence, if at all, on international rankings, which is what led to the development of U-Multirank in Europe. However, U-Multirank does not have the same prominence in the media as the 'traditional' rankings precisely because it does not provide a quick and easy list of 'winners' and 'losers'.

The final component of Movement A is the interaction between universities and the national context. The level of financial and regulatory autonomy that universities have varies between and within countries, depending partly on the universities' status and prestige as well as governments' agendas (Amaral et al., 2009; Martin and Bray, 2011; Stensaker and Harvey, 2011; Land and Gordon, 2013). Amaral and Maassen have presented the struggle between different QA objectives and agendas of academics and governments as a tug-of-war: "The balance between these potentially conflicting objectives shifts towards improvement when academics have a strong voice, and towards accountability when the will of the governments predominates" (Amaral and Maassen in Surssock, 2011 p.128).

There is also an important element of influence by universities and their associations, such as Universities UK (2016a) and the Russell Group of top UK universities, on national government policy formulation. One of my UK interviewees illustrated well the complicated dance and potential for friction in the UK context between universities' status and government policy:

There's no legal framework for government management on what happens in higher education institutions. So anything that is done, needs to be done with co-operation and compliance of the institutions themselves. They are self-regulating, self-accrediting institutions. The government's concern is that the process of self-regulation wasn't necessarily providing this sort of information that the public could reasonably expect about the quality of the provision that is being funded by public money, so that what was meant by the setting of the whole quality assurance system in the first place (was being questioned) (SJ34).

An example of the manoeuvring between government and universities can be found in the proposed reform to regulatory oversight of UK universities (Department for Business Innovation & Skills 2016). On the one hand in proposing risk-based oversight and audits in lieu of the present QAA system, the

document has recognised the complaints made by established universities who in the words of one of my UK interviewees:

feel strongly that they are not getting value for money from the current audit regime of the QAA. I think we are heading towards a model that is closer to the Scottish model of more emphasis on enhancement than compliance (...) I believe that QA at HE can be based on an ideology of improvement and not unproblematically follow the agenda set by the marketization of HE (SW18,14).

Another of my UK interviewees concurred both on the perceived problem and its solution:

Part of the (issue) is that the product (the QAA external audits) has not been perceived by institutions to have actually served the institutions' needs. I think there is also a perception that sometimes less is more and I think we have developed a quality assurance infrastructure at national level in terms of guidelines, frameworks etc allied to rather detailed review procedures where there are pages and pages of guidance for institutions and reviewers. I think there is a view in institutions that we are becoming too bureaucratic and losing the sense of creativity, flexibility and innovation that you need in a system, and actually quality assurance is not the ultimate facility to the enhancement (...), and the enhancement, which is vital, has been lost a little bit (CH12).

As an aside, as discussed previously the interviewee was here distinguishing between 'quality assurance' with all its negative connotations, and 'enhancement'.

However, what UK universities actually got in the White paper was not further enhancement, but a proposal for the effective dismantling of the present measure of autonomy of the QAA, the introduction of a much more centralised metrics-based overview and audit regime, and a loosening of parameters for institutions to gain university title. There can be no doubt that the intention of the Paper is to drive HE 'excellence' through a market-driven mechanism built around the neoliberal mantras of 'student choice', 'fair competition' and 'transparent' public information: the Paper itself has 'Student Choice' in its title, and the whole sector would have one regulator entitled the Office for Students (OfS). Students would be 'well informed' in making their choice for their prospective HE through, amongst other things, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), that would evaluate the 'quality' of HE teaching and learning:

The OfS will be explicitly pro-competition and pro-student choice, and will make sure that a high quality higher education experience is available for students from all backgrounds. For the first time, we will put the interests of the student at the heart of our regulatory landscape. By enabling better student outcomes, we will also protect the interests of taxpayers and the economy (DBIS, 2016 p.15).

At the same time TEF outcomes would directly impact providers' ability to "maintain their fees and access to loans" (p.19), neatly closing the loop linking 'quality' to 'student choice'. In typical NPM-speak, the OfS would be at the service of its clients who are the students and economic operators (not, it is implied, the universities), and accountable to the taxpayers. UK universities have strongly contested these reforms, focusing on the validity and use of the TEF (see, for example, UCL, 2016 and Universities UK, 2016b). One of my UK interviewees⁶ outlined the serious consequences that such an approach would have for the quality of teaching and learning as well as the internal quality processes of universities:

There is a trend now to look at negative metrics, how many complaints have you had etc., is there cause for concern. It is not purely because students are paying for their education; I think there is a social shift towards students feeling more empowered and entitled. They will talk of quality: 'this is not the quality I expect'. (...) There is a sense that because you had paid for it, you are entitled to pass and get a first class,

⁶ This interview took place prior to the release of the White Paper.

not because you have worked hard for it. And this has changed quite dramatically as students have become more self-aware as consumers. There is a huge risk that it might actually reduce the quality of teaching – more teaching to the exam, more spoon-feeding, rather than encouraging scholarship and a genuine love of the subject (SW10,11).

University autonomy and enhancement barely get a mention in the White Paper, and it is not clear how the reference in the Paper to the Quality Code developed by the QAA as the basis of continued external audits matches with the main tenor of the White Paper proposals, given that they are ideologically far apart. On the basis of the White Paper a Bill was presented to the Houses of Parliament on the 19th of May 2016 (Parliament.uk 2016), retaining its neoliberal orientation.

The shift from a fitness-for-purpose to a compliance perspective in HE QA is, of course, not limited to England or indeed Europe. Shah and Jarzabkowski (2013) have documented a similar development in Australia, and Stensaker and Harvey (2011) have brought together studies of similar shifts around the world.

7.4 Movement B: International Neoliberal influences and the E4 Group

Movement B represents the impact of international neoliberal influences on the E4 Group members. Both the EUA and ENQA are well aware of the work of international stakeholders such as the OECD and international rankings. The EUA regularly publishes studies on the effect of international rankings on universities (Rauhvargers, 2011; Rauhvargers, 2013; Hazelkorn et al., 2014; Loukkola and Morais, 2015), and keeps its members informed of relevant news with respect to the OECD (EUA 2016), as does ENQA (Enqa.eu, 2016b) with respect to both rankings and the OECD. However, as discussed in Section 7.7 the key QA instrument in European HE, the ESG, is counter-cultural with respect to the neoliberal perspective discussed in Movement A. The effect of the OECD and international rankings seems to be by virtue of their ubiquitousness, rather than determining the perspective and work of the E4 Group with respect to universities.

There is an indirect but important link between Movements A and B: membership in ENQA by the QA agencies depends, amongst other factors, on their demonstrated independence from their government. This may lead to stresses due to divergences between governments' and agencies' agendas. Williams, who was head of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in the UK and of ENQA, recounts that: "the 2008 review of QAA for the purpose of securing continuing membership in (...) ENQA (...) came up with only two criticisms, one being QAA's lack of independence" (Williams, 2009 p.21). Turner observes that: "government would like to see the emphasis in higher education quality moved much further towards quality assurance than the QAA has hitherto required" (Turner, 2011 p.103). Williams (2009) reported that there were already moves in this direction in 2001, and the 2016 White Paper and subsequent Bill discussed previously seem to have confirmed Turner's concerns.

It is important to note that the UK in 2001 was led by a pro-EU Labour government (certainly more so than the Conservative Party), and there is now a Conservative government in a post-Brexit landscape. The UK case thus provides an important lesson on the pervasive influence of NPM that transcends traditional ideological divides: "New public management approaches were first adopted under the conservatives but were continued and further developed under Labour" (Shattock, 2012 p.2). It is also a cautionary tale for the unfolding implications and consequences to an NPM-inspired HE QA.

7.5 Movement C: The E4 Group and the EHEA

Movement C represents the interaction between the E4 Group, the EHEA and universities. The E4 Group members work in concert when it comes to QA policy issues at European level such as with respect to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and EQAR. They of course interact with universities in specific ways according to their individual remit. ENQA has a strong influence on universities through the support it provides to its member QA agencies and the expectation that they uphold a QA standard in line with the ESG. The universities themselves drive the agenda of the EUA and thus have a significant say on the formulation of the ESG by which the QA agencies are judged and which impacts on their IQA.

Some universities are also members in EURASHE by virtue of their technical/professional provision, but the main representative and driver in the sector is the EUA. The ESU has a minor influence on the universities through the QA training and support it provides to member student organisations, which in turn are involved in varying ways in the internal QA and the EQA of their universities (BT 2,3).

As discussed previously in Section 6.6, the universities had a historically seminal role in the Bologna Process through the Carta Magna Universitatis. They are themselves strongly influenced by the outcomes of the EHEA that go beyond the ESG and EQAR and impact of QA issues, such as the use of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the European Qualifications Framework.

The relationship between the EHEA and its stakeholders is more complex than that within the OECD. The Bologna Process was originally rhetorically premised on the agenda of European universities for institutional autonomy and academic freedom enshrined in the Carta Magna Universitatum. It then gave birth to the EHEA in 2010, which brings together governments, the Commission, the E4 group and other key stakeholders. The competing agendas of all these players with respect to HE QA came together with in the developments of the ESG, one of the two key EQA-oriented outcomes of the EHEA.

However, to be able to explore how these competing agendas have informed the ESG it would be useful to first describe the fourth and final choreography of power, Movement D. This focuses on the interaction between the EU Commission, the EU member countries, and the wider stakeholding within the EHEA that also includes the E4 Group.

7.6 Movement D: The EHEA, the EU Commission and European states

The status of the Commission with respect to HE QA and its relationship with EU member states and the EHEA is complex and convoluted. Within the EU education is nominally a national competence, and therefore not subject to EU legislation; however, education was always much more central to the European project than pre-European Union discourse allowed (Rinne, 2008; Sultana, 1997; 2002). In the 21st century, the focus on education has moved from the cultural – the inculcation of ‘Europeanness’ – to the economic (Westerheijden, 2007), and higher education and research have started to feature ever higher in EU discourse. The Lisbon Agenda (Europa.eu, 2016b) of 2000 called for improved education and training systems: “to adapt both to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for an improved level and quality of employment” (Article 25). The 2003 Lisbon Communiqué of the EHEA ministers stated that: “The quality of higher education has proven to be at the heart of the setting up of a European Higher Education Area” (EHEA, 2003 p.3).

In 2009, a year after the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in America and the near collapse of the world economy, the EU increased its focus on education and training for employment through the Strategic Framework for Education and Training 2020 (Europa.eu, 2016c), which incorporated the Bologna targets. ET 2020, as it is called, included as one of its four common EU objectives improving the quality and efficiency of education and training, and identified a number of numerical benchmarks to be reached by 2020 which include raising graduate numbers and employment.

The upshot is that in spite of the EU formal discourse that: “Each EU country is responsible for its own education and training systems. EU policy is designed to support national action and help address common challenges” (ibid.), in actual fact the Commission leverages its prerogative to preserve and promote the Four Freedoms that are at the core of the EU – the free movement of goods, services, persons (including free movement of workers) and capital – to influence policy in areas beyond its direct remit, such as education, in what Pollack calls “creeping competence” (in Amaral et al., 2009 p.5), both within the EU and the EHEA ecologies. Amaral and Neave commented that in spite of the express intention of government Ministers and university rectors to sideline the Commission in the Bologna Declaration:

that the Commission was able, after the Ministers’ brush off, to infiltrate back to a position of influence in the Bologna process must surely be another example of the effective strategy Bruxelles employs to penetrate “in sensitive policy areas, which no member state seems prepared to grant” (Amaral and Neave, 2009 p.290).

One of my European interviewees echoed this view. He asked rhetorically: “In every framework imposed by Europe it is possible to detect some hidden agenda or underlying mechanism, such as flexibility in employment. For example: is the Bologna reform being executed in the true spirit of the original Bologna intentions?” (AV23). My German interviewee complained that the three-cycle HE system that is one of the hallmarks of Bologna was actually “the victory of the anglo-saxon system (...) in which EU had a lot of influence. The Germans were proud of their long-cycle system, which was highly appreciated all across the world” (IW28). Both comments evince the conflation of EHEA and EU Commission agendas.

Temple (2011 p.100) has noted that the Commission actively encourages member states to follow the Anglo-Saxon model of a ‘hands-off’ approach in university-state relationships, which as discussed means allowing more public university ‘autonomy’ so that they are more exposed to the influence of the market and entrepreneurship perspective. In this context the objectives and processes of external QA measures cannot but be influenced by this shift from ‘government to governance’ as discussed in Section 2.3.

Two of my three interviewees operating at trans-European level – the Directors for ENQA and EQAR respectively – testified to the Commission’s direct and vigorous involvement in HE issues. The Director of ENQA reported that although the E4 Group members were very clear that they were answerable to all the EHEA states, not to the EU, the Commission tried hard to include elements of its policy agenda with respect to employment and freedom of services and movement in the ESG. In her opinion the Commission had noticed that if something gets into QA criteria it is more likely to be implemented, since non-compliance would lead to: “a very direct and clear consequence, you are not approved at a European level, so it can be more difficult to be recognised. (...) They (the Commission) wanted the ESG to support what was important for them” (MK4,5). The Director of EQAR stated that: “clearly the EU has an interest

in having standardisation and a clear reference point in terms of QA. EQAR therefore fits with the EU agenda” (CT6).

However, one of my European interviewees with a QA agency background cautioned about overemphasising the influence of the Commission over individual HE institutions:

The Commission is trying to influence, but there is very strong emphasis on national prerogative. Even within the country, for example in Germany the federal state has no say in educational matters. Belgium also has a very complex situation because of different language communities. So coming from Brussels, to actually have a direct control on a German institution, it's a long, long way. Even the national government does not have... So it comes indirectly, via instruments such as mobility (IW27).

This explains why the influence of the Commission on Universities in Figure 7.1 is not depicted as direct but through national governments and the EHEA QA tools.

Indeed, Maassen and Musselin (2009) observed that the process of Europeanisation of and through HE was not simply top-down, but was more in terms of a multi-level exchange: “the domestic actors also develop strategic uses of the drive towards Europeanisation at the national level, influence the decisions at European level, or engage in various forms of re-nationalisation” (p.12). They concluded that the movement over more than 20 years that included the Magna Carta Universitatis, the Bologna Process and the setting up of the EHEA was, in a sense, an intended antidote by the universities and national governments for the Europeanisation agenda of the Commission. Governments saw Bologna as a way of imposing reforms in their own countries – as in fact happened in Malta, as discussed in Chapter 8. Each country was concerned with how to improve its own HE sector and pursued its own logic of how to achieve this. Or, as Westerheijden put it: “there were as many Bologna Declarations as there were countries signing” (Westerheijden, 2007 p.77). Witte observed that: “the commonalities between different national reforms that can nevertheless be observed seem to stem from similar trade-offs and tensions that each of the national systems tried to come to grips with individually, rather than from a coordinated reform” (2009 p.228). One of my UK interviewees highlighted the ambivalence of UK universities to Bologna:

The UK does not perhaps feel separate and apart from the EHEA process, but we do feel a little more confident and perhaps a little arrogant about ourselves. (...) This is going to sound very rude and I don't mean to be rude, but I actually think that we feel that we are so far above that. You know, we think that most of Europe is behind us in terms of quality assurance (SW5,21).

Schriewer (2009) went a step further, calling Bologna a “rationalised myth” because the discourse at transnational level did not “correspond to the specific needs for decision making prevailing under the conditions of particular sociohistorical settings” (p.33).

Kauko has claimed that the Europeanisation of quality assurance that is at the heart of the Bologna process benefitted all the main actors (2012). Martens and Wolf (2009), on the other hand, came to a different conclusion. Their research indicated that the choreography of governments, EHEA and Commission took an unexpected turn; they characterised the instrumentalization of Bologna by national governments as a ‘boomerang’ and their use of OECD supranational tools and reports as a ‘Trojan horse’ leading to unintended implications that were driven by the institutional self-interest of the EU Commission and the OECD secretariat respectively.

In a further twist, Martens and Wolf (ibid.) reported that in reaction to this situation, action was taken in Germany at national and sub-national level to re-establish regional or national competence in aspects of the education sector that were perceived as unduly influenced by the Commission or the OECD. Musselin (2009) described four forms of renationalisation by institutions and governmental actors concerned with the encroachment of European policies in HE matters; at government level these included taking over control of the European process and using it to tackle domestic issues.

The interview data I have collected with respect to the development of the ESG and which I discuss in the next section would tend to give more credence to the interactive scenario, however turbulent, drawn by Martens and Wolf (2009) rather than the win-win situation depicted by Kauko (2012) at one extreme or the corrosive scepticism of Schriewer (2009) at the other.

7.7 Developments in the ESG

Williams concludes that: “the ESG have become accepted as the key authoritative statement on quality assurance in the EHEA” (2012 p.5). The struggle for the ‘ownership’ and application of the ESG is nothing less than the struggle for mastery over the meaning and purpose of QA in HE in Europe.

When I was undertaking the interviews for this thesis, the third round of revisions of the ESG had been finalised and were in the process of being formally confirmed by the EHEA, which took place at the Yerevan Ministerial Conference in May 2015. My interviewee who represented ENQA observed that originally the E4 Group did not feel that an in-depth revision was required, but only a touching-up to remove inconsistencies and overlaps:

Maybe the Commission was keener on an actual revision (...). The interest of the Commission was for quality assurance to become a real tool to push forward the Commission policies and tools. So they wanted direct references to ECTS and other Commission policies and tools (...) The Commission was one of the entities in the BFUG that really insisted on the aspect of employability (MK1,3,5).

However, the ESU objected to this; they did not want to reduce the purpose of HE to only or mainly employability, and put more emphasis on students’ contribution to society (MK12). The E4 Group insisted with the Commission that the ESG were applicable to the EHEA, which was much wider than the EU (MK3). The final approved version of the ESG was a compromise that did not go as far as the Commission would have wished (MK13); the E4 Group effectively resisted the Commission’s pressure to turn the ESG into more of a compliance mechanism.

It must be said that efforts to change the nature and use of the ESG have predated 2015. It was Williams, who was one of the chief architects of the ESG, who expressed unease at the way the ESG were being used “as a continent-wide set of regulations” (2009 p.16) and drifting away from their original intentions as guidelines that respected the national and institutional autonomy of HE within Europe. One of my UK interviewees agreed that the ESG “potentially appear (...) inflexible” (CH66).

One of the core questions I asked my interviewees was whether they thought that using the ESG as the key criterion for membership in ENQA and for acceptance in EQAR had changed the nature of the ESG, notwithstanding its overt discourse. My student, Belgian and German interviewees did not feel the ESG were unduly restrictive (IW25, BT4) and if anything may be too basic (AV21). The ENQA interviewee considered that in function of the eternal balancing act that QA needed to have between compliance and

improvement, there was always a risk that the ESG would become only prescriptive, leading to a reduction of innovation and stopping creative thinking. But she felt that this was a risk that could be managed and averted (MK7).

The most revealing reply was by the EQAR director. He considered that it should not take anyone by surprise that although the ESG started as guidelines to give a general sense of direction, the fact that they are now used as a checklist as a precondition to EQAR membership might have changed their nature:

ESG did start out not to be a checklist, not to be too prescriptive, but even in the first version of the ESG there was a hint that compliance to the ESG might be used as condition to entry into the Register. It is not the first European document that sets out to be non-prescriptive but ends up as being more prescriptive than originally planned. But no-one should be surprised that that has happened. When the second version of the ESG (of 2009) was being discussed we were mindful that the role of the ESG had started to change – now they do fulfil a more prescriptive role than was originally claimed (CT9).

He justified this shift as not only inevitable, but useful and necessary in terms of transparency and freedom of movement:

Originally the Bologna tools were not intended for compliance but for information and support, but especially now as we talk about automatic recognition, issues of compliance with international standards come to the fore. So there is a more direct link between European instruments and tools and what formal consequences they have on the national level. Of course that changes the character of these tools. I think this is a positive development because 15 years after Bologna it is very difficult to explain to students that their degree is still not automatically recognised in all the EHEA countries because there is not automatic recognition. Some say this is promising too much, but others say that this is what Bologna must lead to (CT10).

This passage highlights the ‘creeping competence’ of the Commission – echoing the ‘regulatory creep’ of the neoliberal state through NPM discussed in Section 2.5 – and the conflation of the EHEA and Commission agendas as discussed previously in Section 7.6, in terms of the struggle for the ‘soul’ of the ESG. On the one hand there is the E4 Group whose primary loyalty is the original Bologna ethos as expressed in the ESG. On the other there is EQAR, where the E4 Group’s is one of many competing agendas, and where, as its Director makes clear, EQAR’s primary loyalty is towards neoliberal principles espoused by the Commission and individual governments. This is a struggle conducted ‘under the radar’, which would explain the unproblematic positions of some of my interviewees and in some literature as discussed earlier, but it is no less real nonetheless. Both the ontological and teleological status of the ESG are being put into question. The Commission has tried hard to change their nature, and through EQAR it is attempting to change their purpose.

7.8 A paradigmatic perspective of HE QA in Europe

In this chapter we have seen that the European HE QA panorama is animated by multiple agendas that at times intersect and coalesce, but at other times oppose each other. In this complex scenario two overarching trends can be discerned, each with their own beliefs on the nature of higher education and its relationship to personal fulfilment and national development, as well as on the nature of QA and the relationship between the state and universities, which lead to the justification of particular positions and actions. In the context of my discussion in Section 3.3 I am calling these trends paradigms, as represented in Figure 7.2. In the context of the Methodological Research Programme for Education (MRPE) discussed

in that section, the beliefs constitute the 'hard core' that cannot be changed since they provide the identity of the paradigm, whilst the positions and actions provide its 'protective belt'.

In Figure 7.2 the more dominant is the Neoliberal QA Paradigm which manifests itself most strongly in the choreographic Movements A, B and D. The MRPE theoretical perspective explains at least in part the counter-rationality of a paradigm that is extending its reach and rhetorical strength in spite of growing evidence of its demonstrated non-fitness for purpose as discussed in Section 7.3.

The Neoliberal QA Paradigm is countervailed by the Quality Enhancement (QE) Paradigm, which manifests itself most strongly in Movement C in which the E4 Group and the influence of the universities predominate.

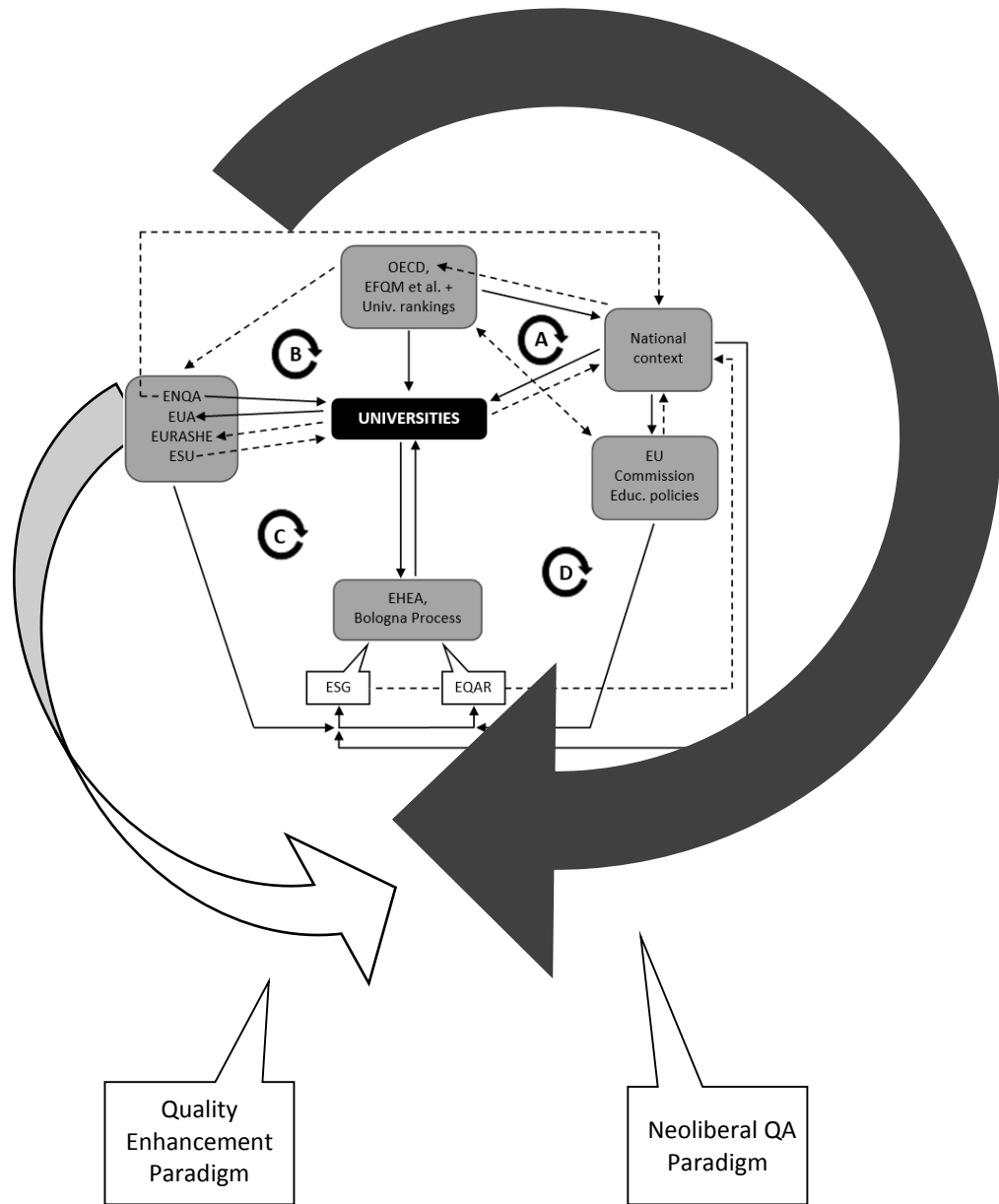


Figure 7.2: The two Paradigms encompassing the four QA Choreographies of European HE

From the perspective of Weberian social action theory the Neoliberal QA Paradigm represents a seemingly relentless drive for the bureaucratization of HE QA and European universities through a process of what I would call entropic isomorphism. Entropy is the dissipation of energy in a system that leads to a gradual decline into disorder. The evidence indicates that HE QA that is underpinned and, in my view, denatured by the Neoliberal QA Paradigm leads to the vitiation of QA practices that are driven by professional rigour and enhance teaching and learning. These practices are substituted by performativity processes that in

the worst case scenario render HE QA a fabrication and a façade, a disordered, useless and even counter-productive mechanism. Thus, entropic isomorphism has an internal tension that will eventually lead to its paradigmatic decay: the neoliberal processes tend towards isomorphic globalisation and therefore a purported increase of ‘order’ through standardisation, whereas in actual fact to paraphrase Ball (2004) in Section 7.3 they ‘gauge out’ HE and the QA thereof, leading to entropy.

The Weberian-paradigmatic perspective allows us to perceive that the Neoliberal QA Paradigm is being challenged by the QE Paradigm. The latter, in line with Weberian theory, also has an isomorphic centripetal force, but it is a Subject-led isomorphism; it retains the agency of the Subject in QA developments. So, whilst the Neoliberal QA Paradigm leads to entropic isomorphism, the QE Paradigm leads to parabolic isomorphism. A parabola takes divergent points of light emanating from the same source and projects them in the same direction along similar (notionally parallel) but discrete pathways. In the same way, HE QA systems that are about quality enhancement and inspired by the ESG as originally intended help their universities progress forward along similar but not identical paths, according to the particular realities and opportunities of each institution. Universities that undertake parabolic isomorphism go through a process of learning and adaptation that allows them to interface with external influences in ways that best suit them, leading to organic and sustainable growth. The relationship between the university and its QA processes (including external ones) is one of mutualistic symbiosis – both prosper. On the other hand, in entropic isomorphism the relationship between the university and the QA process is one of parasitic symbiosis – eventually they strangle each other.

However, in a further Foucauldian game of truth it is the Neoliberal QA Paradigm that as the dominant discourse is normalized within the HE QA panorama; it is the “common-sense of the twenty-first century” (Grant, 2009 p.xii), with its mantras of transparency, mobility, inclusiveness and choice, against which the QE Paradigm must constantly prove its viability and its worth.

7.9 Concluding synthesis

In this chapter I have explored the HE QA regulatory panorama of Europe and have proposed that the interaction of its various actors can be best understood in terms of four choreographies through which two distinct paradigms are manifested: the Neoliberal QA Paradigm and the Quality Enhancement Paradigm. The first leads to entropic isomorphism and a parasitic symbiosis between universities and QA systems. The latter leads to parabolic isomorphism and a mutualistic symbiosis between universities and QA systems. One clear example of the differences between these two paradigms is the pressures being brought to bear on the ontology and teleology of the ESG.

In the next chapter I situate developments in Malta’s QA for F&HE, with a special focus on the University of Malta, within this theoretical model.

Chapter 8

Implementing the Quality Enhancement Paradigm in Maltese Higher Education

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore how the Quality Enhancement Paradigm has been enacted in Malta since the 2006 Education Act through a case study of the development of QA in the University of Malta, and the development of a national QA framework for F&HE by the Maltese government. In doing so I discuss how these developments have been informed by, and have reacted to, the QA choreographies of the Europe-wide network discussed in Chapter 7.

8.2 The developing IQA capacity of the University

Following its re-foundation with the 1988 Education Act as discussed in Section 6.2, the University passed through a *laissez-faire* period with respect to its governance and QA in reaction to the excessive state interference of the previous 16 years. The new administration was keen to reconstitute the University, reverse the erstwhile heavy-handed approach of government and emphasise the University's autonomy (Mifsud Bonnici, 2015).

In 1990 the University commissioned the Warwick Higher Education Group to develop its strategic plan. The Group concluded that "performance monitoring is undertaken neither in teaching nor research, neither centrally or at faculty level" (Shattock, 1990 p.16) and that "there is an unwillingness in the institution as a whole to do anything about the problem" (ibid. p.17). It recommended the setting up of an independent academic review committee to monitor academic programmes and research in the university (ibid. p38).

But it was only in 1996 that the University set up its first Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) (Government of Malta, 1997), which was very much influenced by the Europe-wide discussions that led to the start of the Bologna Process in 2001 (CF11). The *raison d'être* of this QAC was captured in its motto: 'Help us help one another' (Quality Assurance Committee, 2001a). The primary role of this first QAC was to lay the foundations for a procedures framework as well as a 'positive' perception of QA amongst University staff, so as to retain a delicate balance between the developmental and compliance functions of QA. Its first Chair believed that "there cannot be professionalism without autonomy. However, there can be no autonomy without trust by the stakeholders" (CF1). Since the QAC was navigating in uncharted waters in terms of QA, its efficacy largely rested on "moral suasion" (JS41, CF3).

The Bologna developments were seen as positive: "One of the arguments used with non-cooperative staff was that it is better if we do this first before it is done to us, because in future your courses will be accredited externally so you might as well get used to the idea" (CF6). Indeed, in an international climate of increased external accountability, Farrugia believed that HE lecturers needed to appropriate the concept of QA as one based on trust and professionally-driven improvement (Farrugia 1996). In 2005 the QAC was responsible for the University's first Internal Academic Audit across the faculties. More information on the work of the QAC is given as Appendix 8.1.

This first QAC was far from the Warwick recommendations. In spite of – and perhaps even because of – its cautiousness, it was not without its detractors. Farrugia himself mentioned two faculties who were consistently obstructive towards any form of external oversight (CF3). On the other hand an internal University committee set up in 2000, mid-way through the work of this QAC, to explore the implications for the University of Malta’s prospective EU membership commented that measures such as the student questionnaires that were introduced by the QAC “(have) not achieved the desired level of QA” (Lauri, 2000 p.10). It recommended that quality control procedures be strengthened, if necessary with outside help.

Bartolo, a member of Parliament who in the Maltese system retained his full-time job as University lecturer, was also not very complementary of the external examiner system during the parliamentary debate of the 2006 Education Act:

These external examiners enjoy coming to Malta – I do not want to be cynical – they do look at some things but they will not undertake an audit that will somehow lead to the university telling them not to come back as external examiners, so they are a bit self-serving (PTM, 2006h p. 535 the Hon. E. Barolo).

He was also concerned that their comments were not followed up. Bartolo was speaking at the end of the ten-year period of operations of the University’s first QAC. He spoke disparagingly about the internal QA audit that the QAC had just undertaken; he considered it a “ritualistic” exercise, “simply to tick the box and do the paperwork” (ibid.). Prof. Warrington, one of my interviewees and a member of the QAC during that decade, echoed Bartolo’s sentiments:

That committee lacked a clear mandate and the authority to act on its decisions or proposals. Furthermore, it was not integrated into the administrative structure and procedures, including the programme planning function and the ICT infrastructure. I venture the opinion that the University’s leadership at the time was only weakly committed to quality assurance, perhaps fearful of the effect on Rectorial discretion and of potential opposition from the academic staff (EW8).

The University Students’ Council also believed that QA at the University of Malta was weak: “It is nowhere near the level we would like to see” (Times of Malta, 2004).

In 2006 the new University Rector Prof. Juanito Camilleri started his tenure with his team of Pro-Rectors, equivalent to the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellors in UK universities. Prof. Camilleri had a much more rigorous approach to QA; “he walked the talk” (ALV13). In 2007 the University restructured the way new course and programme proposals were assessed and approved by setting up the Programme Validation Committee (PVC) that replaced a Senate sub-committee that had been essentially a persuasive operation, and “that does not get you far” (ALV10). The remit of the PVC was not limited to programmes approval; it included “to provide quality assurance mechanisms acceptable to Senate and appropriate for internal and external audit purposes” and “to ensure optimal use of available resources” (Um.edu.mt, 2016a), so in effect it functioned as the replacement of the old QAC but with stronger powers. In 2009 a centralised system of reviewing research requests was set up through the University Research Ethics Committee. In 2014 the Periodic Programme Review (PPR) mechanism was launched.

Prof. Vella, the Pro-Rector in charge of academic affairs and QA and chair of the PVC, had a hard-nosed view of the process of driving QA within the University that was in stark contrast with the previous ‘enabling’ approach. He believed that a culture of quality would only come about in the face of the disasters that came about when it was not there – it was the only way: “you have to trample over the corpses of students, staff and administrators because you thought you were doing the right thing, we

thought we had a system that had checks and balances but didn't" (ALV2). He quoted a remark he had once heard: "trying to inculcate a university with a quality culture is like trying to move a cemetery – don't expect any cooperation from the inmates" (ALV9). He admitted that the highly centralised approach from 2007 onwards took no cognizance of the good practice already extant in the various faculties, or indeed of the work carried out by the previous QAC (ALV10). He believed that systems needed to be established top-down in a uniform manner since otherwise it would not be fair for different categories of students to be served differently. After all QA was mainly about serving the students well, not serving lecturers (ALV11).

Although Vella justified these reforms in terms of students' experience, this does not imply a market-driven student-as-client QA change dynamic. Over 90 per cent of the University's learners are local non-fee-paying students who receive a stipend on top. Vella's concerns had much more to do with issues of justice, equity and academic rigour than with client or market response, to which the University is not significantly exposed since just over seven per cent of its income comes from student fees and 80 per cent is through direct government subvention (University of Malta, 2016).

Warrington lauded the outcomes of the more rigorous approach to QA:

it brought a rigour, clarity and consistency to programme review and planning which I valued greatly as Head of Department. I invariably found the Programme Review Committee (the PVC) and APQRU (the PVC secretariat) helpful, and used their support to gain leverage over colleagues whose study units were clearly inadequate, but who would not otherwise make an effort to raise their game. (EW8).

Warrington's positive perception is confirmed by almost all the faculty deans and directors of institutes at the University, who I interviewed as part of my work at the University (Spiteri, 2016).

These changes came after the 2006 Education Act. Vella confirmed that his advice to the government at the time was that the University needed to have an external driver to support the Rectorate to make the necessary changes in quality. At the same time the University was also inspired through and driven by its membership in the European Universities Association (EUA), Malta's active participation in the Bologna process, and QA developments at the European level. His participation in international events allowed him to immerse himself in the QA 'language' and perceive trends coming the University's way. This gave him stature within the University to assert the arguments he was trying to make: "but if you say – let's try this because everyone else is doing it (...) those who are not doing it will be forced to do it" (ALV16).

So, following his predecessor's example, the process of inculcating a QA culture within the University from 2006 onwards also followed a carrot and stick approach. "Had the Education Act changes not been made as they were it would have been more difficult for the University to convince people to do the necessary changes. (...) I once told (a Ministry official): if you don't do it I will have to invent it exists!" (ALV14).

In terms of the Weberian narrative of power in authority discussed in Section 3.4.2, Vella was bolstering his Legitimate Power emanating from his role as Pro-Rector with Expert Power on the basis of his knowledge of the QU/EHEA QA process, thus strengthening the intrinsic legitimacy of the QA reforms he wished to implement within the University.

In 2014 the University agreed to become a partner in the EU-funded project 'Making Quality Visible' as I discuss in the next section. In April 2015 it underwent its first external audit as part of the EU Project. As

a direct consequence of this experience it reconstituted the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) with the remit of laying the groundwork for a fully-functioning QAC as from academic year 2016-17 (Um.edu.mt, 2016b). A Quality Assurance Unit was set up to support administratively the work of the QAC.

As discussed, the internal QA of the University after its re-foundation with the 1988 Education Act evolved from a *laissez-faire* approach, to a purely persuasive role with a trust-building objective, to a much more assertive centralized compliance function. The present phase dates from the external quality audit of 2015 and its regime of publishing judgements on standards, to which the University is still coming to terms and understanding its implications as I discuss in the next section. Table 8.1 gives these (first) four phases:

**Table 8.1: The Four Phases (up to now)
of the Quality Enhancement Paradigm for the University**

P	<u>From 1988 to 1996 (from the refounding of the University)</u>	<i>Laissez-Faire</i>
1	<u>From 1996 to 2006 (from setting up of first QAC)</u>	Persuasive Trust-Building
2A	<u>From 2006 to 2015 (from more rigorous approach to QA)</u>	Centralised Compliance
2B	<u>From 2015 onwards (from first external quality audit)</u>	Post-EQA

These four phases elaborate for the purposes of the University the two broad phases of the Quality Enhancement Paradigm identified earlier in Section 6.9. Phase P was really preparatory to the Quality Enhancement Paradigm: although it had a higher element of self-regulation than the new Paradigm itself because of the *laissez-faire* governance environment of the University, the discourse on quality enhancement only started in 1996 with the setting up of the first QAC by the University. Phase 1 in Table 8.1 is the University equivalent to Phase 1 in Figure 6.2; the element of self-regulation in this phase matched that of Phase P and was also higher than would eventually be the levels in Phases 2A and 2B because of the more rigorous centralized approach by the University authorities to QA as well as the effect of the EQA. Phases 2A and 2B are together equivalent to Phase 2 in Figure 6.2.

Figure 8.1 builds on Figure 6.2 and represents the two Paradigms from the perspective of the University, including the four phases in Table 8.1 above.

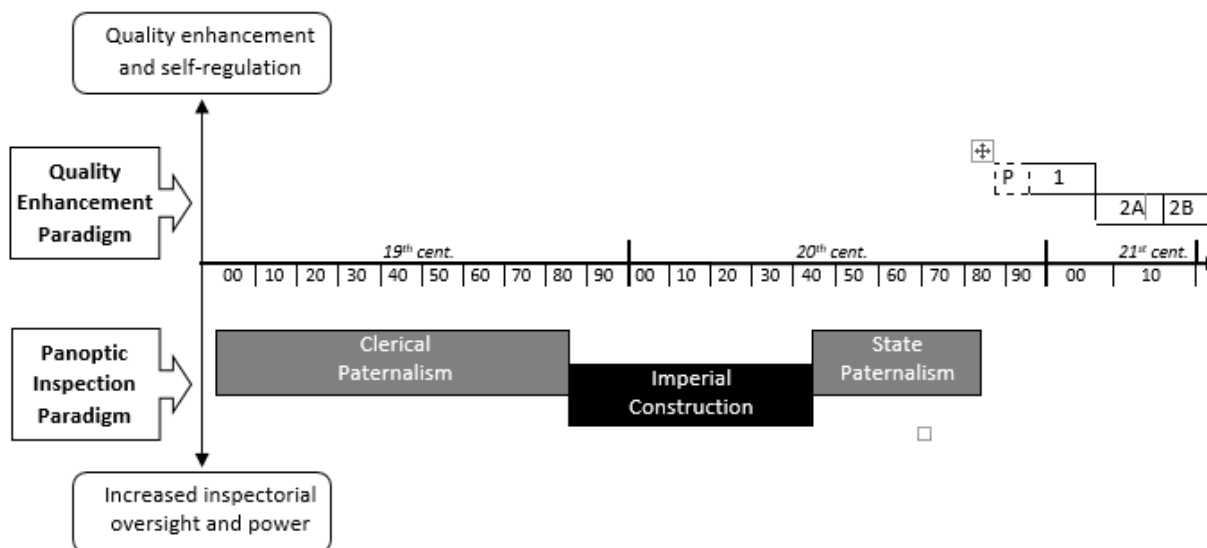


Figure 8.1: The University perspective of the two Paradigms

The four phases of QA development of the University are consistent with the five-phase developmental table proposed by Bollaert (2014b). Table 8.2 matches Bollaert’s phases with the different phases of the University.

Table 8.2: Comparing the QA Development of the University of Malta with Bollaert’s Developmental Phases of QA

Bollaert’s developmental Phases of QA*	Management and organisation Processes*	Results*	QA development of the University of Malta
Phase 1	Quality is the result of purely individual commitment.	Quality is variable.	Pre-Phase P
Phase 2	There is the beginning of thinking in processes.	Quality is the result of a beginning systematic approach.	Phase 1
Phase 3	The organisation is managed professionally.	Quality is guaranteed.	Phase 2A
Phase 4	The organisation as well as its management is systematically renewed.	Quality is continually improved with innovation.	
Phase 5	The organisation is outward-oriented and strives for excellence.	Quality is recognised by externals as excellent and thus an international example.	

*taken from Bollaert 2014b p.99

I discuss the position of Phase 2B of the QA development of the University in Appendix 9.1.

8.3 QA at the University in the context of the European QA network

One can conclude that although the QA developments of the University were certainly influenced by the Bologna process, the main driver for change seems to have been internal, based on the felt need to improve provision and to enhance its international credentials. Indeed, much like hydroelectric dams use the potential energy of water to generate electricity, the University administration engineered and even amplified the external pressure derived from the Bologna process and Malta's international commitments thereof to overcome internal resistance and drive through what were considered to be essential internal QA reforms. Although there is some evidence, for example in the Parliamentary debate discussed earlier in Section 8.2, of dissatisfaction in the quality processes and outcomes of the University, this does not seem to have been a primary change driver to the extent that it led to change being forced upon an unwilling University. To continue the aquatic metaphor, it is clear that the University was not at the mercy of a flood of QA legislation and implementation, nor financially beholden to its students, but was very much involved in generating and directing the force and flow of the whole process, right up to the format and undertaking of its external quality audit.

Therefore, the increase in rigour and compliance that was the hallmark of Phase 2A and Phase 2B in Figure 8.1 with respect to the preceding Phase P and Phase 1 cannot be attributed to some local adaption of the international NPM agenda leading to specific external legislative or market pressures, but primarily to the self-regulatory processes of the University itself.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) explored the pressures of rationalisation and compliance that organisations face, in a reconsideration of Weber's famous metaphor of the Iron Cage by which he described the irreversible momentum of bureaucratisation in industrial society. They distinguished between three isomorphic processes: coercive, mimetic and normative. Coercive isomorphism occurs when the organisation is under formal or informal direct pressure, whether through legislation or through persuasion, to change and conform. Mimetic isomorphism is the process by which organisations themselves seek to model themselves on their peers to address uncertainty. Normative isomorphism is driven by issues of professionalization and stems from the desire of the members of the organisation to legitimate their occupational autonomy.

Using this taxonomy, the QA developments at the University may be said to have been subjected to mimetic and normative isomorphic processes rather than coercive ones. The Bologna process did lead to an isomorphic tendency in the QA practices of the University, but it was an isomorphism that was informed by significant agency on the part of the University, made possible because of its particular positionality as the sole state university with deep traditions in a post-colonial small island state. This positionality allowed for the filtering and manipulation of both international globalising and local pressures, so that the University could operate within the Quality Enhancement Paradigm to undertake its own form of parabolic isomorphism and enjoy a degree of insulation from the Neoliberal QA Paradigm, as discussed previously in Section 7.8.

This beneficial instrumentalization of the Bologna process by universities has also been documented in Belgium and Holland (de Wit, 2010), Greece (Asderaki, 2009) and Italy (Ursin et al., 2008).

8.4 A QA Framework for Maltese further and higher education

Although national regulations did indicate that both F&HE institutions would fall under the same IQA and EQA general regime (Government of Malta, 2012b Regulations 36 to 41), they did not specify the quality standards against which these would be benchmarked, and left the possibility for different categories of entities to be subject to customized QA mechanisms (ibid. Regulation 39(3a)). When I was recruited as the first Head of QA within the NCFHE in mid-2013, my brief included the setting up of the national QA F&HE system using EU project funds. The Maltese partners of the EU project, entitled Making Quality Visible, included all the major state providers of vocational, adult, further and higher education in Malta: the University of Malta, MCAST, the ITS, the Directorate for Lifelong Learning, and the Employment and Training Corporation. Although I led the project and its various components, as well as undertaking the relevant research and authoring the National QA Framework, all deliberations and decisions involved the representatives of all the partners, who met frequently to discuss the process and outcomes of the project and agreed unanimously on all issues and deliverables. For this reason in this chapter the pronoun 'we' refers to the project partners and myself. The project was called 'ESF 1.227: Making Quality Visible', and more information is available at Ncfhe.gov.mt (2016a).

In Section 6.4 I discussed the three main challenges that a new paradigm for school inspection would face. These were related to Coloniality, Monopoly and Intimacy. In F&HE these challenges were addressed through a three-pronged strategy embedded in the ESF Project: a) capitalizing on the positive aspects of Malta's size and close-knit social networks; b) a scoping exercise with providing institutions; and c) the setting up of a Network for Quality Assurance Professionals in Further and Higher Education (Net-QAPE).

As was discussed in Section 3.2, Malta's 'absolute condition' of Smallness is not only a limitation but can also be an advantage. The fact that in Malta we have one Ministry of Education covering all educational provision gave added impetus for attempting to define one unified QA Framework and for the close working collaboration between stakeholders on the ground, of which the ESF project was a typical example. Also, the National Qualifications Framework in place since 2009 gives parity of esteem to vocational and tertiary provision, and to the ECTS (academic) and ECVET (vocational) learning credit systems. Finally, the NCFHE itself uses the same licensing and accreditation mechanisms for all entities and forms of provision. We capitalized on these common elements in making the case for a unified QA Framework.

The first task of the project was to identify the kind of QA framework that would underpin the required QA systems at national level. There have been ongoing attempts at European level since 2006 to synergise the QA processes between the vocational and HE spheres. Up to now these have been fruitless both because of the divergent ontologies and teleologies of QA systems in further and higher education sector respectively, and also because of fears of the EU's 'creeping competence' discussed in Section 7.6. The only other country that has developed an overarching Framework, after Malta developed its own, is Ireland. Further information is provided in Appendix 8.2.

In deliberating on the type of QA framework that would best fit the Maltese context, the ESF project partners first looked at Malta's international commitments to implement QA measures for further, higher

and adult education provision; further information is provided in Appendix 8.2. Could the way to fulfil these commitments be a single QA framework? To explore the possibility of a unified QA framework for the sector, we compared the ESG 2009 for higher education provision with EQAVET, the EU QA system for vocational provision, as adapted for the Maltese context (NCFHE, 2013). We concluded that at a conceptual level all the Factors and Principles and 65 per cent of the Indicators of the Maltese version of EQAVET were reflected in the ESG. Further information on the desk research that was carried out on local and international studies of the applicability of QA systems across sectors is given in Appendix 8.2.

We were of course aware of the epistemological, ontological and teleological differences between the higher education and vocational education approaches to quality assurance, encapsulated in the difference between the Bologna and Copenhagen processes respectively. The emphasis in the former was on the academic freedom and autonomy of the HE institutions given the status of European universities as discussed in Chapter 7. This was reflected in the ESG and its focus on process and quality enhancement. The QA dynamic of the Copenhagen Process called for greater accountability through numerical performance indicators and the possibility for state and EU intervention, which reflected the status of vocational education and training in many European countries, and the much stronger presence of the Commission in this sector due to its connection to employment, as discussed previously in Section 7.6. This was reflected in the outcomes orientation of EQAVET.

However, given Malta's advantages of Smallness discussed previously we concluded that the identification of an EQA common core for further, higher and adult education was conceptually viable.

The next step was to identify the boundaries of possibility of such a framework. To do so we undertook a scoping exercise with service providers, so as to explore the complexity of provision and the practice of providers in terms of quality assurance. This scoping exercise had two components: a) a survey of QA practice by the project partners; and b) one-to-one interviews from January to March 2014 with 75 per cent of license holders at the time, including the major private providers. Further information on the outcomes of this exercise is given in Appendix 8.2.

All providers who were interviewed and the project partners agreed that the ethos and scope of the ESG could function as the basis for a national QA framework that catered not only for higher but also for further and lifelong educational provision, for both state and private sectors. At the same time, providers expressed the need for a QA framework that was both process and outcome oriented, was sufficiently sensitive to the range of realities of provision, and had a greater sensitivity to stakeholder (including employer) involvement and employability issues than the ESG 2009.

The third component of the strategy to implement the 2006 Education Act for QA in F&HE was the setting up of Net-QAPE, the Network for QA Professionals in F&HE. Net-QAPE brought together over 40 QA officers from all the major state and private providers and many smaller ones, which together cover more than 95 per cent of students in the sector. It provided a regular and frequent forum to discuss all aspects of the QA Framework. As with the ESF Project partnership, this was possible because of the positive aspects of small size, and provided a good example of what Lowenthal (1987) called "managed intimacy" as discussed in Section 3.2. Net-QAPE ensured the ownership of all providers in the process, and dispelled fears that the QA Framework was yet another manifestation of state Monopoly. Indeed, the final framework was approved unanimously.

Finally, the NCFHE requested a number of transnational and national European agencies, namely ENQA, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the QA agencies of Austria, Switzerland, Romania and Great Britain, to provide feedback in the proposed QA framework for Malta. All agreed that at the time such a comprehensive framework was innovative, certainly in the European context, and was a viable proposition for Malta (NCFHE 2015g p.13).

Through all these processes, the Project partners and the Net-QAPE members concluded that such a QA framework for further, state and private higher and adult formal educational provision that was situated within the Quality Enhancement Paradigm, underpinned by the ESG and enriched by EQAVET perspectives, was acceptable to providers and an achievable target for Malta that would be fit for purpose given Malta's particular history and reality (ibid.). The wording 'situated within the ESG' is used advisedly; we concluded that the ontological and teleological underpinning of the Framework would be the ESG, with its emphasis on entity ownership and autonomy, and quality enhancement rather than accountability.

Malta's National F&HE QA Framework is underpinned by six principles, given in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3 The Six Principles of Malta's National F&HE QA Framework

1	Framework contributes to a National Quality Culture
2	Framework is based on the ESG and enriched by the EQAVET perspective
3	IQA is Fit for Purpose
4	EQA is a tool for both Development and Accountability
5	The Quality Cycle is at the Heart of the Framework
6	Integrity and Independence of the EQA Process

Further information on the Framework is provided in Appendix 8.3.

The decision was taken to first focus on institutional-level QA systems and EQAs, since it was felt that this would be the best way to support entities in the development of their quality cultures. The Framework was piloted through the undertaking of EQA external quality audits with the University of Malta, MCAST and the ITS. The full reports of these EQAs are available at the NCFHE website: www.ncfhe.org. At the time of writing they are not at all easily accessible, for reasons I shall hint at later on. Further information of the piloting of the EQAs is available in Appendix 8.3.

All in all, stakeholders agreed that the strategy of having one set of QA Standards that could be interpreted flexibly for both the IQA and the EQA within an overarching Framework for further, higher and formal adult learning, had worked.

That, at least, was the consensus by the concluding conference of the ESF Project, which took place on the 1st July 2015. But that was before the draft reports of the three EQAs were circulated to the three hosting institutions one month later at the end of July 2015. As I explained in Section 4.4, insider research considerations prevent me from delving more into the aftermath of the EQA; in Appendix 8.3 I state only the facts that are already in the public sphere. In Chapter 9 I discuss the implications of the reaction of the University for further research.

8.5 Comparing the Maltese and European HE QA scenarios

Figure 8.3 brings together the discussions in this chapter and applies the QA network at European level developed previously in Figure 7.1 to the Maltese context. The University was a member of EURASHE some years ago but has now focused on its membership in the EUA. The University's Students Council KSU receives a little support from the ESU and itself has some impact on QA procedures and outcomes. The NCFHE is an affiliate member of ENQA and of course has strong influence on the University through ongoing compliance verifications and the EQAs.

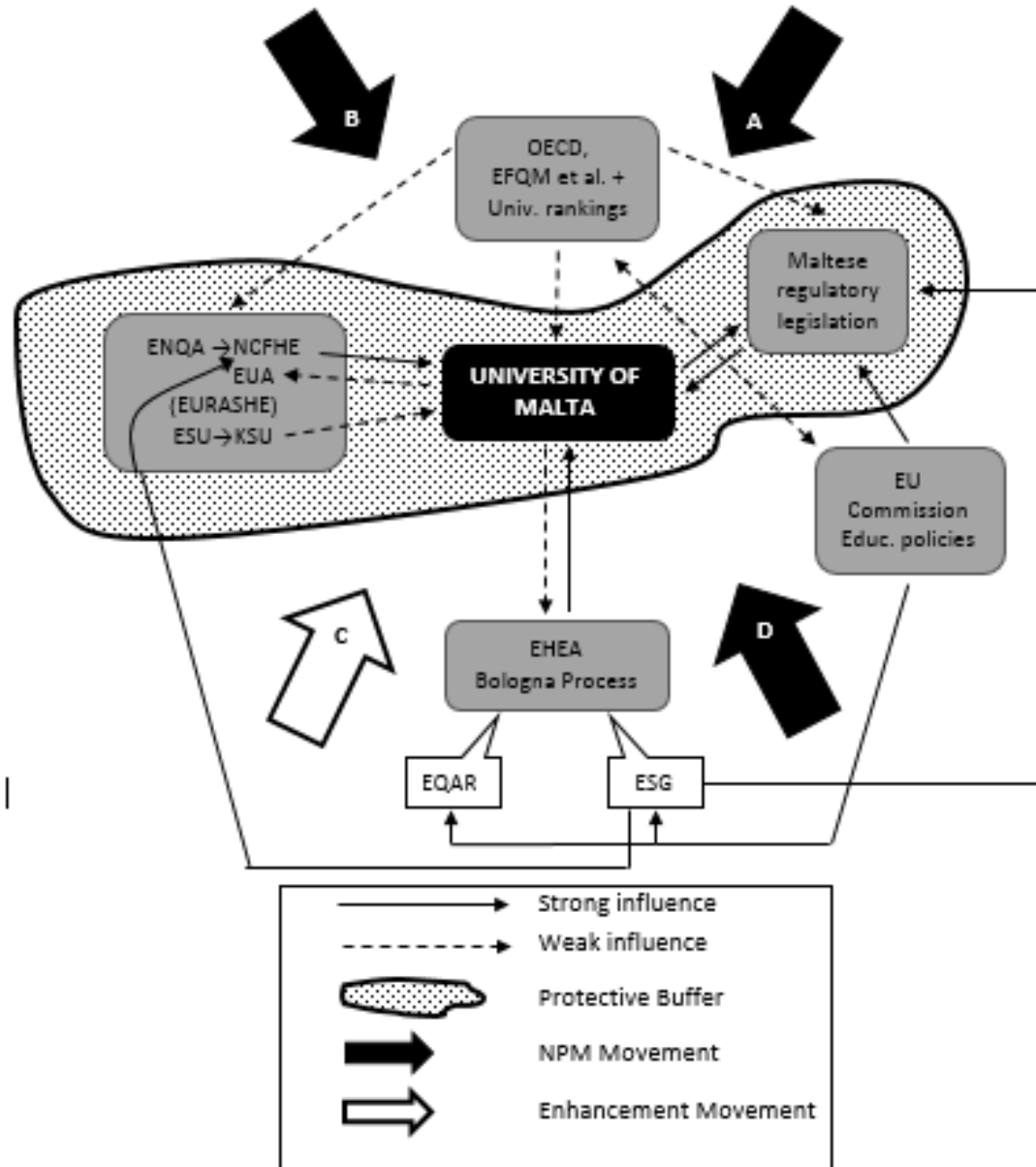


Figure 8.2: Network of QA Regulatory Power and Influence for the University of Malta

A comparison between Figure 8.2 and Figure 7.1 for the whole European QA network clearly illustrates that the University is less impacted by the neoliberal supranational entities, has more influence on state regulatory legislation and has less influence on the Bologna Process than universities typically have at European level. The ESG have a strong influence on Maltese QA legislation and on the work of the NCFHE, certainly stronger than in England.

There is a symbiotic relationship between the QA developments at the University of Malta and Maltese HE policy development and implementation that seems to have the power to temper international globalising influences by virtue of an anamorphic take on Malta's characteristics of Smallness, Monopoly and Intimacy. The university's socio-political history as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, as well as its relatively sheltered status as the sole state university with stable funding, a guaranteed student pool and minimal exposure to the vagaries of student fees mean that it can bring disproportionate influence – when compared to its European peers – on state HE policy development and implementation. This influence buffers the latter from the Neoliberal QA Paradigm, contributing to a national QA Framework and EQA protocol that is situated within the Quality Enhancement Paradigm, far removed from the state coloniality of yesteryear. Additionally, this dynamic has contributed to the national QA Framework covering further, higher and adult formal education provision, the first of its kind in the EHEA.

In turn, this dynamic has allowed the University itself to undertake a controlled process of mimetic and normative isomorphism with respect to its QA development, including its first EQA, which was also underpinned by the same paradigm.

Figure 8.3 includes this protective buffer that encompasses the University, state policy making and regulatory implementation. This buffer is being subjected to the influence of the four choreographic Movements described in Figure 7.1. They are here represented as black or white arrows, and the letters labelling each arrow correspond to the respective choreographic Movement in Figure 7.1. These arrows do not represent additional forces of power and influence over and above those represented by the thin whole or dotted arrows, but are a general summation of these forces. As discussed previously in Section 7.8, Movements A, B and D are largely underpinned by the Neoliberal QA Paradigm, whilst the fourth Movement in which the E4 Group predominates is largely underpinned by the Quality Enhancement Paradigm. Thus although the Neoliberal QA Paradigm is still the predominant influence on QA issues in Europe, the protective buffer generated by the anamorphic perspective of Malta's small island state characteristics and augmented by the international influences of the Quality Enhancement Paradigm is, up to now, sufficient to counteract the neoliberal agenda and to articulate and operationalize a Maltese version of the Quality Enhancement Paradigm.

In Chapter 6 I commented that paradigms sometimes 'come back'. Naidoo (2011), Shahjahan (2013) and Blanco Ramírez (2014) have considered that the globalising tendency of the Neoliberal QA Paradigm is justified by an imperial rhetoric that conceptualises the Global South as requiring 'saving' and 'development'. One of my Maltese interviewees with extensive QA experience in the Middle East lamented the tendency of some governments and universities in that region to copy uncritically what happens in the UK, in an attempt to quickly 'buy into' international prestige: "this (...) is a form of reproductive performance of colonialism. They are assuming that unless they copy QA that mirrors what happens in the UK then they are not on a par. This to me is a foul" (JP3).

The Neoliberal QA Paradigm shares the same DNA as Malta's Panoptic Inspection Paradigm: it privileges accountability, dissipates trust and professional standing, disempowers the Subject and distances them from the locus of power and control which at least partly is no longer under national control. To paraphrase the famous aphorism that war is the continuation of politics by other means, I would say that in the Maltese context, the Neoliberal QA Paradigm would be the continuation of the Panoptic Inspection Paradigm by other means.

8.6 Concluding synthesis

Chapters 7 and 8 discussed how the three-fold theoretical framework articulated in Chapter 3 has been used to describe the European panorama of QA in HE, and thereby to identify and account for the distinctive approach that Maltese QA policy development in F&HE has taken when compared to European trends. In Chapter 7 the paradigmatic perspective identified the major and countervailing paradigms in HE QA internationally in the context of the Weberian narrative of a multi-actor network of power and influence. In Chapter 8 this was applied to the Maltese context through the prism of the perspective of small island characteristics. These characteristics acted as a buffer that largely protected QA HE developments in Malta from the influences of the Neoliberal QA Paradigm and allowed them to be imbued by the Quality Enhancement Paradigm.

On the other hand, in keeping with the Janus-like quality of the small island characteristics, I have also hinted at the resistance put up by the University upon the publication of the report of its EQA, underpinned by this same dynamic, which if anything reinforces the concept of the protective buffer.

This complex choreography of power and influence may yet change, and the greatest challenge is likely to come for the implementation of Malta's HE internationalisation agenda. In the next and final chapter I discuss, amongst other things, the possible implications of this.

Chapter 9

The Future of QA in Malta

9.1 Has Paradigm Shift occurred?

I started this thesis by asking the question: ‘Why and how did Malta, a post-colonial EU member micro-state, attempt to replace educational inspection, born and bred in the 19th century colonial logic of panoptic oversight and paternalistic micro-management, by an overarching Quality Enhancement model?’ This question has different answers for compulsory and HE provision. With respect to HE the evidence would suggest that the precursor to paradigmatic shift in this sector really started with Malta’s increased political autonomy in 1921, took root in the post-WWII period and culminated in Independence in 1964. After a sore trial in the 1980s the shift stabilized from 1987 onwards and has grown in strength ever since. The 2006 Education Act confirmed this trend. The internal and external inspection regimes of the 19th and early 20th centuries are unthinkable in today’s University. The Quality Enhancement Paradigm (QEP) in Maltese HE has even been strong enough to keep at bay the pan-European neoliberal influences of New Public Management (NPM), due to the protection afforded by Malta’s small island characteristics.

However, this may yet change. The present government has a *de facto* policy for the internationalization of F&HE which is set to be formalized through the creation of Education Malta: “a not-for-profit (public-private) initiative (that) will promote the internationalisation of education in Malta, encouraging foreign educational entities to establish a presence here” (Bartolo, 2016). Indeed, the monopoly of the University of Malta was terminated when the NCFHE issued four new licences in 2015 and 2016 (Ncfhe.gov.mt, 2016b) for universities operating in Malta, and when I left NCFHE other licences were under review. The NCFHE also issued 16 new licences in 2015 for higher education institutions that can offer courses up to PhD level (Ncfhe.gov.mt, 2016c), bringing the total of licenced HE or F&HE institutions including universities to 84, albeit most being small providers of foreign courses. Additionally, also in 2015 MCAST’s capacity for self-accreditation was raised to Masters level (Government of Malta, 2015 Regulation 11).

Another aspect of diversification is the presence of foreign paying students at the University of Malta. The percentage of the student cohort of the University that was foreign has increased slowly from 5.8 percent in 2012 to 6.9 percent in 2015, earning it 7.4 percent of its total income in 2015 (University of Malta, 2016). The incoming Rector Prof. Alfred Vella has identified the increase of foreign students as one of his targets, and the relatively low placement or invisibility of the University in international rankings one of his concerns (Vella, 2016). In spite of its small size, the present foreign student population exerts a disproportionate influence with respect to expectations of academic provision – for example, in recent years it has led to the redesign of particular courses that attract a significant number of fee-paying students (Spiteri, 2016). A strong increase in the percentage of foreign student intake is likely to amplify this influence further.

This increasing diversification at national level and within the University itself may reach a point where significant pressure starts to be applied on the number of applications and the provision of particular courses, as well as for a rethinking of the present funding model. Currently, government funds the University directly for 80 percent of its budget, without this being tied to success criteria or performance

indicators apart from financial audits. Increasing diversification could lead to rival providers claiming preferential treatment for the University, and public opinion could push government towards a funding model which follows the student and is tied to expected outcomes. Or else a significant economic downturn could make it impossible for the state to keep up this level of funding, as has happened in many European Countries in the last two decades. In both these scenarios, the reliance of the University on fee-paying students would increase significantly, reducing the University's funding security and potentially whittling down the buffer effect of the small island characteristics to the Neoliberal QA Paradigm discussed in Section 8.6.

In the compulsory sector it is less clear that paradigm shift has in fact occurred. On the one hand the overbearing inspection regime of old is not likely to return, even because the professional status of teachers would act as an effective blocking force. On the other, there is growing public concern that the 2006 reform did not sufficiently impact teaching and learning and that it needs to be reviewed (see, for example, Sunday Times of Malta, 2016; Caruana, 2016; Micallef, 2016). Government has just issued proposed sweeping changes to the Education Act (socialdialogue.gov.mt 2016), including a restructuring of the regulatory framework. Under the proposed law schools will have a much greater degree of autonomy from their Colleges, and the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) will be transformed into a National Commission that will retain the inspection function of the DQSE and have greater autonomy from government than the DQSE. The proposals have retained the legal text related to the developmental focus of the inspection function of the 2006 Education Act. But it is not at all clear that the increased autonomy of the schools, which will include increased financial autonomy and three-year budgeting, will not trigger a more rigorous accountability regime that would rely on performance targets, changing the nature of school internal QA mechanisms and external inspection. As I argued in my IFS with respect to the College system in the 2006 reform, we may again be facing a disconnect between the overt discourse of the proposed legal amendments and the subtext, which in this case may well have a neoliberal flavour.

Malta's small island state characteristics insulated it from the Neoliberal QA Paradigm in HE QA developments and allowed for the national QA framework in F&HE to be set up and running in 19 months. The external QA structure for compulsory education took even less time. However, these same characteristics can lead to just as quick a change in direction – if ten key senior educators in either compulsory or F&HE provision are replaced by a government keen to introduce NPM-inspired practices, the deed can be done in that sector. The political metabolism of small island states resembles the metabolism of small mammals: things can get done quickly, but they can also be undone quickly and have a short time-span.

So, as discussed in Chapter 3, there is no guarantee that the QE Paradigm in either compulsory or higher education will inevitably strengthen and remain unchallenged. We will need to await developments in both sectors in the coming years, and this in itself should be a fruitful area for further research. My hope is that such research would not be a requiem to a failed attempt at whole-system change in Maltese education, but a chronicle of the resilience of a small island state continually adapting its practices to strive for educational excellence and equity in the face of seemingly overpowering forces.

9.2 Further research avenues

In the course of working on this thesis a number of research avenues came to light which I could not pursue but which are worth exploring. They are indicated below; further information is provided in Appendix 9.1:

- using a symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective to investigate the QA power dynamics at a micro-level, to complement the Foucauldian and Weberian macro-level perspective that I used in this work;
- exploring the gender perspective of educational inspection and QA in Malta, for example with respect to gender and colonial power (Levine, 2004), and gender and power in education settings (for example, Brimblecombe et al., 1996);
- exploring how contradictory currents in English society and Imperial governance impacted on the intertwining networks within Maltese society during the British period with respect to educational development and inspection in Malta, taking into account the changes in the concept of Empire throughout the 19th century;
- exploring the interface between QA/school inspection developments, economic/financial considerations and school effectiveness issues in small island contexts;
- exploring what has happened to the evolution of the Quality Enhancement Paradigm in Malta both in the compulsory and F&HE sectors after the self-imposed time limit of this thesis, in the context of the small island characteristics of Isolation, Smallness, Intimacy and Monopoly;
- a corollary to the above would be to explore similarities and differences between the QA realities in other small island / region communities;
- at a European level, investigating further the evolution of the two Paradigms discussed in Chapter 7 with a special focus on the EHEA and the evolving role of EQAR as discussed in Section 7.7, and to what extent are universities managing to undertake parabolic rather than entropic isomorphism.

9.3 My contribution to the field

Although there is a wealth of research and writings on the effect of QA in both compulsory and F&HE sectors, my work gives a useful contribution in a number of areas. Firstly it expands small states literature on whole-system school reform, which tends to focus on big countries and the ‘winners’ of the various international studies such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS (see, for example, Fullan, 2009; Hargreaves and Shirley, 2009; Hargreaves et al., 2010; Fullan, 2011). The small states perspective is also quite limited in the HE literature (Baldacchino, 2011; Martin and Bray, 2011). In this context my work provides analysis of the first example, certainly in the EHEA, of a national educational quality culture that encompasses all educational sectors, from compulsory to HE. However, my work can be of interest beyond the small-state focus since, as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, developments in this context can throw contrastive light on supra-national dynamics.

My work is also useful in that it goes beyond the Foucauldian-driven neoliberal-bashing narrative that is the staple of a lot of QA literature in HE. Whilst recognizing the preponderance of the Neoliberal QA Paradigm, I have proposed a Weberian-paradigmatic theoretical framework that allows for the articulation of a narrative of multiple agency, of complex and unpredictable choreographies that can and have given rise to articulated responses to the Neoliberal QA Paradigm, chief of which is the Quality

Enhancement Paradigm embodied by the ESG. This theoretical framework explains why universities in a *de facto* monopolistic position in small states function differently with respect to international QA influences than larger and nominally 'stronger' counterparts who are more exposed to these influences. It also explains why different supra-national entities do not behave as a single, solid neoliberal hegemonic block, and why we need to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' HE isomorphic processes.

Figure 9.1 below summarises the insights on Maltese and European QA developments gained in undertaking this work by using the triple 'lens' theoretical framework developed in Chapter 3. The insights are categorized according to the 'lens' they are most closely associated with; however it must be emphasized that these insights were only perceived through all three 'lenses', by making use of all three theoretical perspectives together.

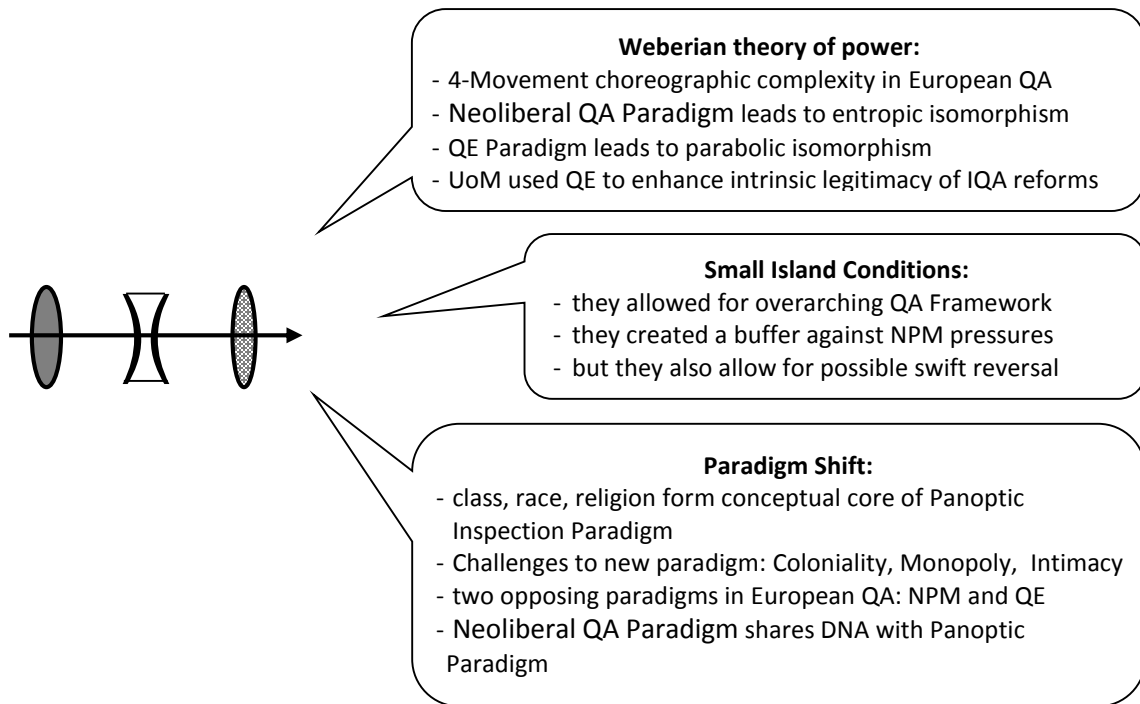


Figure 9.1 Insights gained using the Tripartite Conceptual Framework