

The Secondary Education Certificate Examination in Malta: An Evaluation of the Differentiated Paper System

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ABSTRACT

At the end of secondary schooling, students in Malta sit for the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examinations that were set up to meet the requirements of the then new national curriculum (1988). The philosophy of the SEC examinations is similar to that of the British GCSEs and the objectives are the following: (1) to emphasize achievement rather than selection; (2) to give importance to subjects that did not make up the core 'academic' curriculum; (3) to cater for a wider ability range of students; (4) to widen access to post-secondary and tertiary education in order to put Malta on a par with European levels. This differentiated paper system is made up of a common paper taken by all the candidates (Paper I) and a choice of Paper II (A or B) in each subject. This paper investigates the national trends that have been developed in the first ten-year period. Specifically, it looks at the overall trends in the choice between Paper IIA and IIB in the different subjects over this period. It then focuses on the choices made by candidates (males and females) attending the three educational sectors in Malta in the past four years. Furthermore, it attempts to qualify reasons behind the trends observed and suggest further research that is needed to probe particular issues of concern.

INTRODUCTION

In Malta, the Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) Board is responsible for the external examinations at two levels: the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examination which replaced the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O-level) offered by English examination boards and the Matriculation Certificate examination based on the IB-type system which replaced GCE A-levels. This paper only concerns the SEC system of examinations, which caters for 16-year-olds at the end of compulsory schooling. The system became fully operational in 1994. Therefore by the end of the year 2003, the examination system has been in operation for ten years.

According to Ventura and Murphy (1998):

The setting up of the new system was essentially a declaration of independence from English GCE examination boards whose syllabuses had practically controlled the secondary school curriculum since 1951 (page 48/9).

However, the British GCE examinations have been allowed to continue as an alternative route (Sultana, 1998). The SEC examination is intended to provide an opportunity for all

students finishing secondary school education to obtain external certificates for the subjects studied at school. The 1992 SEC brochure suggests that “The SECE is suitable for almost the whole ability range” (page 9). Therefore, while only about 20% of students in each age cohort used to sit for GCEs, the SEC examination is intended to cater for about 80% of the cohort.

The SEC examination reflects local educational developments, including the promulgation of the Education Act (1988) and a National Minimum Curriculum for the various levels of education. It therefore aims to:

- emphasize achievement rather than selection
- give importance to subjects that did not make up the core ‘academic’ curriculum
- cater for a wider ability range of students
- widen access to post-secondary and tertiary education to put Malta on a par with European levels. (Sultana, 1999).

The MATSEC Board has emphasized that the SEC examination dovetails with the National Minimum Curriculum introduced in Malta in 1988 (Sultana, 1998). In fact, its brochure advertising the SEC examination declares that this examination complements the requirements of the National Minimum Curriculum by providing a common assessment system of an impartial standard, applying examinations appropriate for students with different abilities and incorporating recent trends in educational thinking (page 1). As Sultana (1998) points out, “although the GCSE was not adopted locally, the spirit of the GCSE has been behind local initiatives” (page 127).

The fundamental principle of the SEC examination is that it should enable candidates to demonstrate what they know and can do rather than expose their shortcomings (Ventura & Murphy, 1998). This philosophy led to the introduction of papers at two levels of difficulty and candidates being asked to select the appropriate level for their ability in each subject when they register for the examination. For all subjects, Paper I is common to all students, and falls within the ability range of all candidates. In most cases, it includes an aural / oral / practical / coursework component. Paper II entails a choice. Paper IIA has more demanding questions than Paper I. It is designed for the more academically able students, and is targeted at those who expect high achievement and who want to proceed to higher qualifications in the subject. Paper IIB has less demanding questions. Until 2001, candidates who opted for Paper I and Paper IIA qualified for Grades 1 to 4. The results of candidates who do not obtain at least a Grade 4 remain unclassified (U). Candidates who opted for Paper I and Paper IIB qualified for Grades 4 to 7. The results of candidates who do not obtain at least a Grade 7 remain unclassified (U). (SEC brochure, 1992, page 9).

A major concern regarding this system was the possibility that some candidates who opted for the higher level and failed to obtain Grade 4, remained unclassified when their achievement was comparable to the achievement of candidates who obtain a Grade 5 by taking Paper I and IIB. Markers, in particular, complained that the system is not equitable for such candidates (Ventura and Murphy, 1998) and Pace (2000) referred to the need for the overlapping of grades to be wider. In 2000, the MATSEC Board recommended to the Senate of the University of Malta that Grade 5 should be introduced in Paper IIA as well. The recommendation was approved and from 2002, those candidates who opted for Paper I and IIA qualified for Grades 1-5. Therefore the overlapping grades from the two versions of Paper II are currently 4 and 5. It is important to point out that grades 1 to 5 give

students access to Form VI, while lower grades enable students to apply for courses in some post secondary institutions, and employment in various occupations (Sultana, 1998).

According to the SEC brochure, this differentiated scheme introduced encouraged positive achievement. It argues that:

entering all candidates for the same paper does not encourage positive achievement since tasks may be either too easy for the more able candidates or too difficult for the less able ones. Positive achievement is encouraged by differentiated papers: candidates of differing abilities enter for papers suited to their abilities (page 9).

Pace (2000) reports that Physics teachers expressed their agreement with the differentiated system, because without Paper IIB, a number of students would not be attracted towards sitting for the SEC examination at all. The same study also reported that students were positive towards having a choice. In particular, those who opted for Paper IIB found the differentiated system more convenient. Moreover, as Ventura and Murphy (1998) point out, whatever the option that is selected, all candidates could obtain the lowest acceptable grade for entry into the academic sixth form college, which is Grade 5.

A concern with the present system is that it is not certain that candidates choose the option that matches their ability in the subject. In fact, some high achievers may deliberately decide to take the easy route, study less and be content with Grade 4 or 5. Pace (2000) reiterates this view. The teachers interviewed in her study maintained that the differentiated system is having negative effects on the level of attainment because it is encouraging a number of high achieving students to opt for the softer Paper IIB. Ventura and Murphy (1998) explain that by abusing the system in this way, high achieving students may be blocking the middle grades and effectively reducing the chances of average candidates from obtaining a Grade 5. This behaviour creates an unfair situation that defeats the whole purpose of differentiated papers. Markers are aware of this situation and complain that the system is not equitable for a number of candidates who opt for Paper IIB and are pushed out of Grade 5 by better candidates who are 'playing safe'. The situation may have changed since the introduction of Grade 5 in Paper IIA in 2002 but this remains to be seen.

There has been criticism from the teachers' union because the differentiated system requires candidates to declare in advance whether they intend to take Paper IIA or IIB, The claim is that this creates stress for students, parents and teachers alike. Both teachers and guidance personnel have expressed their dissatisfaction with the system of choice, and have generally not appreciated the added responsibility of advising students as to which paper they should take (Sultana, 1999). Zarb Adami et al. (1998) also refer to the possibility that parents and teachers may make the wrong choice when guiding their students. However, it must be pointed out that in Pace's study (2000) the majority of the candidates said that they made the choice themselves. Very few indicated that their parents or teachers influenced them in their choice. This study also reported that boys seemed to have fewer problems with their choice of paper. Girls endured a higher stress level in the process of choice.

Zarb Adami et al. (1998) recommended that "the possibility of substituting the present system by a graded exam, to be taken by all students should be investigated" (page 24).

The possibility of having graded papers instead of differentiated papers has been echoed repetitively since the latter system came into being. In its response, the MATSEC Board decided that the choice between the two papers should stand because candidates were likely to get used to making an evaluation of their own abilities and hence choose the paper most suitable for them (Minute 96, meeting of 11 February, 1994; Ventura and Murphy, 1998; Sultana, 1999). A problem with the current differentiated system is that constructing papers of a different difficulty level is more possible in some subjects than in others.

From a sociological perspective, Darmanin (1995) has argued that the choice between papers entraps students (and teachers and parents) in making 'dispositional adjustments' according to the beliefs they hold regarding their ability. She argued that students who were labeled poor achievers tended to self-select, irrespective of their real potential. Therefore instead of opening up of opportunities, this differentiated system could be leading to a closing of options. Ventura and Murphy (1998) also referred to the possibility that candidates' selection of option may be based on their self-esteem, which depends on psychological and social factors. However, it is important to reiterate that the lowest acceptable grade for entry into post-secondary is attainable even through the Paper IIB route.

Although a full-scale evaluation of the effects and impact of the new examination system on educational practice has not taken place so far, a series of studies have started shedding light on different aspects of SEC examinations. Some of the existing data suggest that SEC examinations have become more accessible over the years, although accessibility has not reached the desired 80% of each age cohort (Ventura and Murphy 1998). However, accessibility is not even, but is marked by gender and school-type patterns. More girls than boys sit the examinations and the number of candidates from area secondary schools is minimal (Sultana, 1999).

The study from which this paper is extracted addresses one aspect of the need identified by Sultana (1998) for "evaluative research to be carried out in order to spot problems, monitor progress and improve overall performance" (page 143). Essentially, it traces the national trends of the Paper IIA and Paper IIB choices made in the different subjects in the past ten years. It then focuses on the choices made by candidates (males and females) attending state, church and independent schools, these being the three educational sectors in Malta. Furthermore, it attempts to qualify reasons behind the trends observed and suggest further research that is needed to probe particular issues of concern.

RESULTS

In this paper, the results of three groups of subjects are presented, namely: (1) the Main Languages (English, French, Italian, Maltese); (2) Mathematics and Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Computing, Mathematics, Physics); and (3) the Humanities (Environmental Studies, Geography, History, Religious Knowledge, Social Studies). There are other subjects that are examined at this level.¹

¹ The three categories of subjects that are not discussed in this paper are:

- (1) Other languages (Arabic, German, Latin, Russian, Spanish);
 - (2) Commercial Subjects (Accounting, Business Studies, Commerce and Economics) and
 - (3) Other subjects (Art, English Literature, Graphical Communication, Home Economics, Textiles and Design).
- (4) European Studies was introduced in 2003 and Physical Education will be introduced in 2004.

PART 1: National Trends in the Registration of the SEC examinations

The registration data for the period 1994 –2003 were used to analyse the candidate numbers in the different subjects during this ten-year period and to look at the trends in the choice of Paper IIA and IIB during this time. Table 1 shows that initially the numbers were relatively small. At this point in time, many students continued to take the route of the foreign GCEs. Although this route continues to exist, the majority of the candidates now only opt to take the local SEC examinations. It could be argued that confidence in the local system has steadily grown over the years and now it is generally accepted that students take these examinations at the end of their compulsory schooling. The numbers of candidates registering for the different subjects vary considerable. As expected, they are currently highest for the common core subjects: English, Maltese, Mathematics, Religious Studies and Physics (compulsory science subject in state schools).

Having identified the numbers of registrations for the different subjects, the next step is looking at the trends in the choice of Paper IIA and IIB. It is especially interesting to find out how the registration patterns changed over the first eight years of implementation and the extent to which the introduction of Grade 5 in Paper IIA in 2002 has brought about a difference in these patterns.

In the first eight years, although fluctuations were apparent in a number of subjects, the predominant trend was a decline in the percentage of candidates opting for Paper IIA. In the category of the Main Languages (see Table 1.1) a sharp decline was observed in two of the subjects: Italian and Maltese. Fluctuations are most apparent in Italian and French. Until 2002, the percentage of candidates opting for Paper IIA remained the most stable in English. However this was the subject with the lowest percentage of candidates opting for Paper IIA in this category during the 1994-2001 period. In fact, in 2001, only 26% of the candidates opted for Paper IIA in English. Maltese, on the other hand, generally had the highest percentage proportion of candidates opting for Paper IIA in this category. In the year 2001, 40% of the candidates opted for Paper IIA. The introduction of Grade 5 in Paper IIA brought considerable changes in the situation for all four main languages. In fact, in 2003, the percentage proportions of the candidates opting for Paper IIA in this category of subjects ranged from 47% for French to 41% for English Language.

In the category of Mathematics and Sciences (see Table 1.2), similar trends were observed between pairs of subjects: between Mathematics and Physics and between Biology and Chemistry (with the exception of 1997 for the latter). Although some fluctuation was evident in all subjects, the situation remained rather stable between 1998 and 2000 for the above four subjects. However, there was a discrepancy between the percentage populations opting for Paper IIA in Biology and Chemistry on the one hand, and Mathematics and Physics on the other. In the year 2001, the percentages of the population opting for Paper IIA in Biology and Chemistry were 50% and 59% respectively. In Mathematics and Physics, however, only 29% of the population and 32% of the population opted for Paper IIA respectively. It is important to point out that the numbers of candidates taking the Mathematics and Physics examinations were considerably larger than those taking the Biology and Chemistry examinations. In the first eight years, there has been consistent fluctuation in Computing with regard to the percentage population opting for Paper IIA. In the year 2001, 37% of the population opted for Paper IIA. The trends changed direction in the last two years for all the subjects in this category and more candidates have opted for Paper IIA in the different subjects. In 2003, 68% of the candidates who registered for

Chemistry opted for Paper IIA, as did 61% of those who registered for Biology. There has been a significant increase in the proportion of candidates registering for Paper IIA in Computing, which reached 52% in 2003. The situation is different for Mathematics and Physics, which are two of the subjects with relatively larger registrations. Currently, in 2003, 35% of the candidates registered for Paper IIA in Mathematics and 38% in Physics respectively.

In the Humanities category (see Table 1.3) some fluctuation was observed in all five subjects. However a sharp decline was especially observed in Environmental Studies and Social Studies during the first eight years. In Environmental Studies, in 1994, 66% of the candidates registering for this examination opted for Paper IIA while in the year 2001, 31% of the candidates opted for this paper. The introduction of grade 5 in Paper IIA brought about the expected increase and in 2003, 36% of the candidates opted for Paper IIA. In Social Studies, the percentage of candidates opting for Paper IIA decreased progressively from 55% in 1994 to 16% in the year 2000. Although this figure now stands at 29% in 2003, it remains the subject with lowest proportion of candidates opting for Paper IIA.

Table 1: Numbers and Percentages of Candidates opting for Papers IIA and IIB (page 1 of 2)

Table 1.1: Main Languages

| Subjects | 1994 | | | 1995 | | | 1996 | | | 1997 | | | 1998 | | | 1999 | | | 2000 | | |
|------------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English Language | 2190 | 854 | 1336 | 2757 | 848 | 1909 | 3686 | 1341 | 2345 | 4995 | 1862 | 3133 | 5539 | 1797 | 3742 | 6031 | 1642 | 4389 | 6058 | 1627 | 4431 |
| | | 39.0 | 61.0 | | 30.8 | 69.2 | | 36.4 | 63.6 | | 37.3 | 62.7 | | 32.4 | 67.6 | | 27.2 | 72.8 | | 26.9 | 73.1 |
| French | 447 | 181 | 266 | 593 | 183 | 410 | 894 | 412 | 482 | 1831 | 895 | 936 | 1068 | 340 | 728 | 2068 | 632 | 1436 | 2198 | 750 | 1448 |
| | | 40.5 | 59.5 | | 30.9 | 69.1 | | 46.1 | 53.9 | | 48.9 | 51.1 | | 31.8 | 68.2 | | 30.6 | 69.4 | | 34.1 | 65.9 |
| Italian | 2799 | 1854 | 945 | 2953 | 1667 | 1286 | 2898 | 1595 | 1303 | 3256 | 1399 | 1857 | 3398 | 1393 | 2005 | 3384 | 1235 | 2149 | 3309 | 1238 | 2071 |
| | | 66.2 | 33.8 | | 56.5 | 43.5 | | 55.0 | 45.0 | | 43.0 | 57.0 | | 36.5 | 59.0 | | 57.5 | 63.5 | | 37.4 | 62.6 |
| Maltese | 3602 | 2351 | 1251 | 3423 | 2334 | 1089 | 3483 | 2397 | 1086 | 4078 | 2647 | 1431 | 4302 | 2465 | 1837 | 4585 | 2418 | 2167 | 4533 | 1918 | 2615 |
| | | 65.3 | 34.7 | | 68.2 | 31.8 | | 68.8 | 31.2 | | 64.9 | 35.1 | | 57.3 | 42.7 | | 52.7 | 47.3 | | 42.3 | 57.7 |

Table 1.2: Mathematics and Sciences

| Subjects | 1994 | | | 1995 | | | 1996 | | | 1997 | | | 1998 | | | 1999 | | | 2000 | | |
|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 139 | 64 | 75 | 272 | 158 | 114 | 580 | 411 | 169 | 734 | 510 | 224 | 784 | 467 | 317 | 960 | 533 | 427 | 1033 | 571 | 462 |
| | | 46.0 | 54.0 | | 58.1 | 41.9 | | 70.9 | 29.1 | | 69.5 | 30.5 | | 59.6 | 40.4 | | 55.5 | 44.5 | | 55.3 | 44.7 |
| Chemistry | 112 | 56 | 56 | 185 | 98 | 87 | 373 | 262 | 111 | 274 | 41 | 233 | 664 | 412 | 252 | 659 | 386 | 273 | 782 | 462 | 320 |
| | | 50.0 | 50.0 | | 53.0 | 47.0 | | 70.2 | 29.8 | | 15.0 | 85.0 | | 62.0 | 38.0 | | 58.6 | 41.4 | | 59.1 | 40.9 |
| Computing | 246 | 152 | 94 | 387 | 186 | 201 | 129 | 49 | 80 | 488 | 272 | 216 | 865 | 411 | 454 | 1144 | 383 | 761 | 1778 | 566 | 1212 |
| | | 61.8 | 38.2 | | 48.1 | 51.9 | | 38.0 | 62.0 | | 55.7 | 44.3 | | 47.5 | 52.5 | | 33.5 | 66.5 | | 31.8 | 68.2 |
| Mathematics | 1553 | 535 | 1018 | 2363 | 590 | 1773 | 3153 | 1096 | 2057 | 4379 | 1576 | 2803 | 4804 | 1449 | 3355 | 4886 | 1404 | 3482 | 5187 | 1406 | 3781 |
| | | 34.4 | 65.6 | | 25.0 | 75.0 | | 34.8 | 65.2 | | 36.0 | 64.0 | | 30.2 | 69.8 | | 28.7 | 71.3 | | 27.1 | 72.9 |
| Physics | 1105 | 434 | 671 | 1686 | 579 | 1107 | 2645 | 1097 | 1548 | 3492 | 1298 | 2194 | 4028 | 1278 | 2750 | 3980 | 1277 | 2703 | 4031 | 1281 | 2750 |
| | | 39.3 | 60.7 | | 34.3 | 65.7 | | 41.5 | 58.5 | | 37.2 | 62.8 | | 31.7 | 68.3 | | 32.1 | 67.9 | | 31.8 | 68.2 |

Table 1.3: Humanities

| Subjects | 1994 | | | 1995 | | | 1996 | | | 1997 | | | 1998 | | | 1999 | | | 2000 | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Environ Studies | 94 | 62 | 32 | 551 | 352 | 199 | 840 | 461 | 379 | 1300 | 454 | 846 | 1087 | 264 | 823 | 1639 | 561 | 1078 | 1842 | 573 | 1269 |
| | | 66.0 | 34.0 | | 63.9 | 36.1 | | 54.9 | 45.1 | | 34.9 | 65.1 | | 24.3 | 75.7 | | 34.2 | 65.8 | | 31.1 | 68.9 |
| Geography | 47 | 20 | 27 | 68 | 33 | 35 | 150 | 79 | 71 | 184 | 88 | 96 | 173 | 72 | 101 | 192 | 82 | 110 | 249 | 114 | 135 |
| | | 42.6 | 57.4 | | 48.5 | 51.5 | | 52.7 | 47.3 | | 47.8 | 52.2 | | 41.6 | 58.4 | | 42.7 | 57.3 | | 45.8 | 54.2 |
| History | 303 | 190 | 113 | 152 | 96 | 56 | 203 | 101 | 102 | 217 | 118 | 99 | 194 | 106 | 88 | 276 | 127 | 149 | 351 | 121 | 230 |
| | | 62.7 | 37.3 | | 63.2 | 36.8 | | 49.8 | 50.2 | | 54.4 | 45.6 | | 54.6 | 45.4 | | 46.0 | 54.0 | | 34.5 | 65.5 |
| Social Studies | 1415 | 778 | 637 | 1240 | 581 | 659 | 1333 | 634 | 699 | 2051 | 731 | 1320 | 2404 | 663 | 1741 | 2879 | 637 | 2242 | 2912 | 469 | 2443 |
| | | 55.0 | 45.0 | | 46.9 | 53.1 | | 47.6 | 52.4 | | 35.6 | 64.4 | | 27.6 | 72.4 | | 22.1 | 77.9 | | 16.1 | 83.9 |
| Religious Know. | 2677 | 1545 | 1132 | 3074 | 1648 | 1426 | 3189 | 1696 | 1493 | 3801 | 1816 | 1985 | 4057 | 1700 | 2357 | 4170 | 1722 | 2448 | 4223 | 1671 | 2552 |
| | | 57.7 | 42.3 | | 53.6 | 46.4 | | 53.2 | 46.8 | | 47.8 | 52.2 | | 41.9 | 58.1 | | 41.3 | 58.7 | | 39.6 | 60.4 |

Table 1: Numbers and Percentages of Candidates opting for Papers IIA and IIB (page 2 of 2)

Table 1.1: Main Languages

| Subjects | 2001 | | | 2002 | | | 2003 | | |
|------------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English Language | 5996 | 1534 | 4462 | 6150 | 2117 | 4033 | 5623 | 2285 | 3338 |
| | | 25.6 | 74.4 | | 34.4 | 65.6 | | 40.6 | 59.4 |
| French | 2172 | 747 | 1425 | 2179 | 944 | 1235 | 2212 | 1045 | 1167 |
| | | 34.4 | 65.6 | | 43.3 | 56.7 | | 47.2 | 52.8 |
| Italian | 3015 | 1064 | 1951 | 2987 | 1291 | 1696 | 3027 | 1293 | 1734 |
| | | 35.3 | 64.7 | | 43.2 | 56.8 | | 42.7 | 57.3 |
| Maltese | 4551 | 1809 | 2742 | 4764 | 2052 | 2712 | 4943 | 2259 | 2684 |
| | | 39.7 | 60.3 | | 43.1 | 56.9 | | 45.7 | 54.3 |

Table 1.2: Mathematics and Sciences

| Subjects | 2001 | | | 2002 | | | 2003 | | |
|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 1108 | 552 | 556 | 1246 | 696 | 550 | 1371 | 832 | 539 |
| | | 49.8 | 50.2 | | 55.9 | 44.1 | | 60.7 | 39.3 |
| Chemistry | 747 | 442 | 305 | 901 | 554 | 347 | 911 | 620 | 291 |
| | | 59.2 | 40.8 | | 61.5 | 38.5 | | 68.1 | 31.9 |
| Computing | 1839 | 683 | 1156 | 1832 | 895 | 937 | 1797 | 925 | 872 |
| | | 37.1 | 62.9 | | 48.9 | 51.1 | | 51.5 | 48.5 |
| Mathematics | 4759 | 1390 | 3369 | 5165 | 1684 | 3481 | 5491 | 1922 | 3569 |
| | | 29.2 | 70.8 | | 32.6 | 67.4 | | 35.0 | 65.0 |
| Physics | 3952 | 1256 | 2696 | 4090 | 1641 | 2449 | 4325 | 1633 | 2692 |
| | | 31.8 | 68.2 | | 40.1 | 59.9 | | 37.8 | 62.2 |

Table 1.3: Humanities

| Subjects | 2001 | | | 2002 | | | 2003 | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Environ Studies | 1933 | 595 | 1338 | 2184 | 785 | 1399 | 2313 | 830 | 1483 |
| | | 30.8 | 69.2 | | 35.9 | 64.1 | | 35.9 | 64.1 |
| Geography | 228 | 120 | 108 | 285 | 168 | 113 | 282 | 139 | 143 |
| | | 52.6 | 47.4 | | 58.9 | 39.6 | | 49.3 | 50.7 |
| History | 299 | 127 | 172 | 248 | 134 | 114 | 239 | 124 | 115 |
| | | 42.5 | 57.5 | | 54.0 | 46.0 | | 51.9 | 48.1 |
| Social Studies | 2639 | 504 | 2135 | 2603 | 672 | 1931 | 2206 | 636 | 1570 |
| | | 19.1 | 80.9 | | 25.8 | 74.2 | | 28.8 | 71.2 |
| Religious Knowledge | 4175 | 1665 | 2510 | 4353 | 1975 | 2378 | 4542 | 2214 | 2328 |
| | | 39.9 | 60.1 | | 45.4 | 54.6 | | 48.7 | 51.3 |

PART 2: Choice of Paper IIA and Paper IIB by Gender

In this section, the analysis looks at the trends in the choice of Paper IIA and Paper IIB for male and female candidates separately during the period 2000 - 2003. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2. The general trend of an increase in the proportion of candidates opting for Paper IIA since 2002 was evident for both subgroups in some or all of the subjects in the three categories.

In the Main Languages (see Table 2.1) there were significant differences between the percentages of male and female candidates opting for Paper IIA in English, French, Italian and Maltese in the past four years. For all four subjects, the percentages were generally higher for girls. The gender difference was most pronounced. In 2003, for both males and females, the percentage proportions of candidates opting for Paper IIA in the four main languages was in the 40-50% range.

In the category of Mathematics and Sciences (see Table 2.2), the trend of having a higher percentage of females opting for Paper IIA was only observed in Chemistry. The tendency to have a higher percentage proportion of males opting for Paper IIA was observed in Biology, Computing and Physics. The smallest discrepancy between the two gender groups was observed in Mathematics. The percentage proportions of candidates opting for Paper IIA has been consistently lower for both males and females for Mathematics and Physics. Currently, these are found in the 30% band (35% and 39% for males and 35% and 36% for females). For Biology and Chemistry, which are option subjects, the percentage proportions, for both male and female candidates opting for Paper IIA, are relatively higher (68% and 63% for males and 57% and 73% for females in these two subjects). Computer Studies falls in between these two pairs of subjects, with 53% of males and 48% of females opting for Paper IIA.

In the Humanities category (see Table 2.3) the percentages of the male and female candidates opting for Paper IIA were generally comparable in all five subjects although there were some exceptions in one year for several of the subjects. History and Geography are relatively small subjects and in the past two years, proportionally more males than females opted for Paper IIA. In Religious Knowledge, the gender gap which has been relatively small is widening and in 2003, 44% of males and 54% of females opted for Paper IIA. In Environmental Studies and Social Studies, relatively smaller proportions of candidates (males and females), have opted for Paper IIA over the years. In 2003, 37% and 26% of males opted for Paper IIA in these subjects. The percentage proportions for girls were 35% and 31% in the same subjects.

Table 2: Choice of Papers IIA and IIB by Gender (2000 -2003) (page 1 of 3)

Table 2.1: Main Languages

| 2000 | Candidates | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English | 6058 | 1627 | 4431 | 2873 | 687 | 2186 | 3185 | 942 | 2243 |
| | | 26.9 | 73.1 | | 23.9 | 76.1 | | 29.6 | 70.4 |
| French | 2198 | 750 | 1448 | 753 | 232 | 521 | 1445 | 518 | 927 |
| | | 34.1 | 65.9 | | 30.8 | 69.2 | | 35.8 | 64.2 |
| Italian | 3309 | 1238 | 2071 | 1535 | 562 | 973 | 1774 | 675 | 1099 |
| | | 37.4 | 62.6 | | 36.6 | 63.4 | | 38.0 | 62.0 |
| Maltese | 4533 | 1918 | 2615 | 2166 | 744 | 1422 | 2367 | 1173 | 1194 |
| | | 42.3 | 57.7 | | 34.3 | 65.7 | | 49.6 | 50.4 |

| 2001 | Candidates | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English | 5996 | 1534 | 4462 | 2800 | 683 | 2117 | 3196 | 851 | 2345 |
| | | 25.6 | 74.4 | | 24.4 | 75.6 | | 26.6 | 73.4 |
| French | 2172 | 747 | 1425 | 787 | 246 | 541 | 1385 | 501 | 884 |
| | | 34.4 | 65.6 | | 31.3 | 68.7 | | 36.2 | 63.8 |
| Italian | 3015 | 1064 | 1951 | 1369 | 502 | 867 | 1646 | 562 | 1084 |
| | | 35.3 | 64.7 | | 36.7 | 63.3 | | 34.1 | 65.9 |
| Maltese | 4551 | 1809 | 2742 | 2145 | 734 | 1411 | 2406 | 1075 | 1331 |
| | | 39.7 | 60.3 | | 36.7 | 63.3 | | 44.7 | 55.3 |

| 2002 | Candidates | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English | 6150 | 2117 | 4033 | 2932 | 974 | 1958 | 3218 | 1143 | 2075 |
| | | 34.4 | 65.6 | | 33.2 | 66.8 | | 35.5 | 64.5 |
| French | 2179 | 944 | 1235 | 840 | 367 | 473 | 1339 | 577 | 762 |
| | | 43.3 | 56.7 | | 43.7 | 56.3 | | 43.1 | 56.9 |
| Italian | 2987 | 1291 | 1696 | 1455 | 638 | 817 | 1532 | 653 | 879 |
| | | 43.2 | 56.8 | | 43.8 | 56.2 | | 42.6 | 57.4 |
| Maltese | 4764 | 2052 | 2712 | 2365 | 885 | 1480 | 2399 | 1167 | 1232 |
| | | 43.1 | 56.9 | | 37.4 | 62.6 | | 48.6 | 51.4 |

| 2003 | Candidates | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English | 5623 | 2285 | 3338 | 2612 | 1000 | 1612 | 3011 | 1285 | 1726 |
| | | 40.6 | 59.4 | | 38.3 | 61.7 | | 42.7 | 57.3 |
| French | 2212 | 1045 | 1167 | 771 | 362 | 409 | 1441 | 683 | 758 |
| | | 47.2 | 52.8 | | 47.0 | 53.0 | | 47.4 | 52.6 |
| Italian | 3027 | 1293 | 1734 | 1387 | 606 | 781 | 1640 | 687 | 953 |
| | | 42.7 | 57.3 | | 43.7 | 56.3 | | 41.9 | 58.1 |
| Maltese | 4943 | 2259 | 2684 | 2358 | 952 | 1406 | 2585 | 1307 | 1278 |
| | | 45.7 | 54.3 | | 40.4 | 59.6 | | 50.6 | 49.4 |

Table 2: Choice of Papers IIA and IIB by Gender (2000 -2003) (page 2 of 3)

Table 2.2: Mathematics and Sciences

| 2000 | Candidates | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 1033 | 571 | 462 | 333 | 225 | 108 | 700 | 347 | 353 |
| | | 55.3 | 44.7 | | 67.6 | 32.4 | | 49.6 | 50.4 |
| Chemistry | 782 | 462 | 320 | 399 | 213 | 186 | 383 | 248 | 135 |
| | | 59.1 | 40.9 | | 53.4 | 46.6 | | 64.8 | 35.2 |
| Computing | 1778 | 566 | 1212 | 931 | 338 | 593 | 847 | 227 | 620 |
| | | 31.8 | 68.2 | | 36.3 | 63.7 | | 26.8 | 73.2 |
| Mathematics | 5187 | 1406 | 3781 | 2404 | 666 | 1738 | 2783 | 740 | 2043 |
| | | 27.1 | 72.9 | | 27.7 | 72.3 | | 26.6 | 73.4 |
| Physics | 4031 | 1281 | 2750 | 1987 | 662 | 1325 | 2044 | 618 | 1426 |
| | | 31.8 | 68.2 | | 33.3 | 66.7 | | 30.2 | 69.8 |

| 2001 | Candidates | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 1108 | 552 | 556 | 377 | 205 | 172 | 731 | 347 | 384 |
| | | 49.8 | 50.2 | | 54.4 | 45.6 | | 47.5 | 52.5 |
| Chemistry | 747 | 442 | 305 | 389 | 206 | 183 | 358 | 236 | 122 |
| | | 59.2 | 40.8 | | 53.0 | 47.0 | | 65.9 | 34.1 |
| Computing | 1839 | 683 | 1156 | 1033 | 435 | 598 | 806 | 248 | 558 |
| | | 37.1 | 62.9 | | 42.1 | 57.9 | | 30.8 | 69.2 |
| Mathematics | 4759 | 1390 | 3369 | 2212 | 696 | 1516 | 2547 | 694 | 1853 |
| | | 29.2 | 70.8 | | 31.5 | 68.5 | | 27.2 | 72.8 |
| Physics | 3952 | 1256 | 2696 | 1906 | 672 | 1234 | 2046 | 584 | 1462 |
| | | 31.8 | 68.2 | | 35.3 | 64.7 | | 28.5 | 71.5 |

| 2002 | Candidates | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 1246 | 696 | 550 | 430 | 266 | 164 | 816 | 430 | 386 |
| | | 55.9 | 44.1 | | 61.9 | 38.1 | | 52.7 | 47.3 |
| Chemistry | 901 | 554 | 347 | 515 | 276 | 239 | 386 | 278 | 108 |
| | | 61.5 | 38.5 | | 53.6 | 46.4 | | 72.0 | 28.0 |
| Computing | 1832 | 895 | 937 | 1014 | 538 | 476 | 818 | 357 | 461 |
| | | 48.9 | 51.1 | | 53.1 | 46.9 | | 43.6 | 56.4 |
| Mathematics | 5165 | 1684 | 3481 | 2463 | 847 | 1616 | 2702 | 837 | 1865 |
| | | 32.6 | 67.4 | | 34.4 | 65.6 | | 31.0 | 69.0 |
| Physics | 4090 | 1641 | 2449 | 2085 | 882 | 1203 | 2005 | 759 | 1246 |
| | | 40.1 | 59.9 | | 42.3 | 57.7 | | 37.9 | 62.1 |

| 2003 | Candidates | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 1371 | 832 | 539 | 421 | 289 | 132 | 950 | 543 | 407 |
| | | 60.7 | 39.3 | | 68.6 | 31.4 | | 57.2 | 42.8 |
| Chemistry | 911 | 620 | 291 | 453 | 286 | 167 | 458 | 334 | 124 |
| | | 68.1 | 31.9 | | 63.1 | 36.9 | | 72.9 | 27.1 |
| Computing | 1797 | 925 | 872 | 1066 | 571 | 495 | 731 | 354 | 377 |
| | | 51.5 | 48.5 | | 53.6 | 46.4 | | 48.4 | 51.6 |
| Mathematics | 5491 | 1922 | 3569 | 2546 | 889 | 1657 | 2945 | 1033 | 1912 |
| | | 35.0 | 65.0 | | 34.9 | 65.1 | | 35.1 | 64.9 |
| Physics | 4325 | 1633 | 2692 | 2111 | 831 | 1280 | 2214 | 802 | 1412 |
| | | 37.8 | 62.2 | | 39.4 | 60.6 | | 36.2 | 63.8 |

Table 2: Choice of Papers IIA and IIB by Gender (2000 -2003) (page 3 of 3)

Table 2.3: Humanities

| 2000 | Candidates | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Environ. Studies | 1842 | 573 | 1269 | 929 | 266 | 663 | 913 | 306 | 607 |
| | | 31.1 | 68.9 | | 28.6 | 71.4 | | 33.5 | 66.5 |
| Geography | 249 | 114 | 135 | 140 | 68 | 72 | 109 | 46 | 63 |
| | | 45.8 | 54.2 | | 48.6 | 51.4 | | 42.2 | 57.8 |
| History | 351 | 121 | 230 | 239 | 77 | 162 | 112 | 44 | 68 |
| | | 34.5 | 65.5 | | 32.2 | 67.8 | | 39.3 | 60.7 |
| Social Studies | 2912 | 469 | 2443 | 1216 | 153 | 1063 | 1696 | 315 | 1381 |
| | | 16.1 | 83.9 | | 12.6 | 87.4 | | 18.6 | 81.4 |
| Religious Knowledge | 4223 | 1671 | 2552 | 1955 | 717 | 1238 | 2268 | 954 | 1314 |
| | | 39.6 | 60.4 | | 36.7 | 63.3 | | 42.1 | 57.9 |

| 2001 | Candidates | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Environ. Studies | 1933 | 595 | 1338 | 894 | 289 | 605 | 1039 | 306 | 733 |
| | | 30.8 | 69.2 | | 32.3 | 67.7 | | 29.5 | 70.5 |
| Geography | 228 | 120 | 108 | 147 | 78 | 69 | 81 | 42 | 39 |
| | | 52.6 | 47.4 | | 53.1 | 46.9 | | 51.9 | 48.1 |
| History | 299 | 127 | 172 | 209 | 87 | 122 | 90 | 40 | 50 |
| | | 42.5 | 57.5 | | 41.6 | 58.4 | | 44.4 | 55.6 |
| Social Studies | 2639 | 504 | 2135 | 1091 | 197 | 894 | 1548 | 307 | 1241 |
| | | 19.1 | 80.9 | | 18.1 | 81.9 | | 19.8 | 80.2 |
| Religious Knowledge | 4175 | 1665 | 2510 | 1933 | 717 | 1216 | 2242 | 948 | 1294 |
| | | 39.9 | 60.1 | | 37.1 | 62.9 | | 42.3 | 57.7 |

| 2002 | Candidates | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Environ. Studies | 2184 | 785 | 1399 | 1063 | 441 | 622 | 1121 | 344 | 777 |
| | | 35.9 | 64.1 | | 41.5 | 58.5 | | 30.7 | 69.3 |
| Geography | 285 | 168 | 113 | 160 | 91 | 69 | 125 | 77 | 48 |
| | | 58.9 | 39.6 | | 56.9 | 43.1 | | 61.6 | 38.4 |
| History | 248 | 134 | 114 | 164 | 97 | 67 | 84 | 37 | 47 |
| | | 54.0 | 46.0 | | 59.1 | 40.9 | | 44.0 | 56.0 |
| Social Studies | 2603 | 672 | 1931 | 1164 | 314 | 850 | 1439 | 358 | 1081 |
| | | 25.8 | 74.2 | | 27.0 | 73.0 | | 24.9 | 75.1 |
| Religious Knowledge | 4353 | 1975 | 2378 | 2142 | 940 | 1202 | 2211 | 1035 | 1176 |
| | | 45.4 | 54.6 | | 43.9 | 56.1 | | 46.8 | 53.2 |

| 2003 | Candidates | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Environ. Studies | 2313 | 830 | 1483 | 1079 | 394 | 685 | 1234 | 436 | 798 |
| | | 35.9 | 64.1 | | 36.5 | 63.5 | | 35.3 | 64.7 |
| Geography | 282 | 139 | 143 | 181 | 97 | 84 | 101 | 42 | 59 |
| | | 49.3 | 50.7 | | 53.6 | 46.4 | | 41.6 | 58.4 |
| History | 239 | 124 | 115 | 168 | 92 | 76 | 71 | 32 | 39 |
| | | 51.9 | 48.1 | | 54.8 | 45.2 | | 45.1 | 54.9 |
| Social Studies | 2206 | 636 | 1570 | 828 | 216 | 612 | 1378 | 420 | 958 |
| | | 28.8 | 71.2 | | 26.1 | 73.9 | | 30.5 | 69.5 |
| Religious Knowledge | 4542 | 2214 | 2328 | 2207 | 960 | 1247 | 2335 | 1254 | 1081 |
| | | 48.7 | 51.3 | | 43.5 | 56.5 | | 53.7 | 46.3 |

PART 3: Choice of Paper IIA and Paper IIB by Type of School

In this section, the analysis focuses on the choice of Paper IIA and Paper IIB in the three main educational sectors (state, church and independent). The state sector is divided into two in order to differentiate between the choices made by junior lyceum candidates, who are the successful candidates of the 11+ examination and those made in the area secondary schools. (These are the schools where the rest of the students complete their compulsory education).

The results of the analysis of the choice of Paper IIA and Paper IIB in these four types of schools are presented in Table 3. Differences are immediately apparent in the numbers of candidates registering for the various subjects from the different school types and also in the percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA and Paper IIB in these subjects across the different sectors. One observation is the consistent low registration figures in the area secondary schools, which are not comparable to the other types of schools. This is the reason why it was deemed necessary to differentiate between the two school types that make up the state sector.

In the category of the Main Languages (see Table 3.1) the Church schools consistently had high percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA in the four main languages. In 2003, the figures were as follows: 78% for Maltese, 76% for English and 63% for Italian and French. The percentage proportions were not very different for the Junior Lyceums and Independent schools with one exception: English. There were 73% of the candidates from the Independent schools that opted for Paper IIA and only 49% of those from the Junior Lyceums that made this option. Generally speaking, there is a tendency for students in the Independent schools to be bilingual or have English as their first language, whereas for the majority of the students in the Junior Lyceums, Maltese would be their first language. For this category of subjects, it is interesting to observe an increasing proportion of candidates opting for Paper IIA in 2002 and 2003 since the introduction of Grade 5.

In the category of Mathematics and Sciences (see Table 3.2), the percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA in Biology and Chemistry have consistently been high in the three sectors. Once again they are found to be highest in the Church with the figures for 2003 reaching 78% and 81% in these two subjects. The percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA in Computing, Mathematics and Physics have also been consistently high in the Church schools. In 2003, they were 66%, 67% and 70% respectively. In the Junior Lyceums and Independent schools, the figures have been comparatively lower. In 2003, they are in the 50% region in the Independent schools but they are lower in the Junior Lyceums for Mathematics (45%) and Physics (37%).

The tendency to have high percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA in the Church sector was apparent in three of the five subjects in the Humanities category in 2000 and 2001: in Environmental Studies, Geography, and Religious Knowledge. Since the introduction of Grade 5 in Paper IIA in 2002, this tendency is also observed in Environmental Studies and History. The numbers of candidates registering for subjects such as Geography, History and Environmental Studies are generally smaller and therefore not much can be said in terms of trends. However, Social Studies is a subject with large registration numbers from the different sectors. There are students who study it as an option and have four lessons a week while others have one lesson a week since it forms part of the core curriculum. This reason may account for the relatively lower proportions of candidates opting for Paper IIA in the three sectors. The figures for the percentage proportions of candidates opting for Paper IIA in 2003 in Social Studies were the following: 56% in the Church sector, 45% in the independent sector and 30% in Junior Lyceums.

Table 3: Choice of Paper IIA and IIB by School Type (2000 -2003) (page 1 of 3)

Table 3.1: Main Languages

| 2000 | Junior Lyceum | | | Area Secondary | | | Church | | | Independent | | |
|---------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------|-------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English | 1495 | 439 | 1056 | 755 | 16 | 739 | 1292 | 783 | 509 | 238 | 137 | 101 |
| | | 29.4 | 70.6 | | 2.1 | 97.9 | | 60.6 | 39.4 | | 57.6 | 42.4 |
| French | 854 | 271 | 583 | 106 | 2 | 104 | 784 | 380 | 404 | 82 | 31 | 51 |
| | | 31.7 | 68.3 | | 1.9 | 98.1 | | 48.5 | 51.5 | | 37.8 | 62.2 |
| Italian | 927 | 391 | 536 | 385 | 16 | 369 | 945 | 591 | 354 | 155 | 64 | 91 |
| | | 42.2 | 57.8 | | 4.2 | 95.8 | | 62.5 | 37.5 | | 41.3 | 58.7 |
| Maltese | 1475 | 754 | 721 | 726 | 28 | 698 | 1191 | 830 | 361 | 232 | 83 | 149 |
| | | 51.1 | 48.9 | | 3.9 | 96.1 | | 69.7 | 30.3 | | 35.8 | 64.2 |

| 2001 | Junior Lyceum | | | Area Secondary | | | Church | | | Independent | | |
|---------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------|-------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English | 1346 | 426 | 920 | 692 | 7 | 685 | 1277 | 717 | 560 | 217 | 139 | 78 |
| | | 31.6 | 68.4 | | 1.0 | 99.0 | | 56.1 | 43.9 | | 64.1 | 35.9 |
| French | 781 | 256 | 525 | 80 | 2 | 78 | 848 | 371 | 477 | 63 | 20 | 43 |
| | | 32.8 | 67.2 | | 2.5 | 97.5 | | 43.8 | 56.3 | | 31.7 | 68.3 |
| Italian | 741 | 267 | 474 | 345 | 13 | 332 | 954 | 554 | 400 | 135 | 49 | 86 |
| | | 36.0 | 64.0 | | 3.8 | 96.2 | | 58.1 | 41.9 | | 36.3 | 63.7 |
| Maltese | 1339 | 630 | 709 | 664 | 25 | 639 | 1259 | 822 | 437 | 208 | 67 | 141 |
| | | 47.1 | 52.9 | | 3.8 | 96.2 | | 65.3 | 34.7 | | 32.2 | 67.8 |

| 2002 | Junior Lyceum | | | Area Secondary | | | Church | | | Independent | | |
|---------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------|-------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English | 1480 | 586 | 894 | 700 | 17 | 683 | 1223 | 948 | 275 | 258 | 169 | 89 |
| | | 39.6 | 60.4 | | 2.4 | 97.6 | | 77.5 | 22.5 | | 65.5 | 34.5 |
| French | 831 | 322 | 509 | 88 | 5 | 83 | 882 | 512 | 370 | 74 | 36 | 38 |
| | | 38.7 | 61.3 | | 5.7 | 94.3 | | 58.0 | 42.0 | | 48.6 | 51.4 |
| Italian | 842 | 385 | 457 | 303 | 27 | 276 | 953 | 623 | 330 | 156 | 58 | 98 |
| | | 45.7 | 54.3 | | 8.9 | 91.1 | | 65.4 | 34.6 | | 37.2 | 62.8 |
| Maltese | 1468 | 766 | 702 | 689 | 25 | 664 | 1287 | 962 | 325 | 238 | 92 | 146 |
| | | 52.2 | 47.8 | | 3.6 | 96.4 | | 74.7 | 25.3 | | 38.7 | 61.3 |

| 2003 | Junior Lyceum | | | Area Secondary | | | Church | | | Independent | | |
|---------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English | 1424 | 698 | 726 | 780 | 25 | 755 | 1372 | 1041 | 331 | 288 | 209 | 79 |
| | | 49.0 | 51.0 | | 3.2 | 96.8 | | 75.9 | 24.1 | | 72.6 | 27.4 |
| French | 862 | 384 | 478 | 102 | 1 | 101 | 884 | 554 | 330 | 91 | 36 | 55 |
| | | 44.5 | 55.5 | | 1.0 | 99.0 | | 62.7 | 37.3 | | 39.6 | 60.4 |
| Italian | 866 | 396 | 470 | 337 | 37 | 300 | 1029 | 650 | 379 | 148 | 61 | 87 |
| | | 45.7 | 54.3 | | 11.0 | 89.0 | | 63.2 | 36.8 | | 41.2 | 58.8 |
| Maltese | 1481 | 822 | 659 | 755 | 32 | 723 | 1360 | 1054 | 306 | 259 | 127 | 132 |
| | | 55.5 | 44.5 | | 4.2 | 95.8 | | 77.5 | 22.5 | | 49.0 | 51.0 |

Table 3: Choice of Paper IIA and IIB by School Type (2000 -2003) (page 2 of 3)

Table 3.2: Mathematics and Sciences

| 2000 | Junior Lyceum | | | Area Secondary | | | Church | | | Independent | | |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------|--------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 202 | 112 | 90 | 23 | 0 | 23 | 489 | 326 | 163 | 108 | 60 | 48 |
| | | 55.4 | 44.5 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 66.7 | 33.3 | | 55.6 | 44.4 |
| Chemistry | 186 | 102 | 84 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 398 | 267 | 131 | 62 | 41 | 21 |
| | | 54.8 | 45.2 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 67.1 | 32.9 | | 66.1 | 33.9 |
| Computing | 226 | 73 | 153 | 75 | 0 | 75 | 611 | 289 | 322 | 99 | 37 | 62 |
| | | 32.3 | 67.7 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 47.3 | 52.7 | | 37.4 | 62.6 |
| Mathematics | 1460 | 494 | 966 | 634 | 5 | 629 | 1207 | 663 | 544 | 250 | 102 | 148 |
| | | 33.8 | 66.2 | | 0.8 | 99.2 | | 54.9 | 45.1 | | 40.8 | 59.2 |
| Physics | 1459 | 416 | 1043 | 362 | 5 | 357 | 1071 | 636 | 435 | 196 | 95 | 101 |
| | | 28.5 | 71.5 | | 1.4 | 98.6 | | 59.4 | 40.6 | | 48.5 | 51.5 |

| 2001 | Junior Lyceum | | | Area Secondary | | | Church | | | Independent | | |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------|--------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 229 | 113 | 116 | 40 | 1 | 39 | 481 | 313 | 168 | 91 | 36 | 55 |
| | | 49.3 | 50.7 | | 2.5 | 97.5 | | 65.1 | 34.9 | | 39.6 | 60.4 |
| Chemistry | 182 | 93 | 89 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 367 | 267 | 100 | 42 | 25 | 17 |
| | | 51.1 | 48.9 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 72.8 | 27.2 | | 59.5 | 40.5 |
| Computing | 242 | 103 | 139 | 52 | 0 | 52 | 732 | 393 | 339 | 65 | 32 | 33 |
| | | 42.6 | 57.4 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 53.7 | 46.3 | | 49.2 | 50.8 |
| Mathematics | 1303 | 418 | 885 | 531 | 2 | 529 | 1265 | 696 | 569 | 219 | 89 | 130 |
| | | 32.1 | 67.9 | | 0.4 | 99.6 | | 55.0 | 45.0 | | 40.6 | 59.4 |
| Physics | 1303 | 381 | 922 | 383 | 1 | 382 | 1127 | 637 | 490 | 167 | 81 | 86 |
| | | 29.2 | 70.8 | | 0.3 | 99.7 | | 56.5 | 43.5 | | 48.5 | 51.5 |

| 2002 | Junior Lyceum | | | Area Secondary | | | Church | | | Independent | | |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------|--------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 262 | 166 | 96 | 35 | 0 | 35 | 516 | 368 | 148 | 147 | 81 | 66 |
| | | 63.4 | 36.6 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 71.3 | 28.7 | | 55.1 | 44.9 |
| Chemistry | 264 | 149 | 115 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 421 | 308 | 113 | 63 | 49 | 14 |
| | | 56.4 | 43.6 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 73.2 | 26.8 | | 77.8 | 22.2 |
| Computing | 339 | 156 | 183 | 58 | 2 | 56 | 746 | 493 | 253 | 58 | 32 | 26 |
| | | 46.0 | 54.0 | | 3.4 | 96.6 | | 66.1 | 33.9 | | 55.2 | 44.8 |
| Mathematics | 1445 | 592 | 853 | 627 | 9 | 618 | 1296 | 813 | 483 | 257 | 123 | 134 |
| | | 41.0 | 59.0 | | 1.4 | 98.6 | | 62.7 | 37.3 | | 47.9 | 52.1 |
| Physics | 1429 | 611 | 818 | 403 | 6 | 397 | 1152 | 792 | 360 | 170 | 110 | 60 |
| | | 42.8 | 57.2 | | 1.5 | 98.5 | | 68.8 | 31.3 | | 64.7 | 35.3 |

| 2003 | Junior Lyceum | | | Area Secondary | | | Church | | | Independent | | |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 309 | 192 | 117 | 57 | 2 | 55 | 599 | 466 | 133 | 134 | 83 | 51 |
| | | 62.1 | 37.9 | | 3.5 | 96.5 | | 77.8 | 22.2 | | 61.9 | 38.1 |
| Chemistry | 240 | 132 | 108 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 449 | 364 | 85 | 71 | 54 | 17 |
| | | 55.0 | 45.0 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 81.1 | 18.9 | | 76.1 | 23.9 |
| Computing | 359 | 203 | 156 | 89 | 13 | 76 | 745 | 492 | 253 | 68 | 36 | 32 |
| | | 56.5 | 43.5 | | 14.6 | 85.4 | | 66.0 | 34.0 | | 52.9 | 47.1 |
| Mathematics | 1455 | 649 | 806 | 688 | 12 | 676 | 1378 | 916 | 462 | 289 | 152 | 137 |
| | | 44.6 | 55.4 | | 1.7 | 98.3 | | 66.5 | 33.5 | | 52.6 | 47.4 |
| Physics | 1435 | 526 | 909 | 456 | 15 | 441 | 1174 | 819 | 355 | 216 | 135 | 81 |
| | | 36.7 | 63.3 | | 3.3 | 96.7 | | 69.8 | 30.2 | | 62.5 | 37.5 |

Table 3: Choice of Paper IIA and IIB by School Type (2000-2003) (page 3 of 3)

Table 3.3: Humanities

| 2000 | Junior Lyceum | | | Area Secondary | | | Church | | | Independent | | |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------|--------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Env. Stud. | 960 | 317 | 643 | 240 | 0 | 240 | 354 | 203 | 151 | 73 | 40 | 33 |
| | | 33 | 67 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 57.3 | 42.7 | | 54.8 | 45.2 |
| Geography | 80 | 45 | 35 | 21 | 0 | 21 | 103 | 62 | 41 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| | | 56.3 | 43.7 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 60.2 | 39.8 | | 100 | 0 |
| History | 81 | 37 | 44 | 28 | 0 | 28 | 141 | 52 | 89 | 9 | 4 | 5 |
| | | 45.7 | 54.3 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 36.9 | 63.1 | | 44.4 | 55.6 |
| Social Stud | 1151 | 211 | 940 | 426 | 2 | 424 | 535 | 157 | 378 | 13 | 1 | 12 |
| | | 18.3 | 81.7 | | 0.5 | 99.5 | | 29.3 | 70.7 | | 7.7 | 92.3 |
| Religious Kn | 1311 | 588 | 723 | 581 | 15 | 566 | 1167 | 777 | 390 | 180 | 63 | 117 |
| | | 44.9 | 55.1 | | 2.6 | 97.4 | | 66.6 | 33.4 | | 35 | 65 |

| 2001 | Junior Lyceum | | | Area Secondary | | | Church | | | Independent | | |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------|--------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Envir Stud | 855 | 247 | 608 | 273 | 0 | 273 | 410 | 225 | 185 | 80 | 51 | 29 |
| | | 28.9 | 71.1 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 54.9 | 45.1 | | 63.8 | 36.3 |
| Geography | 67 | 38 | 29 | 16 | 0 | 16 | 90 | 67 | 23 | 12 | 5 | 7 |
| | | 56.7 | 43.3 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 74.4 | 25.6 | | 41.7 | 58.3 |
| History | 81 | 34 | 47 | 11 | 1 | 10 | 111 | 60 | 51 | 25 | 12 | 13 |
| | | 42.0 | 58.0 | | 9.1 | 90.9 | | 54.1 | 45.9 | | 48.0 | 52.0 |
| Social Stud | 960 | 178 | 782 | 343 | 2 | 341 | 618 | 225 | 393 | 11 | 3 | 8 |
| | | 18.5 | 81.5 | | 0.6 | 99.4 | | 36.4 | 63.6 | | 27.3 | 72.7 |
| Religious Kn | 1235 | 541 | 694 | 541 | 5 | 536 | 1233 | 830 | 403 | 193 | 64 | 129 |
| | | 43.8 | 56.2 | | 0.9 | 99.1 | | 67.3 | 32.7 | | 33.2 | 66.8 |

| 2002 | Junior Lyceum | | | Area Secondary | | | Church | | | Independent | | |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------|--------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Env Stud | 1028 | 366 | 662 | 318 | 1 | 317 | 485 | 318 | 167 | 108 | 67 | 41 |
| | | 35.6 | 64.4 | | 0.3 | 99.7 | | 65.6 | 34.4 | | 62.0 | 38.0 |
| Geography | 104 | 69 | 35 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 115 | 77 | 38 | 29 | 19 | 10 |
| | | 66.3 | 33.7 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 67.0 | 33.0 | | 65.5 | 34.5 |
| History | 70 | 38 | 32 | 14 | 0 | 14 | 75 | 60 | 15 | 28 | 15 | 13 |
| | | 54.3 | 45.7 | | 0.0 | 100.0 | | 80.0 | 20.0 | | 53.6 | 46.4 |
| Social Stud | 943 | 203 | 740 | 318 | 2 | 316 | 649 | 363 | 286 | 21 | 9 | 12 |
| | | 21.5 | 78.5 | | 0.6 | 99.4 | | 55.9 | 44.1 | | 42.9 | 57.1 |
| Religious Kn | 1315 | 632 | 683 | 579 | 13 | 566 | 1267 | 963 | 304 | 234 | 110 | 124 |
| | | 48.1 | 51.9 | | 2.2 | 97.8 | | 76.0 | 24.0 | | 47.0 | 53.0 |

| 2003 | Junior Lyceum | | | Area Secondary | | | Church | | | Independent | | |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Env Stud. | 1026 | 400 | 626 | 404 | 1 | 403 | 493 | 315 | 178 | 125 | 76 | 49 |
| | | 39.0 | 61.0 | | 0.2 | 99.8 | | 63.9 | 36.1 | | 60.8 | 39.2 |
| Geography | 72 | 35 | 37 | 26 | 5 | 21 | 101 | 83 | 18 | 29 | 13 | 16 |
| | | 48.6 | 51.4 | | 19.2 | 80.8 | | 82.2 | 17.8 | | 44.8 | 55.2 |
| History | 44 | 25 | 19 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 82 | 59 | 23 | 33 | 22 | 11 |
| | | 56.8 | 43.2 | | 11.1 | 88.9 | | 72.0 | 28.0 | | 66.7 | 33.3 |
| Social Stud. | 722 | 214 | 508 | 309 | 2 | 307 | 661 | 321 | 340 | 20 | 9 | 11 |
| | | 29.6 | 70.4 | | 0.6 | 99.4 | | 48.6 | 51.4 | | 45.0 | 55.0 |
| Religious Kn | 1309 | 717 | 592 | 653 | 26 | 627 | 1341 | 1038 | 303 | 272 | 175 | 97 |
| | | 54.8 | 45.2 | | 4.0 | 96.0 | | 77.4 | 22.6 | | 64.3 | 35.7 |

PART 4: Choice of Paper IIA and Paper IIB by Gender in Two School Types

In this section, the analysis now looks at the choice of Paper IIA and Paper IIB in two different types of single-sex schools: in Junior Lyceums and Church Schools: which are the two largest school types. This analysis is done in order to be able to analyse if the results by school type relate to both boys' and girls' schools in one sector or whether there are similarities between the boys' schools in particular when compared to the girls' schools in the two sectors. At the end of their primary school cycle, students opt to sit for the entrance examination to the state Junior Lyceums and boys also have the option to sit for the Common Entrance examination for admittance into a Church school. In reality, about half of the children who sit for the Junior Lyceum Entrance Examinations make the grade. Boys who pass the Common Entrance Examination also have the option of going to a Church school. Girls do not have this option at 11+ although a number of boys' and girls' church schools admit children by means of a ballot system at age 5. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.

In the category of the Main Languages (see Table 4.1) the boys' Church schools and the girls' Church schools have had relatively high and comparable percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA in English and Maltese. In 2003, these were 76% and 78% for the boys' schools and 75% and 77% for the girls' schools. The state Junior Lyceums have had smaller proportions of students opting for Paper IIA. However there are large gender discrepancies in this case. In 2003, while 56% and 65% of female candidates in Junior Lyceums opted for Paper IIA in English and Maltese respectively, only 37% and 39% of boys in this type of school opted for the same paper. What is positive about the male junior lyceums is that the introduction of Paper IIA in 2002 has encouraged more students to opt for this paper although the proportions are still comparatively low. A leap in the proportion of students opting for Paper IIA since 2002 was also observed in both types of Church schools. Smaller changes were observed in the registration patterns of Junior Lyceum girls. With regard to Italian and French, again we find higher percentage proportions of candidates opting for Paper IIA from boys' Church schools. In 2003, the figures were 69% and 66% respectively. The figures for the girls' schools were higher for the Church schools (58% and 60%) than for the Junior Lyceums (51% and 49%), but once again the figures were lowest for the Junior Lyceum males (26% and 41%).

In the category of Mathematics and Sciences (see Table 4.2), the boys' Church schools and the girls' Church schools have had comparable high percentage proportions of candidates opting for Paper IIA in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. In 2003, the figures were 87%, 81% and 70% for males and 73%, 81% and 70% for females in this sector. The percentage proportion of Junior Lyceum girls opting for Paper IIA have been comparatively high in Biology and Chemistry for two of the subjects in 2002 and 2003. In 2003, the figures were 65% and 75%. These are option subjects and students who choose them tend to be academically oriented. For Physics, which is a popular option in state schools, their percentage proportion was relatively lower (41%) in 2003. The percentage proportion of IIA candidates has been consistently lower for Junior Lyceums boys for all three subjects but especially for Chemistry and Physics (30% in 2003). In Computing, the percentage proportion of candidates opting for Paper IIA has become comparable across the four school types. In 2003, it was highest for Church school boys (59%) and lowest for Junior Lyceums boys (52%). The figures for Mathematics were considerably different in the four school types although they were higher for the Church schools in 2003: 71% for Church school boys and 62% for Church school girls, going down to 51% for Junior Lyceum girls and 34% for Junior Lyceum boys.

In the Humanities category (see Table 4.3), once again, the percentage proportion of candidates opting for Paper IIA was consistently highest for Church school boys, ranging from 83% for Geography to 56% for Social Studies in 2003. However, for Social Studies and Religious Knowledge in particular, Junior Lyceum boys really stand out on their own in terms of how small their figures for Paper IIA are. In 2003, for Religious Knowledge, only 33.3% of their candidates opted for Paper IIA compared to 67% of Junior Lyceum girls, 76% of Church school girls and 79% of Church school boys. For Social Studies, the figure for the Church school boys was the highest (56%). The figures for the two types of girls' schools were comparable (43% for Church school girls and 39% for Junior Lyceum girls). However for Junior Lyceum boys, it was only 6%.

Table 4: Choice of Papers IIA and IIB by School Type and Gender (2000-2003) (Page 1 of 3)

Table 4.1: Main Languages

| 2000 | Males - Junior Lyceums | | | Females- Junior Lyceums | | | Males - Church Schools | | | Females - Church Schools | | |
|---------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English | 592 | 79 | 513 | 903 | 360 | 543 | 698 | 422 | 276 | 515 | 315 | 200 |
| | | 13.3 | 86.7 | | 39.9 | 60.1 | | 60.5 | 39.5 | | 61.2 | 38.8 |
| French | 236 | 26 | 210 | 618 | 245 | 373 | 374 | 183 | 191 | 410 | 197 | 213 |
| | | 11.0 | 89.0 | | 39.6 | 60.4 | | 48.9 | 51.1 | | 48.1 | 51.9 |
| Italian | 356 | 104 | 252 | 571 | 287 | 284 | 523 | 345 | 178 | 422 | 246 | 176 |
| | | 29.2 | 70.8 | | 50.3 | 49.7 | | 66.0 | 34.0 | | 58.3 | 41.7 |
| Maltese | 573 | 144 | 429 | 902 | 610 | 292 | 689 | 464 | 225 | 502 | 366 | 136 |
| | | 25.1 | 74.9 | | 67.6 | 32.4 | | 67.3 | 32.7 | | 72.9 | 27.1 |

| 2001 | Males - Junior Lyceums | | | Females- Junior Lyceums | | | Males - Church Schools | | | Females - Church Schools | | |
|---------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English | 531 | 86 | 445 | 815 | 340 | 475 | 670 | 398 | 272 | 607 | 319 | 288 |
| | | 16.2 | 83.8 | | 41.7 | 58.3 | | 59.4 | 40.6 | | 52.6 | 47.4 |
| French | 238 | 33 | 205 | 543 | 223 | 320 | 391 | 182 | 209 | 457 | 189 | 268 |
| | | 13.9 | 86.1 | | 41.1 | 58.9 | | 46.5 | 53.5 | | 41.4 | 58.6 |
| Italian | 282 | 67 | 215 | 459 | 200 | 259 | 472 | 315 | 157 | 482 | 239 | 243 |
| | | 23.8 | 76.2 | | 43.6 | 56.4 | | 66.7 | 33.3 | | 49.6 | 50.4 |
| Maltese | 528 | 132 | 396 | 811 | 498 | 313 | 661 | 474 | 187 | 598 | 348 | 250 |
| | | 25.0 | 75.0 | | 61.4 | 38.6 | | 71.7 | 28.3 | | 58.2 | 41.8 |

| 2002 | Males - Junior Lyceums | | | Females- Junior Lyceums | | | Males - Church Schools | | | Females - Church Schools | | |
|---------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English | 636 | 192 | 444 | 844 | 394 | 450 | 613 | 504 | 109 | 610 | 444 | 166 |
| | | 30.2 | 69.8 | | 46.7 | 53.3 | | 82.2 | 17.8 | | 72.8 | 27.2 |
| French | 266 | 60 | 206 | 565 | 262 | 303 | 407 | 265 | 142 | 475 | 247 | 228 |
| | | 22.6 | 77.4 | | 46.4 | 53.6 | | 65.1 | 34.9 | | 52.0 | 48.0 |
| Italian | 368 | 140 | 228 | 474 | 245 | 229 | 494 | 345 | 149 | 459 | 278 | 181 |
| | | 38.0 | 62.0 | | 51.7 | 48.3 | | 69.8 | 30.2 | | 60.6 | 39.4 |
| Maltese | 627 | 205 | 422 | 841 | 561 | 280 | 688 | 513 | 175 | 599 | 449 | 150 |
| | | 32.7 | 67.3 | | 66.7 | 33.3 | | 74.6 | 25.4 | | 75.0 | 25.0 |

| 2003 | Males - Junior Lyceums | | | Females- Junior Lyceums | | | Males - Church Schools | | | Females - Church Schools | | |
|---------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| English | 518 | 189 | 329 | 906 | 509 | 397 | 719 | 549 | 170 | 653 | 492 | 161 |
| | | 36.5 | 63.5 | | 56.2 | 43.8 | | 76.4 | 23.6 | | 75.3 | 24.7 |
| French | 227 | 59 | 168 | 635 | 325 | 310 | 379 | 262 | 117 | 505 | 292 | 213 |
| | | 26.0 | 74.0 | | 51.2 | 48.8 | | 69.1 | 30.9 | | 57.8 | 42.2 |
| Italian | 316 | 129 | 187 | 550 | 267 | 283 | 531 | 352 | 179 | 498 | 298 | 200 |
| | | 40.8 | 59.2 | | 48.5 | 51.5 | | 66.3 | 33.7 | | 59.8 | 40.2 |
| Maltese | 542 | 213 | 329 | 939 | 609 | 330 | 719 | 561 | 158 | 641 | 493 | 148 |
| | | 39.3 | 60.7 | | 64.9 | 35.1 | | 78.0 | 22.0 | | 76.9 | 23.1 |

Table 4: Choice of Papers IIA and IIB by School Type and Gender (2000-2003) (Page 2 of 3)

Table 4.2: Mathematics and Sciences

| 2000 | Males - Junior Lyceums | | | Females- Junior Lyceums | | | Males - Church Schools | | | Females - Church Schools | | |
|-------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 49 | 25 | 24 | 153 | 87 | 66 | 188 | 142 | 46 | 301 | 184 | 117 |
| | | 51.0 | 49.0 | | 56.9 | 43.1 | | 75.5 | 24.5 | | 61.1 | 38.9 |
| Chemistry | 98 | 41 | 57 | 88 | 61 | 27 | 219 | 140 | 79 | 179 | 127 | 52 |
| | | 41.8 | 58.2 | | 69.3 | 30.7 | | 63.9 | 36.1 | | 70.9 | 29.1 |
| Computing | 100 | 28 | 72 | 126 | 45 | 81 | 408 | 217 | 191 | 203 | 72 | 131 |
| | | 28.0 | 72.0 | | 35.7 | 64.3 | | 53.2 | 46.8 | | 35.5 | 64.5 |
| Mathematics | 570 | 146 | 424 | 890 | 348 | 542 | 694 | 409 | 285 | 513 | 254 | 259 |
| | | 25.6 | 74.4 | | 39.1 | 60.9 | | 58.9 | 41.2 | | 49.5 | 50.5 |
| Physics | 568 | 133 | 435 | 891 | 283 | 608 | 691 | 404 | 287 | 380 | 232 | 148 |
| | | 23.4 | 76.6 | | 31.8 | 68.2 | | 58.5 | 41.5 | | 61.1 | 38.9 |

| 2001 | Males - Junior Lyceums | | | Females- Junior Lyceums | | | Males - Church Schools | | | Females - Church Schools | | |
|-------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 64 | 26 | 38 | 165 | 87 | 78 | 172 | 127 | 45 | 309 | 186 | 123 |
| | | 40.6 | 59.4 | | 52.7 | 47.3 | | 73.8 | 26.2 | | 60.2 | 39.8 |
| Chemistry | 81 | 24 | 57 | 101 | 69 | 32 | 209 | 147 | 62 | 158 | 120 | 38 |
| | | 29.6 | 70.4 | | 68.3 | 31.7 | | 70.3 | 29.7 | | 75.9 | 24.1 |
| Computing | 103 | 39 | 64 | 139 | 64 | 75 | 486 | 296 | 190 | 246 | 97 | 149 |
| | | 37.9 | 62.1 | | 46.0 | 54.0 | | 60.9 | 39.1 | | 39.4 | 60.6 |
| Mathematics | 501 | 129 | 372 | 802 | 289 | 513 | 664 | 426 | 238 | 601 | 270 | 331 |
| | | 25.7 | 74.3 | | 36.0 | 64.0 | | 64.2 | 35.8 | | 44.9 | 55.1 |
| Physics | 505 | 133 | 372 | 798 | 248 | 551 | 663 | 408 | 255 | 464 | 229 | 235 |
| | | 26.3 | 73.7 | | 31.1 | 69.0 | | 61.5 | 38.5 | | 49.4 | 50.6 |

| 2002 | Males - Junior Lyceums | | | Females- Junior Lyceums | | | Males - Church Schools | | | Females - Church Schools | | |
|-------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 81 | 40 | 41 | 181 | 126 | 55 | 186 | 152 | 34 | 330 | 216 | 114 |
| | | 49.4 | 50.6 | | 69.6 | 30.4 | | 81.7 | 18.3 | | 65.5 | 34.5 |
| Chemistry | 134 | 50 | 84 | 130 | 99 | 31 | 251 | 168 | 83 | 170 | 140 | 30 |
| | | 37.3 | 62.7 | | 76.2 | 23.8 | | 66.9 | 33.1 | | 82.4 | 17.6 |
| Computing | 154 | 70 | 84 | 185 | 86 | 99 | 477 | 331 | 146 | 269 | 162 | 107 |
| | | 45.5 | 54.5 | | 46.5 | 53.5 | | 69.4 | 30.6 | | 60.2 | 39.8 |
| Mathematics | 610 | 205 | 405 | 835 | 387 | 448 | 690 | 480 | 210 | 606 | 333 | 273 |
| | | 33.6 | 66.4 | | 46.3 | 53.7 | | 69.6 | 30.4 | | 55.0 | 45.0 |
| Physics | 605 | 230 | 375 | 824 | 381 | 443 | 687 | 494 | 193 | 465 | 298 | 167 |
| | | 38.0 | 62.0 | | 46.2 | 53.8 | | 71.9 | 28.1 | | 64.1 | 35.9 |

| 2003 | Males - Junior Lyceums | | | Females- Junior Lyceums | | | Males - Church Schools | | | Females - Church Schools | | |
|-------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Biology | 81 | 44 | 37 | 228 | 148 | 80 | 191 | 167 | 24 | 408 | 299 | 109 |
| | | 54.3 | 45.7 | | 64.9 | 35.1 | | 87.4 | 12.6 | | 73.3 | 26.7 |
| Chemistry | 107 | 32 | 75 | 133 | 100 | 33 | 237 | 193 | 44 | 212 | 171 | 41 |
| | | 29.9 | 70.1 | | 75.2 | 24.8 | | 81.4 | 18.6 | | 80.7 | 19.3 |
| Computing | 156 | 81 | 75 | 203 | 122 | 81 | 509 | 352 | 157 | 236 | 140 | 96 |
| | | 51.9 | 48.1 | | 60.1 | 39.9 | | 69.2 | 30.8 | | 59.3 | 40.7 |
| Mathematics | 530 | 181 | 349 | 925 | 468 | 457 | 727 | 513 | 214 | 651 | 403 | 248 |
| | | 34.2 | 65.8 | | 50.6 | 49.4 | | 70.6 | 29.4 | | 61.9 | 38.1 |
| Physics | 518 | 155 | 363 | 917 | 371 | 546 | 721 | 503 | 218 | 453 | 316 | 137 |
| | | 29.9 | 70.1 | | 40.5 | 59.5 | | 69.8 | 30.2 | | 69.8 | 30.2 |

Table 4: Choice of Papers IIA and IIB by School Type and Gender (2000-2003) (Page 3 of 3)

Table 4.3: Humanities

| 2000 | Males - Junior Lyceums | | | Females - Junior Lyceums | | | Males - Church Schools | | | Females - Church Schools | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Environ. Studies | 356 | 57 | 299 | 604 | 260 | 344 | 317 | 197 | 120 | 37 | 6 | 31 |
| Geography | 20 | 16.0 5 | 84.0 15 | 60 | 43.1 40 | 56.9 20 | 81 | 62.1 58 | 37.9 23 | 22 | 16.2 4 | 83.8 18 |
| History | 35 | 25.0 8 | 75.0 27 | 46 | 66.7 29 | 33.3 17 | 110 | 71.6 47 | 28.4 63 | 31 | 18.2 5 | 81.8 26 |
| Social Studies | 406 | 22.9 41 | 77.1 365 | 745 | 63.0 170 | 37.0 575 | 241 | 42.7 59 | 57.3 182 | 294 | 16.1 98 | 83.9 196 |
| Religious Knowledge | 479 | 10.1 117 | 89.9 362 | 832 | 22.8 471 | 77.2 361 | 667 | 24.5 475 | 75.5 192 | 500 | 33.3 302 | 66.7 198 |
| | | 24.4 75.6 | | | 56.7 43.3 | | | 71.2 28.8 | | | 60.4 39.6 | |

| 2001 | Males - Junior Lyceums | | | Females - Junior Lyceums | | | Males - Church Schools | | | Females - Church Schools | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Environ. Studies | 340 | 43 | 297 | 515 | 204 | 311 | 313 | 212 | 101 | 97 | 13 | 84 |
| Geography | 20 | 12.6 5 | 87.4 15 | 47 | 39.6 33 | 60.4 14 | 82 | 67.7 67 | 32.3 15 | 8 | 13.4 0 | 86.6 8 |
| History | 37 | 25.0 10 | 75.0 27 | 44 | 70.2 24 | 29.8 20 | 103 | 81.7 60 | 18.3 43 | 8 | 0 0 | 100 8 |
| Social Studies | 389 | 27.0 52 | 73.0 337 | 571 | 54.5 126 | 45.5 445 | 237 | 58.3 100 | 41.7 137 | 381 | 0 125 | 100 256 |
| Religious Knowledge | 470 | 13.4 99 | 86.6 371 | 765 | 22.1 442 | 77.9 323 | 644 | 42.2 477 | 57.8 167 | 589 | 32.8 353 | 67.2 236 |
| | | 21.1 78.9 | | | 57.8 42.2 | | | 74.1 25.9 | | | 59.9 40.1 | |

| 2002 | Males - Junior Lyceums | | | Females - Junior Lyceums | | | Males - Church Schools | | | Females - Church Schools | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Environ. Studies | 388 | 91 | 297 | 640 | 275 | 365 | 383 | 291 | 92 | 102 | 27 | 75 |
| Geography | 23 | 23.5 7 | 76.5 16 | 81 | 43.0 62 | 57.0 19 | 107 | 76.0 76 | 24.0 31 | 8 | 26.5 1 | 73.5 7 |
| History | 21 | 30.4 13 | 69.6 8 | 49 | 76.5 25 | 23.5 24 | 75 | 71.0 60 | 29.0 15 | 0 | 12.5 0 | 87.5 0 |
| Social Studies | 354 | 61.9 52 | 38.1 302 | 589 | 51.0 151 | 49.0 438 | 325 | 80.0 218 | 20.0 107 | 324 | 0 145 | 0 179 |
| Religious Knowledge | 553 | 14.7 191 | 85.3 362 | 762 | 25.6 441 | 74.4 321 | 671 | 67.1 541 | 32.9 130 | 596 | 44.8 422 | 55.2 174 |
| | | 34.5 65.5 | | | 57.9 42.1 | | | 80.6 19.4 | | | 70.8 29.2 | |

| 2003 | Males - Junior Lyceums | | | Females - Junior Lyceums | | | Males - Church Schools | | | Females - Church Schools | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B | Total | A | B |
| Environ. Studies | 325 | 61 | 264 | 701 | 339 | 362 | 393 | 277 | 116 | 100 | 38 | 62 |
| Geography | 13 | 18.8 3 | 81.2 10 | 59 | 48.4 32 | 51.6 27 | 100 | 70.5 83 | 29.5 17 | 1 | 38.0 0 | 62.0 1 |
| History | 14 | 23.1 6 | 76.9 8 | 30 | 54.2 19 | 45.8 11 | 82 | 83.0 59 | 17.0 23 | 0 | 0 0 | 100 0 |
| Social Studies | 205 | 42.9 12 | 57.1 193 | 517 | 63.3 202 | 36.7 315 | 290 | 72.0 162 | 28.0 128 | 371 | 0 159 | 0 212 |
| Religious Knowledge | 486 | 5.9 162 | 94.1 324 | 823 | 39.1 555 | 60.9 268 | 710 | 55.9 558 | 44.1 152 | 631 | 42.9 480 | 57.1 151 |
| | | 33.3 66.7 | | | 67.4 32.6 | | | 78.6 21.4 | | | 76.1 23.9 | |

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The main findings of this study are the following:

- ❑ The registration data of the different subjects during the period 1994-2003 indicate a consistent pattern: a general decline in the percentage of candidates opting for Paper IIA in the different subjects, with the exception of Biology and Chemistry until 2001. This has taken place alongside a steady increase in the number of registrations for the different subjects. Since 2002, with the introduction of Grade 5 in Paper IIA and with more stable registration numbers, the direction of the trend has started to change and higher proportions of candidates have started opting for Paper IIA.
- ❑ Analysis of the data by gender indicates that there were differences in the percentage proportions of males and females opting for Paper IIA. Since the introduction of Grade 5 in 2002, higher proportions of both male and female candidates have opted for Paper IIA.
- ❑ The analysis of the data by educational sector identifies two general trends: (1) relatively high percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA in the Church sector and (2) extremely low percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA in the area secondary schools.
- ❑ The breakdown of the data by gender on the choice of Paper IIA and Paper IIB in the Junior Lyceums and the Church schools highlights a serious concern regarding the comparatively lower percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA from the boys' Junior Lyceums in the different subjects. The significant increase in the percentage proportion of candidates from both boys' and girls' Church schools opting for Paper IIA since 2002, has not helped in closing the gap, although an increase has been observed for Junior Lyceums boys.
- ❑ The different analyses identified that Social Studies is not in line with the other subjects.

DISCUSSION

To date, there has been no statement issued regarding the percentages of candidates that are expected to sit for Paper IIA and Paper IIB in the different subjects. However, it was assumed that the percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA would differ according to the number of entries in the different subjects. Therefore, subjects which are studied as options and have a relatively small candidature would have higher percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA than the larger subjects which are taken by the majority of candidates in that particular year. However, the data in Table 1.1 to 1.3 indicate that it is not the number of entries alone that determines what percentages of candidates opt for Paper IIA and Paper IIB in the different subjects. When the Paper IIA and Paper IIB choice was initially introduced, teachers seemed to be divided in terms of their predictions. There were those who predicted that all or most of the candidates would opt for Paper IIB since candidates could obtain grades that were acceptable for higher studies by taking this route. At the same time there were others who predicted that all or most of the candidates would opt for Paper IIA since gaining the highest grades possible was a prerogative of our educational system. While it is not possible to generalise that either of these predictions became a reality, the analysis of this report shows

that there was an inclination towards the Paper IIB option until 2001. Less than 30% of the candidates who registered for English and Mathematics opted for Paper IIA in 2001. A change in this trend is now observed and 41% of the candidates who registered for English opted for Paper IIA in 2003 and 46% of those who registered for Maltese opted for this paper in the same year. The situation remains less positive for Mathematics and only 35% of the candidates registering for this subject opted for Paper IIA in 2003. The factors contributing to the current situation in this subject need to be studied in more detail.

The registration data of the different subjects during the period 1994-2003 indicate a general decline in the percentage of candidates opting for Paper IIA in the different subjects, with the exception of Biology and Chemistry until 2001. The decline was minimal in certain subjects (e.g. Mathematics and Physics), moderate in others (e.g. Maltese, English, Italian and Religious Knowledge) and dramatic in Environmental Studies and Social Studies. Both Environmental Studies and Social Studies are particular in their own way. Environmental Studies draws from Geography, History and Social Studies and attracts students who may not have studied the subject as such. Social Studies on the other hand, is one of the core subjects in the secondary curriculum and therefore all students study this subject for one lesson per week. This subject can also be studied as an option and currently there is a very small number of candidates in state schools who study this subject as an option in Forms 3-5. The large numbers of candidates who are registering for Social Studies (N=2921 in 2000 and N=2,206 in 2003) suggests that the students who are studying the subject for one lesson per week are opting to sit for the SEC examination. Most of these then opt for Paper IIB. The breadth and depth of the content of this subject needs to be reviewed in order to determine the knowledge and skills that are required for this examination in comparison to others and hence determine its equivalence to the other subjects studied at this level. Although the situation has improved considerably for most of the subjects since 2002, the figures for the Paper IIA option are still low for Environmental Studies (36%) and Social Studies (29%).

The analysis of the data by gender indicated that, in general, girls have not tended to opt for Paper IIB more than boys. Therefore, although Pace (2000) reported that girls denoted a higher stress level in the process of choice, this did not seem to materialize in opting for Paper IIB. In fact, the general impression from the analysis by gender indicated that there was a tendency, though small at times, for a higher percentage of girls to opt for Paper IIA. The difference in favour of girls was evident in a variety of subjects of different candidature sizes, ranging from Maltese, where in 2003, 51% of the female candidates opted for Paper IIA compared to 40% of the male candidates to Chemistry, where 73% of the female candidates opted for Paper IIA compared to 63% of the male candidates. There were some exceptions to this trend, for example, in Biology, in 2003, where there was a higher proportion of the male candidates opting for Paper IIA (69% compared to 57% of female candidates) even though there were more than twice as many females (N=950) than males (N=421) that registered for this examination.

Further analysis on the data by educational sector of the past four years indicates that a low percentage of candidates opting for Paper IIA were not consistent in the three educational sectors. In fact, two trends became apparent. There are relatively high percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA in the Church sector and relatively low percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA in the state sector. It is important to point out, however, that the numbers of candidates from the state sector were generally larger. In the section of the Main Languages, for example 76% of the candidates from the Church sector opted for Paper IIA in English in 2003 compared to 49% of the candidates from the Junior Lyceum. Certain Church schools are renowned to promote English as a language of communication and have a proportion of their population who have English as their first language. The same can be said

for the Independent schools where 73% of the candidates opted for Paper IIA in English last year. While these reasons are plausible explanations for this discrepancy, they do not explain the difference in Maltese, where 78% of the candidates from the Church sector opted for Paper IIA compared to 55% of the candidates from the Junior Lyceum.

Although one may have expected a higher proportion of the candidates from the Junior Lyceums to opt for Paper IIA in Maltese, it is important to point out that language competency alone is not enough to do well in the Maltese examination. Language and literature form part of the same examination. Other large subjects, such as Mathematics, Physics and Religion also have higher proportions of the candidates from the Church sector opting for Paper IIA. For these subjects, this was the case in the Independent schools as well. The reasons for these discrepancies may be multi-faceted. It may be argued that the Church schools and Independent schools are 'creaming off' the academically able students by their processes of selection / payment. Secondly, it may be that Church and Independent schools impress upon their students the notion that Paper IIA is appropriate for them. Thirdly, the choice may be related to the issue of self-esteem as pointed out by Darmanin (1995) and Ventura and Murphy (1998). Students in the Church and Independent sector may have higher self-esteem and self-confidence and hence feel confident about opting for Paper IIA. These candidates and their parents may also have higher aspirations about their future and therefore feel that they need to sit for Paper IIA in order to gain high grades, which are desirable for further study. Private lessons, which are very much part of the academically inclined students as well as those who need extra tuition also play a role in this complex situation.

The discrepancies outlined above are real, however they are not consistent across all subjects. In fact, the percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA in Biology and Chemistry are similarly high in the three sectors. It may be argued that the students who opt to study these options in Forms 3-5 are academically able students whether they are in the State, Church or Independent sectors and hence the consistent high proportions of candidates opting for Paper IIA in these subjects. All these arguments can serve as working hypotheses for a separate investigation, which looks into the reasons for the Paper IIA and IIB choice.

As a final note with regard to the breakdown of the data by educational sector, it must be pointed out that the differences in the percentages of the choice of Paper IIA has been discussed using registration data. Therefore, the differences outlined do not necessarily reflect differences in achievement. In order to be able to comment on achievement, the percentage passes (especially for grades 1-5) in the three educational sectors in the different subjects need to be included. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to do this, this analysis needs to be done in order to be able to provide a more complete picture of the impact of the provision of differentiated papers on secondary school students in Malta. It is also important to look into the percentages of the populations in the different types of schools that are taking the SEC examinations in order to be able to evaluate the level of accessibility of the SEC examinations to students in the different types of schools.

The analysis of the choice of Paper IIA and Paper IIB in the Junior Lyceums and Church schools highlights a serious concern regarding the comparatively lower percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA from the boys' Junior Lyceums in the majority of the subjects. For example, in 2003, in Maltese, only 39% of the candidates from the boys' Junior Lyceums opted for Paper IIA, compared to 65% of the candidates from the girls' Junior Lyceums, 78% from the boys' church schools and 77% from the girls' Church schools. In English, only 37% of the candidates from the boys' Junior Lyceums opted for Paper IIA compared to 56% of the candidates from the girls' Junior Lyceums, 76% from the boys' Church schools and 75% from the girls' Church schools. And in Religious Studies, only 33% of the candidates from the boys'

Junior Lyceums opted for Paper IIA, compared to 67% of the candidates from the girls' Junior Lyceums, 79% from the boys' Church schools and 78% from the girls' Church schools. This analysis consistently showed that the patterns of choice of Paper IIA and IIB were not generally comparable in the boys' and girls' Junior Lyceums. Therefore, the concern already aired regarding the low percentages of candidates opting for Paper IIA in the Junior Lyceums relates specifically to the boys' schools. Although considerable changes have been observed since the introduction of grade 5 in 2002, however, the current figures regarding this type of school are not satisfactory.

In addition to the trends noted above, however, there were other observations worth noting. There were a number of subjects, e.g. Physics, where the proportion of female candidates from the Junior Lyceums opting for Paper IIA was considerably smaller than the proportions of females and males from Church schools opting for that paper. Moreover, there was a small number of subjects (Environmental Studies, French and Social Studies) where there were considerable discrepancies between the proportions of candidates opting for Paper IIA from the boys' and girls' Church schools as well as from the boys' and girls' Junior Lyceums. Furthermore, in Social Studies especially, the percentage proportion of candidates opting for Paper IIA was low in the different types of schools.

Overall, however, the analysis by gender and type of school indicated that boys in the Junior Lyceums appear to be opting for a soft choice, when compared to girls in the Junior Lyceums and to other boys. The reasons for this option may be multi-faceted and a qualitative inquiry is needed to uncover them. At this point however, one can hypothesize several explanations. Perhaps boys in Junior Lyceums are 'playing safe' by not taking the risk of sitting for Paper IIA and hence making do with Grades 4-5. These students may also have low self-esteem, in which case they believe that Paper IIA is not aimed at their capabilities. Or they may not be taking their schooling seriously enough. The expectations in these schools may also not be as high, despite the fact that admittance to these schools is selective. Alternatively, they may be protesting tacitly against the system of differentiated papers. Whatever the reasons, the major concern is whether these boys are being shortchanged, whether their potential is being developed and hence whether they are being stretched to perform at their optimal capacity levels in external examinations.

In conclusion, it is necessary to refer to the point made in the introduction that candidates are asked to select the appropriate level for their ability in each subject when they register for the examination. The general trends observed in this study have shown that it is questionable whether candidates choose the paper that matches their ability in the different subjects, especially when we look at the general decline between 1994-2001 and the increase in the popularity of Paper IIA since 2002. Therefore, while in theory, candidates are given the opportunity to select the appropriate level in each subject in relation to their ability when they register for the examination, it appears that this does not necessarily take place. The reasons for this reality are certainly complex and multi-faceted. However, MATSEC must ascertain that the standards of the papers remain consistent from one year to another because ultimately, it should not be a case of taking a risk for these candidates, especially when the fundamental principle of the SEC examination is that it should enable candidates to demonstrate what they know and can do (Ventura & Murphy, 1998). The change in the range of grades obtained via the Paper IIA route (from Grades 1-4 to Grades 1-5) from 2002 has led to changes in the trends of choice and more students are attracted towards Paper IIA. As a direct consequence, there potentially there may be less abuse by high achieving candidates blocking the middle grades by opting for Paper IIB. Potentially, this could have opened up the way for more students from the area secondary schools to register for the Paper IIB option, although this does not seem to

have happened so far. At this point in time, the fact that the majority of students who attend area secondary schools end up with no certification after 11 years of compulsory schooling is highlighted as a major area of concern, which needs immediate attention. A review of the system is planned that will help us understand aspects of the local situation for which innovations and adaptations are a must from an inclusive perspective.

NB: Comments and suggestions regarding issues raised in this report are valuable at this point in time and may be communicated directly to me by email.
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