



From school to industry in post-colonial Malta

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blasphemous rumours?

“

Too lucid to attribute value to everything I write (tittle-tattle, gossip, political soothsaying, passing moods), I still end up conferring such value upon all my notes without exception, by a detour via History.

”

Jean Paul Sartre (1984)

... on rumours.

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Notes on social reproduction.

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Educational provision

- Post-1970 educational and vocational provision: comprehensive and vocational

Discussion

- VET studies
- studies in political economy

Framing concepts

- human capital and/or labour power
- others



The 'economic': putting the 1970s in context.

Colonial

- harbour activity/military interests
- boom and bust - migration and infrastructural works (unemployment)

Post-colonial

- unemployment
- skilled workforce/resource scarcity
- market instead of military
- exports
- FDI
- economic dependency



The 'political' and the 'economic': reproduce/regulate labour.

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Advanced economies' post-war welfare

- integration and stability -

to post-1970 workfare

- capital mobility and flexibility (time, wage, sacking) -

combined in Malta.

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Development Plans. Attract foreign investment

1st, 1959-64. Incentives for “labour-intensive, mainly textile and clothing firms” requiring cheap labour (JC Grech); intro. of technical trng.

2nd, 1964-69, agriculture, tourism; reduce migration/keep pool of skilled.

3rd, 1969-74, stopped 1971.

4th, 1973-80, bank, gas, electricity, broadcasting nationalised; airline, shipping company state-owned.

- Manufacturing GDP share: Lm115.8m ('73); Lm245.8m ('79), (Baldacchino).
- 1974 Educ. Act, 1st holistic educ. act; “1st ever Maltese ‘human resources’ development plan” (Zammit Mangion, 1992)

5th, 1980-85, educ. in industrial skills; technological, research base set up.

6th, 1986-88, employment goals (manufacturing, services) not reached



The core unit

'Human capital' educational theory

- School learning (competencies / behaviour)
-> intermediate goods (certification / credentials) -> job market.
- *T.W. Schultz*, a value (returns from + quality) - cost (acquisition) balance
- *Assumptions*
 - transferability
 - gain for individual and economy
 - economy's wealth-producing capacity

Marxist 'labour-power' theory

- wage-earners sell it to employer to receive interest (wages and salaries)
->
- potential demand from employer gaining profit through surplus value
->
- i.e., schools capitalise students' occupational potential and foretell labour market developments.

Education: functionalist role and intrinsic value

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- productivity, certification and employability
- social control and discipline
- citizenship and democracy

- ... productive, accountable, managerial but education for education's sake?

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State workfarism: trade schools

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Boys' trade schools. 1972.

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Incentives:

demand higher than supply (14 year olds, even first formers):
4th year payment, apprenticeship preference, job promise.

Curriculum:

80% practical - trades; 20% instruction in trade theory, academic subjects.

Ethos:

Timetabling, calendar as in factory. Instructors, GWU members, from the Dockyard.

Methodology:

Corso di avviamento professionale being discarded in Italy.

Girls' trade schools

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1972 to tap source of abundant and trainable female workers

preferred to male in 1960s manufacturing
(20p. per hr, 33p. for males)

Boissevain: 26,760 (1973), 31,800 (1979);
predominant workforce in foreign-owned
manufacturing industries

Implementation blues: continuity and discontinuity

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Institutional channelling.

“Covertly channel[led] the least motivated and achieving students” from secondary schools to TSs to cynically “blame these schools for having the least motivated and achieving students” (Sultana, 1992).

- Demotivated students;
- survival strategies by all;
- No praxis or qualification of manual labour;
- No social mix or conscientisation.

GTSs worse than BTSs

took time to set up,
equipment hard to get
numbers less than expected
teaching staff difficult to attract
school-leaving age raised to 16
future: low-wage, un- or semi-skilled labour - high productivity
traditional female crafts - sewing, lace making, knitting, embroidery, dressmaking, textiles.

+ diluted curriculum, TS students stuck.

Embedded social class character

‘selection amongst’ and ‘streaming within’ schools pre-dated TS
female domesticity pre-dated GTSs
D. Chircop, (1994): “preparation for their unquestioned future role as wives and mothers”.
Drill / discipline to rationalise tradition.
Immobility: TSRPQ (trade school research project 1988-1992) - manually employed parents, 85% father (64% lowest 2 socio-economic sectors), 88% mothers. 43% students absent.

TSs successful

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formed craft level operators for local industrial firms with less than twenty workers

electronic, pharmaceutical neo-Fordist factories -
routinisation/simplification, GTSs sufficient.

call for higher skills affected few of TS students (inc.
specialised machinery maintenance workers).

cost savings: learning-by-doing reduces skills training costs;

Case studies of success stories

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Umberto Calosso

- first TS to open in 1972,
- equipment, tools, expertise donated by Italian government.
- instructors “mainly ex-employees of high calibre of the ex-Naval Dockyard” (Zammit Mangion).
- Instructors looked upon students as “old-time apprentices” (ibid.).

Fellenberg Training Centre in Industrial Electronics

- founded in 1974
- offered 4-year (eventually 5-year) technician level courses serving electronics industry especially in semi-conductors.
- new PN government, 1987, decried TSs, doubled student intake in Fellenberg.

Extended skills training scheme

- Set up in 1979
- 3-year course, TS upgrade from basic trade to technician level.
- could join academic upper secondary path and university to acquire engineer status.

The 'political' and the 'cultural': comprehensive schooling and social reproduction. 1972.

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Besides economic, fiscal measures, 'welfare' related to socially enabling goals.

- 1970-1, PN government:

- secondary education for all; university entry free to all Maltese nationals.

- 1972, PL government:

- no examination

- mixed ability and remedial teaching

- school obligatory attendance extended

Economic, political, and cultural: normative confusion OR systemic contradictions

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1. comprehensive education recompensing cultural deficits assists social integration
against
Poulantzas's class-based mental and manual divide reflecting schools' division
2. State VET successfully provided workforce required for export-based industry
against
vocational instrumentalisation assists class-based social reproduction

Rumours in class: higher and tertiary education

(a) RUM Commission, “to consider ways of nudging the university from being an appendix of the professions into a modern place of learning” (Dahrendorf, 1978) - esp. traditional (lawyers, doctors, priests)

(b) change:

- worker-student scheme (introduced 1977), praxis;
- post-colonial professions: engineers, managers, accountants, public administrators, later, ICT specialists.

(c) Praxis blues (P. Mayo)

- Work-study links?
- Consensus?
- Privatising university education
- Arts and sciences suppressed
- Centre for Labour Studies to monitor participatory self-management in firms - not a reality
- full time employees - mostly public - joined scheme retaining full salary; private employees not supported
- financing study?

(d) Class impact:

reactionary forces

‘In the Labour Movement, we are not afraid of self-criticism and we have admitted that our major mistake is namely that of pressing too far forward too soon in implementing reforms; the priority of modernizing and reforming the antiquated structures of this country sometimes lead us to underestimate the importance of organization, and the strength of reactionary forces.’ A. Sant, 1986.

-Private business sponsorships, 1979 to 1985 , few.

Post-1987. Continuity.

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Education: human capital theory remained “*very influential in Malta ... irrespective of whoever was in government*” (ideological utilitarian MLP; liberal PN). Sultana (1997).

Political economy: any “radical change” in post-war political economy in Malta rejected for “paradigmatic continuity of the concepts that underlie its various official formulations and its practical implementation”. Vella (1994).

Concluding remarks. Underlying reading ...

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(a) Marx, *Capital*:

labour power as commodity:

'for the owner, his commodity possesses no direct use-value. Otherwise, he would not bring it to market. It has use-value for others; but for himself its only direct use-value is as a bearer of exchange-value, and consequently, a means of exchange. He therefore makes up his mind to sell it in return for commodities whose use-value is of service to him. All commodities are non-use-values for their owners, and use-values for their non-owners.'



schooling



(b) McLaren & Farahmandpur (2004):

labour power:

education's "direct production" of labour power; schools are not alone - family and workplace itself - in forming this "end product" but are instrumentally aligned with market demand.

(c) Bowles & Gintis (1976): school - work correspondence

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Education resembles the economy:

- hierarchic structures;
- systems of external rewards;
- preference for competition over cooperation.



Education does not resemble the economy:

- education reproduced social relations;
- capitalist economies aimed at increasing wage-earners and accumulating capital, subduing other economic systems.



(e) Poulantzas (1936-1979)

- the role of VET trainers useful to transfer surplus-value labour-power over to capital.



(f) Glenn Rikowski, 2018

- Because labour power is in and owned by labour, labour has to be “forced, cajoled, incentivised and persuaded” ... i.e., back to employability, lifelong learning, etc. especially in times of crises

(crises in social relations - overt: strike;
mundane: idleness, time-wasting)

practice and theory

- determinist
- mechanistic
- functionalist

vs

e.g. double autonomy of school:

- (i) macro- micro-spaces;
- (ii) school qualifications, skills, competencies are different from external ones, i.e., lack of correspondence
... but not separate.

Theoretical responses

- ‘last instance’
- autonomy of extra-economic social relations
- resistance in practice

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Critique of this critique ...

Unpleasant

Despairing

Limited

Negative

Reductive

Academic

Antonio Zanchi,

Sisyphus

fineartamerica.com





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... from dominant or condescending voice.