

A TALE OF TWO DOCUMENTS

Recently the Government as well as the MLP published separately a policy document each. The Government published the Pre Budget Document 2008 outlining its main proposals for next year's Budget while the MLP published its policy document "Bidu Gdid" intended to serve as a basis for next year's election manifesto. So we have two documents similar in purpose, but different in content, style and thickness.

It will be too laborious to compare each and every sector treated in these documents so I will just limit my comments to the education sector.

The MLP document devotes about 40 pages to education and, yet, it is devoid almost completely of any concrete proposal backed by proper study of its utility and purpose. One can hardly count enough proposals in these 40 pages to use all fingers in one hand. The document is a wish list and a biased analysis of the educational set up highlighting the weaknesses and ignoring the many strong points in the system. One example will prove this point. Reading through paragraphs 1.17 and 11.3 the MLP is proposing a reception year between the kindergarten and primary years. However no proper reason and possible benefits such a reception would have are available. The reader would have to guess why the MLP is proposing such measure and what are the implications of this proposal. Does it mean that it will extend the compulsory schooling up to 17 years? What will be the curriculum of this year? Who will teach this reception year, the kindergarten teacher or the primary school teacher? It is expected that the MLP will give reasons about the benefits and mechanisms of this proposal before expecting the electorate to accept it.

It is refreshing to read in this document repeatedly about the benefits of EU membership on education and the need for all of use to maximise these benefits. However it is perplexing to read the MLP's official document insisting on making use of the benefits of the EU membership when one remembers that up to the referendum (just four years ago) they were dead set against membership. The MLP's proposal of partnership would have excluded us from the benefits of membership.

A veritable U turn if ever there was one.

On a lighter note. The MLP document proposes in paragraph 1.8 that "it wants the University to play in the Premier Division". Our ambition is for our University to play in the Champions League!

In contrast to the MLP document, The pre Budget Document 2008 devotes nine pages on education packed solid with concrete and factual proposals dealing with the College system; school building, upgrading and extensions programme; supply of computers to schools; upgrading of kindergarten staff; reforms in pupil assessment; inclusive education; reforms in guidance services; EU projects; more investment in further and higher education; more investment in scholarships; incentives to encourage more private investment in education; improvements in the maintenance grants and many other on-going projects started in previous years.

A look at these two documents, sector by sector, will give the reader enough insight on who is better prepared to lead the nation after next year' election. One party to be judged by its past records and concrete plans to continue with the progress started before, while the other party of doom and gloom present a vague wish list devoid of any concreteness.