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## Editorial

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### Xjenza - Two Years On

*Xjenza* is now two years old. Since the first issue of *Xjenza* was published, a steady stream of papers have kept the Journal alive. This may bode well for the future but complacency is not a good position to adopt. We are particularly keen to see papers from recent graduates. All science students have to prepare a thesis or a project of original work. Let us read about it. Not enough use is being made of *Xjenza* in this regard particularly from the disciplines of mathematics and physics. Currently, it is the biologists who are the clear leaders.

The second issue of *Xjenza* (December 1996) was dedicated to the Proceedings of the Malta Forum for Science Teachers, held in Malta in September that year. This initiative of the Malta Chamber of Scientists has paid off and we are proud to note that the Department of Primary Education within the Faculty of Education of our University will be offering a certificate in Science Teaching at Primary Level from October this year. Also, Dr Susan Tresman from the Open University, UK, who was one of the invited speakers at the Forum, has been appointed as visiting associate professor at the University of Malta, and a British Council sponsored Scholar, to assist with the development of the course structure and materials. Learning methods will include the use of television programmes based on workbooks for the content credits. Aspects of methodology will utilise the services of the University Radio Station. All primary science teachers are strongly encouraged to avail themselves of this opportunity. This is a vital first step if we are to improve not only the facilities and level of science teaching at primary level, but possibly more importantly, the interest and enthusiasm for the subject, something which is sorely lacking in our country.

Another recent development that will affect the teaching of science has been the publication of the new curriculum. We are pleased to learn that some of the recommendations made in the Editorial (*Xjenza*, 1 (2), 5-6, 1996) have not fallen on deaf ears. At primary level, the teaching of science is to be made compulsory with a recommendation for a minimum of two hours per week. At secondary level (Forms 1 and 2) four hours of integrated science are being recommended whereas at Form 3 and higher, any one of the three science subjects (Chemistry, Biology or Physics) will be made compulsory. This is a change from previous requirements where Physics was the compulsory science subject. Another issue being raised in the revised curriculum is that the teaching of Science is to be conducted in English. Although this is all well and good when one considers the extensive terminology and available material in that language in contrast to what is available in Maltese, one cannot help feeling anxious that unless the standard of English also improves in our schools, our pupils will remain at a distinct disadvantage in their assimilation of scientific concepts and consequently lag behind in their development of scientific analysis and thinking.

An important event for science has taken place in Malta this year, namely, the competition for the Junior Scientist Award (refer to page 32). The recipient of this award will be competing against other young scientists from EU countries in the EU Scientist of the Year award which will be taking place in Portugal later this year. More Maltese young scientists should be encouraged to take part in the Junior Scientist award competition. The high standard of the projects presented and the enthusiasm with which the contestants presented their projects was very encouraging. Perhaps we should introduce a feature in *Xjenza* dedicated to such projects.

National Student Travel Foundation (NSTF) in collaboration with the Malta Chamber of Scientists annually runs a Science Forum over a six-month period in which current topics in science are debated among some fifty budding scientists. A panel of judges made up of university lecturers awards marks for presentation, content and debating skills of individual students. Students placed in the first ten positions at the end of the fora are flown to London for two weeks to attend a science festival consisting of some other three hundred young scientists from all over the world. Lectures, demonstrations and visits to the best laboratories and industries form part of this event. Participation must be an invaluable experience and the best of the ten reports from the students could perhaps be a feature of *Xjenza*.

Industry in Malta is also showing promise in encouraging science education by supporting various initiatives of the Malta Chamber of Scientists. Most of the Business and Scientific meetings organised by the Chamber are sponsored by various industries which have a direct interest in the subject being presented or discussed. In this regard particular thanks go to E.J. Busuttill Ltd. for generous sponsorship of *Xjenza*.

It is thus encouraging to witness some progress being made in Malta in the fostering of a science culture in our youth, perhaps it is the unstinting efforts of the Malta Chamber of Scientists which are bearing some fruit. However, much remains to be done. More motivation nationwide is required and parents themselves need to be educated about the value of some scientific training for all in order to help us develop further in an ever scientific and technological world. We at *Xjenza* will continue playing our part in this endeavour. All readers and local scientists, especially new graduates, are encouraged to submit papers for publication in this journal. Make it a thriving Journal - ~~Keep~~ *Xjenza* alive!

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