INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK 2
OF TEACHER EDUCATION WORLDWIDE
VOL 2

Revised and Augmented Edition

K.G. KARRAS - C.C. WOLHUTER

eds

INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK
OF TEACHER EDUCATION WORLDWIDE

Teachers Education internationally is a field that most researchers, educators, teachers' trainers, and educational policy makers consider to be of most importance. Distinguished authors from the 114 countries have contributed to the present Edition. We do believe that the international bibliography on the field of Education and Teachers Education with this work will be more fruitful and rich. The original papers included in this 3volume Handbook offer a great impact to the problematic in the area and pose crucial questions in the area of teachers' education and education in general. Researchers, teachers of any grade, educators, politicians who involved with education and teachers' education especially will found answers, via similarities and differences, in order to derive good practices and interpret educational situations in different contexts. It is obvious that modern teachers and their education face new challenges and transitions in a global era. The environment of the 21st century is characterized by ideological, economic social transitions, changes, transformations and challenges. These challenges and changes are strongly related to the new teachers' role, their efficiency in their classrooms, job satisfaction etc. The authors of the present 3 volume work, offering their original work and research, contribute to the debate on the area of Education and Teachers' Education worldwide and enrich the existing bibliography. In this context we have to think in common on Teachers' Education in order to find solutions to the existing problems, to communicate good practices internationally. Innovation, creativity, critical thinking and human values are the keys to make the field appropriate to respond to the challenges, changes and transformations of our century.
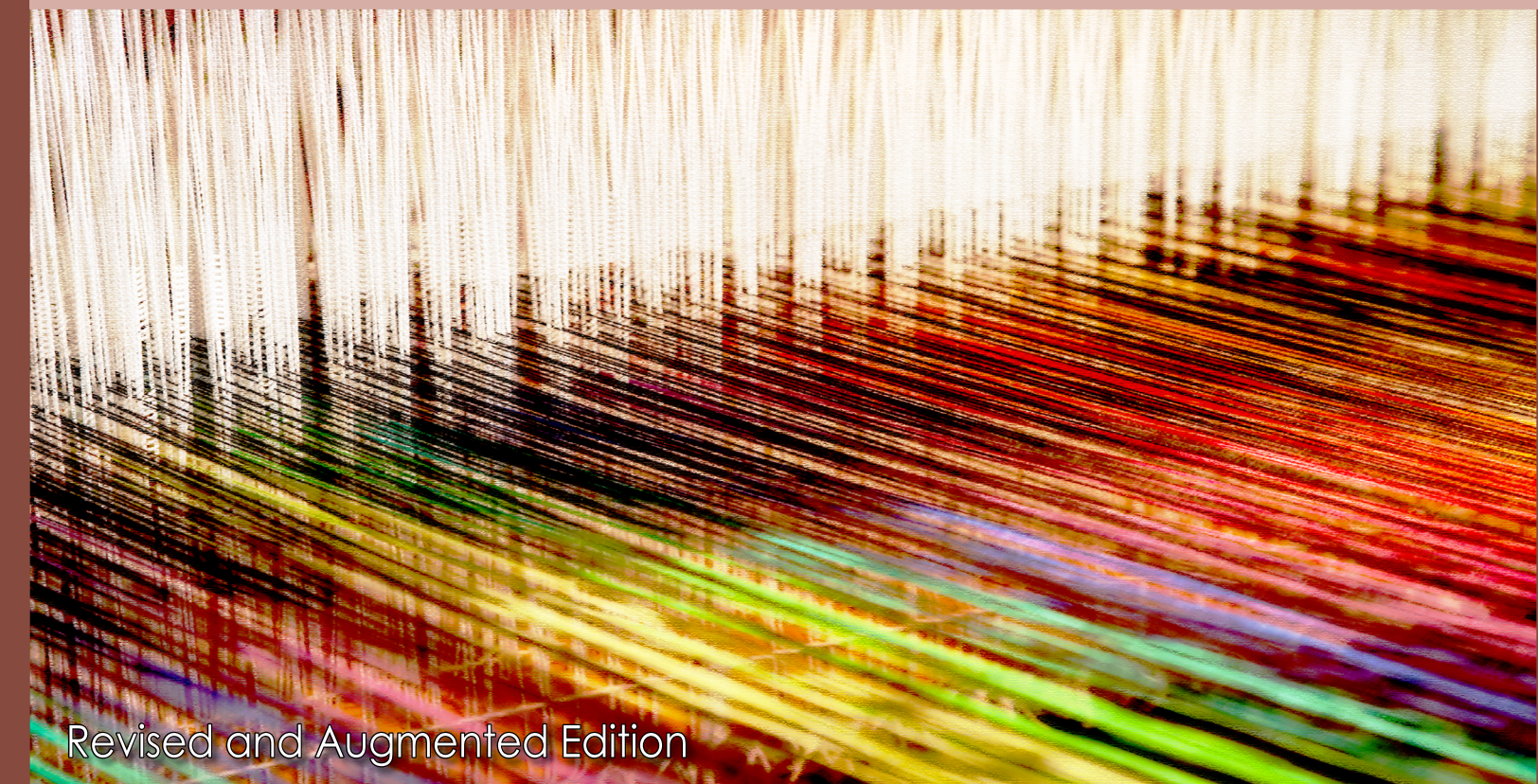
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Foreword
MICHAEL APPLE

Scientific Advisor of the Edition
Prof. Pella Calogiannakis

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Table of Contents

VOL 2

VOL 3

Foreword

Michael W. Apple[1]

In *Educating the "Right" Way* (Apple 2006) and *Can Education Change Society?*(Apple 2013), I spend a good deal of time on the ways in which education has been and is now a significant site of struggle for both retrogressive and progressive movements. Unfortunately, it is these more retrogressive movements who are often in the driver's seat in educational reform many nations currently.

We should not be surprised that education has once again become a focal point of concerted criticism. This is not new. Whenever there is significant turmoil in society, economic worries, a loss of cultural stability and a feeling that "all that is solid melts in the air," and more—all of this has very often led to a focus on educational theories, policies, and practices as both a major cause of our social and well as educational problems and a major source of possible solutions.

This is particularly the case now. Neoliberals have pushed for privatization, the use of corporate models and logics, and competition in everything educational. Neoconservatives have urged a restoration of "real knowledge" and "tradition." Authoritarian populist religious conservatives have lamented the "loss of God" in our schools and daily life. And they have exerted pressures at all levels of education to bring back conservative religious understandings to the central place that they supposedly once had. And new managerial impulses that stress reductive forms of measurement, accountability, and audit as the only way to judge success in schools have had powerful effects as well (Apple, 2006; See also Apple, Gandin, Liu, Meshulam, and Schirmer, 2018).

All of these movements have had very real effects not only on education in general. They have been and are equally powerful in one of the most significant areas of education, that of teacher education. One of the things that provides support for these tendencies is the lamentable fact that we live in a time of increasing disrespect of teaching and teachers in many regions. All too often there seems to an underlying assumption that the act of teaching is somehow "easy," that it doesn't require an extensive amount of varied skills both intellectual and interpersonal, and that therefore it can be done by almost anyone. Nothing could be farther from the truth. If anything,

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a robust and critically reflective teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, is required now more than ever.

The effects of these attacks on public schools and on teachers and teacher education are increasingly visible. For example, the rapid growth of home schooling speaks to the growing mistrust of teachers (Apple 2006). Conservative think tanks have become factories for the production of reports that are scathing in their condemnations of teachers and teacher education institutions, often in the absence of robust empirical evidence to support their claims. The effects are also apparent when one speaks to teachers who work so very hard in our often under-resourced schools and communities and to the teacher educators who strive to build and defend programs that are responsive to the realities that these teachers face. For many of these committed educators, the situation they face can be best seen as "management by stress."

It has become ever more clear that education cannot be understood without recognizing that nearly all educational policies and practices are strongly influenced by an increasingly integrated international economy that is subject to severe crises, that reforms and crises in one country have significant effects in others, that immigration and population flows from one nation or area to another have tremendous impacts on what counts as official knowledge, what counts as a responsive and effective education, what counts as appropriate teaching and responsive teacher education, and the list could continue for quite a while. Indeed, all of these social and ideological dynamics and many more are now fundamentally restructuring what education does, how it is controlled, and who benefits from it throughout the world. The impact of all of this has been profound on teacher education and makes a focus on improving teacher education even more crucial today. All of these conditions make this Handbook an important contribution.

One of the wisest analysts of teacher education, Kenneth Zeichner, has consistently reminded us that while there are a multitude of proposals for "reforming teacher education" throughout the world, all too often these programs remain at the level of slogans. As he puts it, The "appearance of significant and substantive change often turns out, however, to be the illusion of change because the changes take place only on the surface while the underlying program substance and relations of power, knowledge, and coherence remain the same" (Zeichner, 2018, p. 10). For Zeichner, the key element of making lasting changes must be based on the following principle. Reforming teacher education programs and institutions must be done with an eye toward their role in expanding the space of even more critically democratic reforms (Zeichner 2009).

But, before we can understand whether reforms in teacher education or proposals to strengthen and defend it are on the surface or are genuinely aimed at expanding "the space of even more critically democratic reforms," we need to know what is happening in the nations throughout the world that are dealing with the at times difficult, but crucial problems of educating current and future teachers to effectively face an uncertain economic, religious, ideological, and demographic world (see Apple, 2011).

This is one the reasons the *International Handbook of Teacher Education Worldwide* is so useful. It aims to provide us with a much needed picture of what is happening in teacher education in a considerable number of nations throughout the world. Of course, no handbook can provide us with more than a series of initial snapshots of what are very complex situations. But by bringing together these initial pictures, we can then begin to

go further in dealing with the questions of how the multiple programs of teacher education described here function in our changing world.

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Teacher Education in Malta

Ronald G. Sultana[1]
Adrian Gellel[2]
Sandro Caruana[3]

Introduction

As one of the smallest yet most densely populated nations on earth, and hampered by the lack of natural resources other than its own people, Malta – a member of the European Union since 2004 – has had to struggle over millennia in order to survive and build a sustainable economy that supported its inhabitants. Perched on the southernmost periphery of Europe, at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, the island has been colonized throughout its history by a plethora of regional powers ranging from the Phoenicians, Carthaginians and Romans, down to the Byzantines, Arabs, Normans and other medieval European warlords until the fateful take over by the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem – now known as the Knights of Malta – from 1530 to 1798. This was followed by a brief domination by Napoleon and his troops up to 1800, brought to an end by capitulation to British rule right up to 1964.

Considered by many to be too small to stand on its own, independent Malta successfully exploited its position and its strengths in order to build a viable economy that is currently booming thanks partly to the efforts of successive governments in investing in education and training, providing international investors with a pool of suitably qualified workers who can deliver the goods, in some cases at a significantly lower cost of their European counterparts. While mass emigration – first to North Africa throughout the 19th century, and then to the Commonwealth in the 20th – was initially the default solution to overpopulation and attendant miserable conditions of life for many, with as many Maltese abroad as on the island (Attard, 2007), the post-war era saw in education the possibility, for individuals as much as for the country, to climb up the social ladder and out of poverty. Indeed, every education minister to date has made it a point to stress that human capital is the only resource available, and that, despite the recurring hope that oil is found in its territorial waters, Malta can actually only rely on its wit and hard work if it is to maintain and improve its standard of living. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that in several cabinets, including the present one, the Minister of Education is also entrusted with the

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portfolio for employment. Significantly, in 2016 Malta spends close to 5,4% of its GDP on education, which is slightly above the average spent in EU countries which stood at 4.7% (Eurostat, 2018).

This chapter sets out to provide an overview of various aspects of Malta's social, cultural and economic characteristics, focusing in particular on the role played by education in forging the island's fortunes and identity, and specifically on the initial preparation of teachers in the light of reforms to educational provision aimed towards the country's aspiration that 'all children may succeed' (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005).

Contextual background

Geography

Malta is made up of an archipelago of five islands, two of which – Malta and Gozo – are inhabited. Situated 93 kilometres south of Sicily, 284 kilometres east of Tunisia, and 290 kilometres north of Libya, the Republic of Malta extends over 316 km^2 with a population of 425,500 (31,500 of whom live in Gozo) - which translates into an average of 1,346 persons per square kilometre (NSO, 2014; 2015). The crude birth rate is 9.5%, with a growth rate of .95%. In 2012, Malta registered a 9.1% increase in its population, the second highest population increase among EU member states, of which 7.4% was due to immigration (Malta Independent, 2013) and this trend has not changed over the recent years. In 2016 Malta registered the third highest population increase in the EU, and in 2018, projections indicating further population growth in the near future have prompted the question whether, demographically, Malta is reaching its limit (Grech, 2018).

Peppered with towns and villages which were historically distinct, but which now merge into each other due to the untamed urban sprawl, the island's capital is baroque Valletta, designated as Europe's capital city of culture for 2018, which serves as the seat for government and administration as well as an important commercial, though not residential, hub.

As is typical of other Mediterranean countries, Malta is markedly biseasonal, having long, hot and dry summers, and short, mild winters, with temperatures averaging 15°C (and a minimum of 10°C) in the latter and 35°C (and a maximum of 40°C plus) in the former. The landscape is arid with very little vegetation (in the shape of maquis and garigue in the main), and is characterised by wind-swept low-lying hills and dry valleys, with dramatic cliffs on both islands. Average annual rainfall is a meagre 530mm with as much as 56% of potable water being produced through desalination. Such a challenging natural environment is hard-pressed to provide enough food for its human inhabitants, let alone native fauna. While a range of staple crops is grown, the island can only satisfy 20% of its food needs, and depends on imports for the rest. Goats, sheep, cattle and fowl are reared in limited quantities in small farms, with rabbit being especially prized as Malta's national dish. Small mammals (such as hedgehogs and bats), reptiles (including lizards and harmless snakes), birds (both sea and land based, as well as migratory species) and insects (including a plethora of butterflies) nevertheless manage to thrive in the wild on an astonishingly diverse and colourful flora – over 1000 species of vascular plants have been identified in Malta (Weber & Kendzior, 2006) – with many small animals finding refuge from the sun in the typical and omnipresent rubble walls that zigzag through the disappearing countryside (Schembri & Sultana, 1989; Mifsud, 2003; Fenech, 2010). While Mediterranean fish-stock has been depleted due to industrial overfishing, a range of fish – including sea bass, swordfish, grouper, amberjack, mullet, and dolphin fish (lampuka) – are seasonal favourites, with awrat (bream) and tuna being grown commercially for export in fish farms.

Demography

Malta has been inhabited since prehistoric times. This is attested by a remarkable series of megalithic temples, which are among the oldest freestanding stone structures on earth, some pre-dating Stonehenge by a full millennium. Many have been accorded UNESCO World Heritage status. Most of these temples, initially dedicated to the goddess of fertility and managed by a peaceful priestly class, were transformed into fortresses by a more warlike race that inhabited the islands during the Bronze Age (Trump & Cilia, 2005). Different layers of architectural heritage bear witness to the diverse groups that lived in Malta and Gozo, with the most important – other than the ancient temples - being Roman remains such as baths and mosaic floors, the old capital city of Mdina, which was radically modified by the Fatimid Arabs during their rule between the 9th and 11th century, the impressive range of fortifications, bastions, churches and civic sites constructed under the aegis of the Knights of St John, and the British colonial-style structures that, from the 19th century onwards, sprouted all over the island to serve as barracks, as residential units for families of military personnel, as hospitals, and as administrative nerve centres serving Britain's commercial and political interests in the Mediterranean (Said Zammit, 2008).

The fact that Malta's rulers, from the period of the Knights up to the British, were maritime powers meant that most of the population congregated around the harbour where much of the commerce and opportunities for employment could be found. One half of the population now lives in the towns in the Grand Harbour district (Malta Government Gazette, 2013), with the centre and south of the island being the most densely populated. While traditionally new families aimed to set up home in the same town or village of the bride, nowadays one notes a good deal of residential mobility in response to various push and pull factors, including the search for affordable housing, status aspirations, and proximity to services (Schembri, 2000; Cutajar, 2012). Other processes impacting on mobility 'gravity' include 'residential inversion' (Boissevain, 1986) - with sections of the middle class moving into restored traditional townhouses in the old hearts of villages, replacing occupants who move to newer housing estates - and the propensity for immigrants to congregate in the same residential area along ethnic and language lines, displacing locals who prefer to move elsewhere, not least because of the impact on property values.

As with other European countries, Malta has an ageing population. The latest Census figures note that a quarter of the total population was over 60 in 2013, and while in 1901 the 0-14 and 65-plus age groups were 34.1% and 5.4% respectively, in 2012 they represented 14.5% and 17.2% (Formosa & Scerri, 2015; National Statistics Office, 2013). Demographic projections foresee an increase of around 72% (circa 111,700 of 60 plus) by 2060, with a concomitant decrease of around 35% in the number of children and youths under 20, representing a decrease from 90,705 to 59,300 (Agius Decelis, 2013). Besides having major implications for government spending on health, such changes in the age pyramid has an impact on the roll out of educational services across the life span.

Social system

Up to quite recently Malta's population was ethnically and religiously homogenous. By far the vast majority were Catholic, a faith that is so deeply engrained in the island that even as Malta becomes more secular, many of its traditions, cultural expressions and life transitions remain strongly marked by religious elements, rituals and symbols, most of which are enacted through a plethora of colourful public manifestations. Feasts in honour of the patron saint of each town and village are celebrated annually with much enthusiasm and devotion. Church attendance, however, has declined steadily, with the latest survey in 2015 indicating that only 40% go to mass on Sundays, down by 10% from 2006 (Chetcuti, 2015), and a telling contrast with the earliest statistic available of 81.9% in 1967 (J. Debono, 2016).

Deep divisions prevail in what has been described by some as a face-to-face society with back-to-back relations. A first major divide is class based, with an élite that has adopted English as its main language of

communication, and the rest of the population, which, while often having a degree of proficiency in English, prefers to use Maltese. The latter is considered to be the indigenous language, and merges Arabic/Semitic with Italian/Romance elements (Brincat, 2011). Both English and Maltese are official languages, with the former being privileged in the non-state school sector, particularly by those institutions that are fee-paying. Both Maltese and English are languages of instruction, although the latter gains importance as one progresses along the educational ladder so that proficiency in English can lead to better educational achievement although the mother tongue of the vast majority of students is Maltese. Citizens are expected to be bilingual although, in reality, degrees of proficiency in the two languages vary substantially. Code-switching between Maltese and English is resorted to frequently, often to an extent that leaves one wondering whether some Maltese citizens are fully proficient in either of the two languages (Ministry of Education and Employment/Council of Europe, 2015; Micallef, 2016).

A second major divide in Malta is political. While the island has, of late, seen the rise of a number of small political groupings (Green, extreme Right, and centre Left—none with Parliamentary representation), the heavyweights remain the Nationalist Party (of Christian Democrat persuasion) and the Labour Party (of the New Labour variety), currently in government. The polarisation between the supporters of these two parties is such that it has led some to compare it to that found in racially-divided societies, particularly as one's fortunes depend, at least to some extent, on whether one's party enjoys the majority (Cini, 2002).

Cultural manifestations of social and political distinction obviously reflect deeper material differences. While Malta enjoys a strong welfare state system, introduced by the Labour government in the early 1970s, the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' has increased over the past decades. Schooling and medical care are free, and not only are students not charged any fees for full-time post-compulsory courses they follow but all receive a monthly stipend, irrespective of the socio-economic group they come from. Despite this, however, there are major achievement gaps between those attending state schools compared to those from non-state Catholic schools and fee-paying independent schools. These gaps are reflected in the earning potential of different social groups, with successive surveys estimating that as much as 10% of the population is living below the poverty line (Caritas, 2012, 2016) – a clear sign that the minimum wage is not sufficient when it comes to guaranteeing decent living standards for the families concerned, which is not surprising given that this wage has only been revised in 2017 - with an increase of euro 8 per week by 2019 - after it had remained frozen since 1971. Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity (2013) estimates suggest that close to 23,000 children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is also true for 1 out of every 5 senior citizens. Overall, it is calculated that between 2006 and 2012, the number of Maltese persons at risk of poverty went up from 76,000 to 93,783 – an increase of 23.4%. More recent figures indicate that in 2016, the at-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion (AROPE) rate in Malta stood at 20.1%, which is below the euro area average of 23.1%. When compared with 2010, this indicates a drop of 1.1 percentage points. The at-risk-of-poverty (ARP) rate, which measures monetary poverty, has stood consistently below that in the euro area, reaching 16.5% of the population in 2016. Nonetheless, there has been a slow but steady increase in monetary poverty rates over time (Central Bank of Malta, 2018b).

Another key challenge for Malta is the changing composition of its population. Relevant statistics provided by the NSO's Demographic Review (2015) note an increase of 65.8% of non-Maltese nationals between 2005 and 2011, representing 4.8% of the total population. In 2013, of the 23,643 foreign nationals from 150 different countries living in Malta, the total of so-called 'Third Country Nationals' amounted to 11,565 while the corresponding number for EU, EEA and Swiss nationals was 12,078 (Bugre, 2014). Over the past 13 years, more that 20,000 asylum-seekers came to Malta, with an estimated 6,000 remaining on the island (Pisani, 2016). Many arrive after a perilous crossing from Libya, with a peak of 80 boats carrying over 2500 individuals in 2008, mostly fleeing from conflict in Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan. While such numbers seem paltry compared to the mass movement of peoples that the world has seen recently

due to the conflict in Syria, it should be kept in mind that, as Lutterbeck (2009) points out, 'an inflow of 2,000 immigrants into Malta equates to more than four hundred thousand arriving in Germany', and if geographical scale is taken into account, the equivalent would be 'more than 2 million arriving in Germany, more than 3 million in France, more than 1 million in the UK, and almost 2 million in Italy' (ibid., p.121).

In as much as social problems are concerned, surveys have unsurprisingly noted that immigration is considered to be a major challenge for Malta: a Standard Eurobarometer survey held in Autumn 2013 noted that 63% deem it the most important issue facing the country, with immigration in an erstwhile emigration country sparking negative reactions such that 55% respondents stated that immigrants do not enrich Malta culturally or economically. Durick's (2012) study of the theme of Malta besieged is insightful in this regard. Given the shift in migration patterns across Greece and Turkey into Europe, immigration has featured less highly as a perceived social problem in Malta, being overtaken by concerns about traffic congestion and corruption in an Insight Poll carried out in June 2015 (Times of Malta, 2015). Environmental degradation and income feature as issues of personal concern in the same survey.

Economy

In contrast to several countries across Europe and beyond, Malta was not negatively affected by the 2008 recession. Rather, cautious and conservative banking and investment strategies, coupled with a number of (for Malta) fortuitous events and funding for major infrastructural projects by the EU, have led to a consolidation of the country's assets and an economic boom. The Central Bank of Malta (2018a) indicate that real GDP in 2017 stood at 6.4%. Malta's GDP figures are better than the EU average, though the GDP per capita – at close to €28,000 – remains lower than that of several EU countries, and currently stands at 84% of the EU average, which was projected to reach 97% of the EU average in 2017 (M. Debono, 2016 – citing Eurostat and European Commission data).

The wealth being generated in Malta is due to both endogenous and exogenous factors. Briefly, one should mention [a] the economic restructuring that has taken place over the past several years, away from manufacturing and from low tech and low-value added enterprises (e.g. clothing industry) to more high-tech and high-value added ventures (e.g. electronic, pharmaceuticals), with aspirations to move into aviation, ICT, life sciences and industrial research and development (M. Debono, 2016); [b] the strong performance of the services industry, which contributed 83.1% of the GDP in 2015 (National Statistics Office, 2016), with income from the tourism sector breaking records year on year due in part to conflicts and instabilities in other Mediterranean destinations, and with its financial services making it one of the EU's most attractive finance centres due to "its agility to create innovative products and capitalising on the skills of its highly-trained workforce" (The Guardian, 2015, cited in Debono, 2016); [c] the growth of ICT-related sectors such as internet gaming and call-centres, which, besides generating income in and of themselves, have a knock-on effect through, for instance, a boom in rental accommodation.

Given such a strong economic performance, unemployment rates are among the lowest in Europe, standing at 1% in February 2018 (National Statistics Office, 2018). One however needs to point out that the public sector is still considered 'bloated' by EU levels, employing as it does 26% of all workers (National Statistics Office, 2016). Female labour participation remains low, despite government incentives such as tax exemptions for married women returning to work, and free childcare to all families in which both parents work. The demand for labour remains high, with the number of foreign workers now totalling close to 27,000, making up 14% of the Maltese labour force, a dramatic increase from 5% only a decade ago (Scicluna, 2016). Another indicator of the demand for labour is the extent of undeclared work, especially in the hospitality and construction sectors, with Malta reputed to have one of the largest shadow economies in Europe, estimated to be about a quarter of the GDP (M. Debono, 2016).

Political system

The beginning of statehood can be traced back to the rise of nation states in Europe in the middle of the 19th century, with a local élite being inspired by the Italian unification to promote notions of national identity centred on cultural resistance to the British (Frendo, 1979; 1999). Due to poverty and indigence of all sorts, local leaders wavered between opting for integration with more powerful states – first with Italy, then with Britain – until the fateful decision was made to take the road to independence (in 1964) and then to Republican status ten years later. Malta remains a member state of the Commonwealth of Nations, was admitted to the United Nations on independence, and to the European Union in 2004. It became part of the Eurozone in 2008, having abandoned the lira for the euro.

Malta's parliamentary system and public administration follow the Westminster model. The unicameral House of Representatives is elected by direct universal suffrage through single transferable vote every five years and is made up of 69 members of parliament. Currently the majority is held by the Labour Party following a long stretch of government by the Nationalist Party from 1987 to 1996, and from 1998 to 2013. Malta's President, whose role as head of state is largely ceremonial, is appointed for a five-year term by a resolution of the House of Representatives carried by a simple majority.

Scale partly explains the ubiquity of politics in everyday life, as does the propensity for clientalism and patronage, in a country with the second highest voter turnout in the world – more than 90% of eligible voters participate in the elections. In an effort to diffuse power from the centre, and to create a buffer and intermediary layer between parliamentarians and citizens, a system of local government was introduced in 1993, with the country divided into five regions, which are themselves divided into a total of 68 local councils. Councillors are elected every five years as representatives of political parties or as independent candidates, and local councils are responsible for a range of administrative and infrastructural services.

Religion and philosophy

Malta's constitution accords the Roman Catholic Church privileged status, acknowledging its central role over the centuries, and the influential hold it has had over the populace. Key prelates have held important positions across the political, cultural and educational spectrum, and those who governed the islands could only do so with the collaboration, if not consent, of the Church. Freedom of belief is nevertheless provided for in the Constitution. Signs of the weakened position of the Catholic institutional church can be seen not only in dramatic drops in Sunday mass attendance, but also in the introduction of divorce (through a referendum held on 28 May 2011), and of civil union between same-sex partners, including the right of gay parents to adopt children (through a Parliamentary Bill which was approved on 14 April 2014). Abortion remains illegal.

Despite such changes, it could be claimed that most of the Maltese are still culturally Catholic, if of the à la carte sort. A recent survey showed that significant numbers of respondents disagreed with the Church on matters related to sexuality, euthanasia, abortion, and a range of doctrinal positions, without, however, necessarily denying their faith: as many as 89% of respondents defined themselves as Catholics (Debono, 2016). Many prefer to send their children to schools run by the Catholic Church. Catholic religion is part of the core national curriculum in state and non-state schools, and it is only recently that the notion of offering 'ethics' as an alternative option has gained legitimacy.

Religious minorities include various forms of Orthodox Christianity, Protestantism (generally limited to British retirees), Evangelical churches, Jehovah Witnesses, and, increasingly, due to the flow of migrants escaping the Syrian crisis, Muslims, whose solitary mosque and school are unable to cater for the

estimated 10,000-13,000 plus believers. New age religions, while mostly underground, also seem to have a surprisingly vital presence on the islands, merging Christian symbolism and rituals with neo-pagan cultic reverence to that ancient goddess, mother Earth (Rountree, 2014).

Education System

Beginnings and development of formal education

While there is evidence of some educational provision in Malta in the Middle Ages and the early modern period (Dalli, 2001; Cassar, 2001), and a fledgling university – the Collegium Melitense – that was set up by the Jesuits in 1592 (Fiorini, 2001), formal mass education lagged behind developments in Europe. In 1798, during his six-day stay in Malta after the Knights capitulated to his Egypt-bound troops, Napoleon decreed the setting up of primary schools for boys and girls across the island (Testa, 2001) – something that a local intellectual, Mikiel Anton Vassalli (Ciappara, 2014), inspired by the French Enlightenment, had already proposed two years earlier. A conservative and reactionary élite and an obscurantist church, however, preferred British to French rule, with the former bringing in their particular brand of laissez-faire philosophy that allowed the island to mire in ignorance for decades.

The foundations of Malta's formal education system were laid in 1850 with the appointment of a widely travelled and erudite priest as director of education and, eventually, as the first Professor of Pedagogy at the University (Camilleri, 2001). Canon Peter Paul Pullicino was responsible for the opening of several elementary schools in villages, establishing a national curriculum as well as a system of teacher training that included lectures, practice in a Model School, and travel to different countries in Europe to learn from best practice. Compulsory education, however, took a long time to become a reality, not least because the British tried to use schools to anglicise the colony (Frendo, 1979; Keenan, 1880). As a result, the pro-Italian cultured élites resisted the massification of education, also because this would have entailed the introduction of taxation and challenged the status quo by providing opportunities for social mobility for the popular classes (Sultana, 1992).

The movement in favour of education for all picked up at the turn of the 20th century, with the Compulsory Attendance Act of 1924 making it obligatory for those who started their primary education to complete it. The Compulsory Education Ordinance of 1946 sealed the right and obligation of primary education for all children aged between 6 and 14. Mass secondary education was introduced in 1970, initially on a tripartite model similar to that found in the UK, with subsequent attempts to introduce comprehensive models rarely finding favour with teachers or parents (Zammit Mangion, 1992; Zammit Marmarà, 2001). One of these reforms led to compelling the Catholic Church to remove fees so that all students, whatever their background, had equal opportunity to attend its schools, with access being granted on the basis of a socially neutral lottery system. Radical reforms such as these led to an exodus from state schools such that today, the non-state sector caters for around 40% of all students, divided between 29% attending 56 Church schools (where teacher salaries are paid by the State) and 11% attending 25 fee-paying independent schools. In all, there are 109 schools catering for 8,500 pupils at pre-primary level, 141 primary schools for 27,000 primary students, and 64 secondary schools for 26,000 students. There are in all around 7,500 teachers, 5,750 of whom are female.

Despite several attempts to support economic development through the establishment of vocational schooling, the latter generally remained perceived as a second-class education, attracting mainly students from modest socio-economic backgrounds (Sultana, 1992). Trade schools, somewhat paradoxically launched by a Labour government in 1972, were wound down in the early 1990s. Some consider that this left a vacuum which is now being addressed by introducing a range of vocational subject options in the secondary school curriculum, even though there are few teachers trained to teach such subjects.

Further and higher education was, till the early 1980s, mainly reserved for a small élite, with one University catering for around 600 students, and a vocational college – the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) – offering pre-degree level certification in a range of technical and vocational areas. After a number of radical university reforms by a left-wing government in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which also introduced a worker- student scheme meant to attract working class students (Mayo, 2012), the University was 'refounded' through the 1988 Education Act that encouraged the massification of graduate and post-graduate level studies. MCAST was relaunched as a community college in the year 2001, initially as an alternative to the university, and now increasingly functioning as an alternative university given that many of its courses lead to graduate and even postgraduate degrees.

Aims/objectives of education

The aims and objectives for Malta's education system are articulated in different documents starting from the latest Education Act of 1988 and its different updates via legal notices, and a range of frameworks and strategies such as the National Curriculum Framework, the National Literacy Strategy for All, A Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving, and the Strategy for Lifelong Learning. In 2014 the Ministry for Education and Employment launched a Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 that synthesised the various documents under the overall goal of improving the learners' experiences by encouraging creativity, critical literacy, entrepreneurship and innovation at all levels.

The strategy outlines four broad goals that echo the aspirations articulated in the EU document Education and Training 2020, and sets out [a] to reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls and among learners attending different schools; decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence; and increase learner achievement; [b] to support educational achievement of children at risk of poverty and from low socio-economic backgrounds; and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers; [c] to increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning; and [d] to raise levels of learner attainment and retention in further, vocational and tertiary education and training.

The government is also proposing a reform called 'My Journey; Achieving through different paths' to be implemented secondary schools as from 2019. This reform will be accompanied by the introduction of a Learning Outcomes Framework that would replace traditional syllabi. 'My Journey' will also introduce three streams in the local educational system, loosely defined as follows: a 'general' stream, including subjects which have been taught and assessed locally for a number of years; 'vocational' subjects; and 'applied' subjects, based largely on the development of practical skills. The reform, especially the introduction of the vocational and applied streams, is mainly intended to reduce the number of early school leavers.

Education ladder

Pupils' first entry into Malta's educational system is at age 3, where 93% attend public or private kindergartens. Formal compulsory schooling starts at age 5, with students entering the primary school at Year 1 and exiting at age 11 from Year 6. The secondary cycle takes them from Form 1 through middle school and on to senior school where, at age 16, they sit for national examinations in a number of curricular subjects in order to obtain the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC), which is loosely based on the UK's GCSE. Alternative certification is currently being piloted in some subject areas, such as foreign languages, to ensure that underachieving students end up with something to show for their efforts. State primary and secondary schools in Malta are organised in a networked College system, one of the aims of which is to facilitate transitions between the different cycles of education.

Students who do obtain the requisite number of SEC-level passes can then proceed to further general education in state or private Sixth Forms, and after a two year course sit for the Matriculation exam. This is modelled on the International Baccalaureate and consists of two subjects studied at Advanced Level, three subjects at Intermediate Level, and Systems of Knowledge (Sultana, 1998). Students require the Matriculation Certificate to follow courses at one of the 14 faculties at the University, as well as some of the courses offered at the MCAST and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS). Students who, on completing compulsory level schooling, do not obtain the SEC or who do not wish to continue their general education studies at the sixth form can join courses at the ITS or at one of the MCAST's six institutes. Many of these courses include apprenticeships and internships in industry, and lead to national awards at different levels of competence, including National and Higher National Diplomas, as well as degrees. In the case of some courses at both the IT'S and MCAST, students can transfer to the University to top up their diploma to a degree level qualification. The training of teachers in both vocational institutions was initially organised by the University's Faculty of Education, but is now offered in-house at the MCAST through a Vocational Teacher Training Unit.

Challenges

Malta's participation in international studies and student assessments such as TIMSS (2007, 2011, 2015), TALIS (2008) PISA (2009+, 2015), PIRLS (2011, 2016), and the European Survey on Language Competences (2011) has served to highlight some of the main challenges that the island's educational system has to face, and to which the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 is meant to be a response. The most urgent of these challenges is the serious achievement gap between students attending different types of schools. While all schools implement the same national curriculum, and all mostly employ fully qualified graduate teachers and are well equipped with textbooks and educational resources such as computers and interactive whiteboards, the highest performing students are to be found in the non-state sector, with those in the state schools doing significantly less well in a range of core curricular areas. Educational attainment also varies widely between students in state schools from different localities. Such achievement gaps also manifest themselves in the number of students who do not continue with any form of education and training beyond the compulsory years. In 2017Malta, in fact, had the highest early school- leaving (ESL) rate across the European Union, involving 18,6% of students, with higher rates for males (21.9%) than females (15.1%) (European Commission, 2017).

Differences in achievement along gender lines are visible in other aspects of schooling. Girls significantly outperformed boys in a number of areas, and Malta has the largest gender gap in reading across all 74 PISA 2009 and PISA 2009+ participants. There is also a statistically significant gender difference in mathematical and scientific literacy, favouring girls. Malta in fact had the largest gender gap in scientific literacy among all PISA 2009 and PISA 2009+ participants.

Other challenges revolve around the issue of inclusion. An aspect of this concerns the effective mainstreaming of students with special education needs, with Malta placing 2,507 out of 2,572 learners with SEN in mainstream schools – one of the highest placement rates in Europe (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2014). While much – in terms of financial and human resources – is dedicated to mainstreaming, through such strategies as reduced student to teacher ratios and the allocation of trained Learning Support Assistants on an almost one-to-one basis, the results have been far from encouraging (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2014). A related challenge is the integration of foreign students (often referred to as 'migrant learners' in local schools, given that a significant amount of immigrant students (whether EU or Third Country Nationals) do not speak either of the two languages of instruction, i.e. Maltese and English, or only speak one of them. While in 2013, Maltese schools were attended by just over 500 migrant learners, in January 2018 there were 5,744 foreign students in local schools, with the majority of them – 3,835 – in state schools. The Church school

sector has relatively few – 132 – with the remaining 1,777 in independent (fee-paying) schools. Of these 3,389 are in primary school and 2,355 in secondary schools (Times of Malta, 2018). The 'super-diverse' condition of such students, mainly due to the different countries from which they originate and their diverse social, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, represents a challenge to their inclusion in local schools.

Further challenges involve the introduction of a Learning Outcomes Framework, which is meant to shift the focus from input to output, to reform pedagogical practice in ways that cater for the individual and developmental needs of learners, and to tone down the emphasis on examinations. The latter has led to Malta having one of the highest rates of private tuition in the region (Buhagiar and Chetcuti, 2013).

Teacher Education

Beginnings and historical development

As Camilleri (1994) has shown in his overview of the history of teacher training in Malta, the foundation of that enterprise can be traced back to the efforts of Malta's third Director of Primary Schools, Canon P.P. Pullicino who, on taking office, took the radical step of closing down all the extant village schools between October to December 1850, obliging all teachers to follow a crash course at the University of Malta. Pullicino drew on some of the most renowned teaching methods known across Europe at the time, but was mostly influenced by Pestalozzi. Over and above the theoretical courses offered at the University, Pullicino also set up a Model School where teachers could try out their skills under supervision. As more students were enrolled in schools, two Normal Training Schools were set up modelled on similar institutions in Europe, with some of the most promising teachers sent to Catholic Teacher Training Colleges in the UK.

On the whole, however, teacher training remained somewhat basic, with the Malta Union of Teachers – the first trade union to be set up in Malta in 1919 – pushing for the setting up of a proper Training College or the establishment of a training programme in pedagogy at the University. A number of different institutions were set up in the period between the two world wars, including so-called 'Central Schools', 'Higher Central Schools' and 'Practising Schools' that enrolled some of the best achieving students after they finished their compulsory education. Fully fledged teacher training took off the ground with the setting up of two colleges, one for women run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, and one for men run by the Christian Brothers of De La Salle. The first courses were offered in 1947, and over the next few years efforts were made to extend the duration of the programme first by one and then by two years (in 1954 and 1971 respectively), and to ensure the proper socialisation and character building of prospective teachers by making the programme residential, as it was believed that communal living would 'develop refinement and social graces and instil that sense of forbearance and understanding which is the hallmark of the gentleman' (Vassallo, 1956, p.1 – as cited in Camilleri, 1994). Courses offered in Malta were externally audited by the London University Institute of Education.

The Labour government elected to office in 1971 was behind the next significant developments in teacher training on the island by removing it from under the aegis of the religious orders and by making the courses non-residential and co-educational under secular administration. The new course was launched in 1973, and set out to have a better balance between demand and supply of teachers for the primary and secondary school sectors, particularly given the recent introduction of secondary education for all. Initially housed within the Malta College of Education, and later (in 1975) as a Department of Education Studies within the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, two programmes were offered – a three-year course, and one-year Post-Graduate Certificate in Education. Such developments paved the way for the integration of teacher training into the University in 1978, when a four-year degree programme was launched, with all teachers being prepared for both primary and secondary teaching. A one-year PGCE

started being offered again from 1990. A reform in 1998 led to deeper specialisation, with student teachers being required to choose between following a route into either early years and primary, or secondary teaching. The first route retained a concurrent nature, while the organisation of the curriculum of the second became increasingly consecutive. As from October 2016, both courses have given way to a Masters in Teaching and Learning, a two-year consecutive programme building on a first degree.

Aims/Objectives

There is a policy vacuum in Malta when it comes to the national regulation of initial teacher education. While the Ministry of Education has two representatives on the Faculty of Education Board that is responsible for the development of policies regarding initial teacher education, the University enjoys practically total autonomy when it comes to making decisions regarding the content of the courses leading to the formal certification of teachers. There are thus few if any policy statements regarding teacher education, other than that prospective teachers need to be qualified by following a recognised teacher training course which, up to 2016, included a four-year concurrent B.Ed.(Hons) course for both primary and secondary school teachers, or a one-year consecutive Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course for secondary school teachers. The Ministry is then responsible for granting a warrant to teachers, through the Council for the Teaching Profession, on the basis of their professional qualification, as well as on their performance during their first two years of teaching. The current legislation – known as the Education Act – is going through a reform, also in order to reflect the change referred to earlier wherby teacher education will follow a consecutive model, through a Master's degree. The public consulatation phase of this reform was concluded in October 2016, but in 2018 the proposed new legislation was yet to be published.

The Faculty of Education has nevertheless articulated a clear objective for itself in its vision and mission statement, titled 'Promoting an Educated Public in a Participatory Democracy'. In that document, the Faculty commits itself to 'developing and implementing powerful pedagogical practices that foster meaningful learning', and to promoting the formation of reflective practitioners who also act as transformative intellectuals in the public sphere.

A key objective that the Faculty of Education has set itself in relation to initial teacher education is that of 'being of service through flexibly responding to evolving and changing educational scenarios locally and abroad, and by developing programmes that effectively engage with the shifting social and cultural landscape in Malta' (Faculty of Education, Vision and Mission Statement). Regular contacts between the Faculty of Education management team and the Directorates of Education set out to ensure that key concerns of the Ministry are communicated to the Faculty so that the curriculum reflects issues needing attention. This is also done through the development of continued professional development courses, at diploma or post-graduate levels, which respond to specific requirements. A recent development which reinforces the partnership model espoused by the Faculty has been the setting up of a Faculty Consultative Committee that meets representatives from all the main education stakeholders on the island, including the teachers' union (the Malta Union of Teachers), the Parents' Association, and the associations representing the church and non- state school sectors, besides the Directorates and leaders of higher education institutions.

Equivalence to other initial teacher training courses offered by overseas universities – also present on the island through outreach programmes in an increasingly diversified education market – is established by the aforementioned Council for the Teaching Profession, which is tasked by law to 'keep under review and assess education and training standards' and to also 'to examine applications for a warrant to practise the teaching profession and to make recommendations to the Minister on the award or refusal thereof' (Malta House of Representatives, 1988).

Site, programmes, duration

A recent tendency in Malta, which is present in a number of fields, is to have a market for the provision of service for entry into a number of professions. While, initial teacher education for primary and secondary school teachers remains strongly tied with the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta, in 2015 the government set up an Institute for Education Agency. This Agency will start to offer teacher education courses from October 2018. If these develop as planned they could lead to degrees which would run parallel, and in direct competition, with the two-year Professional Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) offered by the Faculty of Education.

The preparation of staff for the early year's sector is covered both by the Faculty of Education through a three year degree in Early Childhood Education & Care and by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, which takes students up to the Higher National Diploma level. Students of this institution who wish to continue to study towards a degree in Early Childhood Education and Care are able to transfer their credits to the University of Malta and build up on them. There is a plethora of courses available catering for the continued professional development (CPD) of teachers, with foreign universities offering study programmes at all levels, mostly by distance. The newly founded Institute for Education, with strong links to the Ministry for Education & Employment, is also set to take on a major role in CPD, and the Faculty of Education has also developed a specific post-graduate degreefor this purpose .

Access, admission, enrolments, supply/demand

In the B.Ed. (Hons) and PGCE courses, the major emphasis was placed on academic credentials when it came to admission. Students were expected to have good passes in the Matriculation exam, besides being proficient in both Maltese and English and to have obtained the European Computer Driving Licence testifying IT literacy. Efforts to include individual or group interviews prior to acceptance were stymied either due to the fact that large number of applicants made the task impractical, and/or because no consensus could be reached with the faculty as to the predictive validity, and hence usefulness, of such a procedure.

The introduction of the MTL provides an opportunity to strengthen the admission procedures in ways that address the faculty's aspirations to attract the most suitable candidates to the teaching profession. This is mainly based on the fact that those aspiring to become teachers will join a degree course at Master's level, thereby being in possession of a first degree and joining the course at a second phase of their studies, rather than at undergraduate level. Student-teachers are also required to be proficient in both Maltese and English. They also have to submit a police good conduct certificate, and are barred from applying if they are included in the Register established under the Protection of Minors' Act. The MTL selection board may require individuals to sit for an interview to assess whether they can follow the course with profit. The number of students admitted to the course is directly related to the availability of human resources and the number of suitable classes available for the field placement component, such that numbers of students that can be accepted for the different subject specialisation area are determined in advance. If the number of eligible applicants exceeds the places available, selection is made on the basis of the strength of the applicants' academic credentials.

Generally speaking, there is no major shortage of teachers in Malta, and indeed there is an oversupply of teachers in some curricular areas at secondary level. There are, however, some indications that shortage could become an issue, especially in some subjects, if the profession is not rendered more attractive – especially in terms of salary and of support given to teachers in schools (Attard Tonna and Calleja, 2018). In the past these teachers were offered a 30-ECTS 'conversion course' in order to qualify to teach in

primary schools. Similar courses are being planned for the future. Temporary shortfalls are addressed through the deployment of 'supply teachers'. There are, however, some concerns about the future given that the numbers opting for a career in teaching has diminished significantly – from 233 in the secondary track in 2011 to 142 in 2015, and from 98 to 31 in the primary and early childhood track for the same years. Although this decrease may also be explained in terms of demographics, attributable to a fall in the birth rate in some of these cohorts, the issue at hand requires thorough investigation as it may represent an indication that teaching is not being perceived as an attractive career. The numbers might decrease even further given that with the MTL, the route into teaching has been extended by one year, i.e. 3 years full time to obtain a first-cycle degree, followed by another 2 years full-time to qualify as a teacher.

Curricula

Malta's Faculty of Education ITE programmes include the same ingredients as those offered internationally, though the balance between the different components – namely educational sciences (psychology, philosophy, and sociology), methodology and practicum – are given different weighting in different countries. The new MTL course has kept the same ingredients as the previous B.Ed. (Hons) and PGCE programmes, but gives school-based learning a more central place, and opts for inquiry-driven learning as the main pedagogical approach across the course.

The curriculum components are [a] educational context knowledge – focusing on learners and learning; contexts, conditions and communities of learners; and curricula and pedagogies; [b] themes in education – focusing on current educational issues that research and stakeholders have singled out as being the most pressing, and drawing on interdisciplinary insights across context knowledge and subject methodology; [c] subject methodology – focusing on pedagogical content knowledge and the problematisation of teaching methods and approaches; [d] creating positive learning environments (CPLE) – focusing on the more affective aspects of teaching and learning, on the use of digital technologies in the classroom and on teaching students how to develop favourable instructional, physical and psychological learning environments; [e] a research component and [f] the practicum – which is now to involve school-based teacher mentors who will have followed a 30-ECTS course specially designed for them (Buhagiar & Attard Tonna, 2015).

The delivery of the MTL programme over the two years will follow the schedule set out below:

YEAR 1		YEAR 2	
Study unit	**Semester/Year**	**Study Unit**	**Semester/Year**
Pedagogic Content Knowledge/Subject Methodology (20 ECTS)	10 ECTS Semester 1 10 ECTS Semester 2	Pedagogic Content Knowledge/Subject Methodology (20 ECTS)	15 ECTS Semester 1 5 ECTS Semester 2
Themes in Education (5 ECTS)	Throughout the year	Themes in Education (5 ECTS)	Throughout the year
Educational Context Knowledge (10 ECTS)	5 ECTS Semester 1 5 ECTS Semester 2	Educational Context Knowledge (5 ECTS)	5 ECTS Semester 1
Research Component A – Preparing for the dissertation (10 ECTS)	Throughout the year		
Creating Positive Learning Environments (5 ECTS)	Throughout the year		
Field Placement (10 ECTS)	Throughout the year	Field Placement (10 ECTS)	Throughout the year
		Research Component B – The dissertation (20 ECTS)	Throughout the year

One of the plans is to extend the MTL both backwards and forwards, i.e. by having optional educational study units offered to prospective teachers while doing their first, content- oriented degree, and by having a closer synergy with the mentoring system organised by the Directorates of Education during the first two years of induction of new qualified teachers. The MTL will also be offered on a part-time basis – with the same curriculum extended over three years. While this is initially intended to address VET subjects, in the future it may be offered in other subject areas too.

Methods and teacher education educators

A range of teaching and assessment methods are used in initial teacher education courses, such that while formal lecturing is common, especially with larger groups of students, a conscious and deliberate effort is made to expose prospective teachers to as many pedagogical strategies as possible, thus modelling the kind of behaviours that faculty wishes to encourage in schools. The overarching pedagogical approach that is planned for the MTL is inquiry-based learning, which coincides with the skills and dispositions that the country's lifelong learning strategy wishes to promote. Distance learning, however, is still in its infancy, though the University has invested heavily in providing an appropriate infrastructure, and relevant expertise is available in the faculty. Some aspects of CPD and of the course for teacher mentors, though not of ITE, are delivered on line. Some hours of distance learning in ITE will be introduced in 2018, especially because of the move to offer the MTL in part-time modality.

Practically all the 60-plus full-time teacher educators in the Faculty started their careers as teachers in primary and/or secondary schools, and went on to read for a PhD overseas, mainly at British universities. Experienced teachers with postgraduate degrees are also regularly employed on a part-time basis in order to lead tutorials, and to support staff with the supervision and evaluation of the practicum. A recurrent issue is the extent to which student-teachers – not to mention the Ministry and Directorates – consider that faculty staff have remained close to schools and classrooms, given that much of their work is university based. Several members of staff however actually spend a great deal of time in schools researching, as well as working with teachers on projects.

Field Placement

The practicum proper – i.e. actual placement in schools to practice teaching under the supervision of faculty staff and mentors – is allocated 20 ECTS from a total of 120 ECTS that make up the MTL. This entails a block Practicum, of 5 weeks duration each, in the second semester of the first and second year of the course. Prior to the block Practicum student teachers will be engaged in schools and communities twice weekly where they will carry out observation sessions and will engage with specific themes and issues. Their observation and reflections will be discussed in groups with the support of related literature and research.

Over and above this, however, the faculty has identified several ways that aim to "put the class in the lecture room, and the lecture room in the class", so that students are encouraged to engage more productively with the theory/practice dialectic. This will include the use of case studies, dilemma-based teaching, teacher narratives, microteaching, visual material (e.g. TALIS and TIMMS video banks), e-portfolios and reflective journals, critical narratives, auto-ethnography, action research and so on. All these should extend and enrich the actual practicum experience, increasing the opportunities for learning from school contexts in a variety of ways.

Challenges

The Faculty has invested a great deal of energy to reform its teacher education course and bring it in line with some of the most successful programmes internationally, taking into account, for instance, the characteristics identified by Darling-Hammond (2013). The aspiration is to prepare teachers in ways that support the national effort to reform education so that the achievement gap is narrowed if not totally removed, and that all citizens are equipped with the knowledge, skills and dispositions that make the country needs in the 21st century. Implementation, however, is another matter, and the challenges are both from within the faculty as much as they are from outside of it. As implementation literature shows, it is far easier to change the way one talks about practice than to actually change the way one normally goes about one's work. Faculty staff is faced with the challenge of being more school-based than office-based; of modelling, through the way they teach, assess and behave, the way that they would like future teachers to act in their classrooms; of putting inquiry and research at the heart of their profession; and of ensuring that there is a productive interplay between theory and practice.

External challenges to the Faculty's ITE programme include a growing market of training services where quality is not necessarily always the prime consideration, and where government might be tempted to go for quick fixes rather than maintain standards. The rapid pace of reforms – including the introduction of vocational subjects at secondary school level, the shift to co-educational settings at the same level, the implementation of a Learning Outcomes Framework, the catering for classrooms which are increasingly diverse in cultures and faiths – require the faculty to update its programmes and to develop new skills if it is not to be left lagging behind. A five-year programme might reduce the attraction of teaching as a profession, which is already waning given the rapid pace of social change and the problems this creates for schools, reform-fatigue (Borg & Giordmaina, 2012), and stagnant salaries. Significant disagreement in the approach to education between the Ministry and the Faculty (e.g. in relation to pull-out programmes meant to facilitate teaching in the mainstream) could lead to situations where the faculty prepares teachers for schools that it would like to see, rather than the schools that exist.

Conclusion

Despite these and many other challenges, however, initial teacher education in Malta is as keen as ever to take up the gauntlet and to support the national project of improving education for all. Harkening back to the first major promoter of teacher training in 19th century Malta, Pullicino's words regarding what should motivate teachers and those who prepare them to exercise their profession are as relevant today as they were then. Pullicino dreamt of a school as a place where both teacher and taught find themselves contented: the teacher happy with the harmony which such an organisation produces to communicate knowledge and his [sic.] feelings; the pupils happy with the satisfaction they experience in finding themselves, due to the same organisation, being guided on a smooth road and not a difficult one for the acquisition of knowledge and virtue. In this way, that mutual happiness will generate the will to work; both teachers and students will find themselves urged to higher studies and to more exacting efforts at school; and, in a short while, the school will come to that state when it will send forth a number of youths, intelligent and industrious, who, with the labour of their hands, will increase production of wealth, and later honourably manage the fruits of their labour to increase their own prosperity and that of the state (cited in Zammit Mangion, 1999, p.7).

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