

Education, Social Capital and Social Inclusion

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I. STRUCTURE OF PROJECTED PRESENTATION

- The generation of social capital, viewed in terms of social capacity building, can have a learning dimension and socially committed teachers, with strong critical consciousness, have an important part to play, in concert with others, in generating social capital among traditionally underprivileged social groups.
- The Let Me Learn project with its emphasis on social equity, social inclusion and teaching for diversity, is geared towards educating in a manner that contributes to social capacity building
- A critical review of current professional development processes in Malta – their strengths and limitations with regard to social capital and social empowerment.
- The need for teacher education in the context of generating Social Capital
- A professional learning process capitalizing on practitioners' experiences/realities, with special reference to knowledge of the social context of learning and possibilities for social empowerment
- Support mechanisms which contribute towards a socially-conscious and social capacity building approach that marks a proactive stance in Teacher Professional Development and Transformation
- Practitioners' voices:
 - Experiences and narratives of teachers witnessing their engagement in the learning process with special attention devoted to the social dimensions of teaching.
 - Case study of the impact of the learning process in classroom practice, which attaches importance to the social dimensions of learning.

A. Hypothesis

Or rather key question: Does the Let Me Learn Professional Learning Process afford teachers the space to critically deconstruct their own practice and think differently about their engagement in education with a view to providing a socially empowering education and fostering greater social capital?

B. Summarized Methodology

- Written narratives of teachers who participated in the Let Me Learn Professional Learning Process in the past

two years. These narratives speak of the teachers' engagement in the learning process and their sensitization to specific issues in their classrooms and the surrounding social milieu. Sixty different narratives will be utilized.

- One detailed case study of the impact of the professional learning process in one classroom with regard to the social dimensions of learning and possibilities for social regeneration and capacity building.
- Trainers' field observation notes over the past two years.

Analysis of the data has followed the grounded theorizing approach thus building on a number of notions emerging from the data that help the authors to form a critique of current professional development discourses. This critique leads to a set of policy implications; it is also suggested that the Let Me Learn Professional Learning Process is adequately responding to the challenges encountered by teachers, especially in the social field.

The authors feel that they have collected sufficient material to be able to adequately discuss the issues raised and suggest a number of policy implications.

C. Probable conclusions

This study emphasizes the notion that the issues raised are dynamic and multi-level; hence conclusions of the study do not provide straightforward answers. Nevertheless the authors suggest a number of considerations that help to enhance the professional development experience:

- potential channels need to be sought in order to customize professional development programmes to the needs and realities of the professionals concerned, the social environment in which they work and the social groups to whom they cater.
- professional development processes built on teachers' experiences concerning the social dimension of learning are more likely to be effective in bringing about change in their social pedagogical approach than transmission approaches to training.
- teachers' experiences contributing to the generation of a social capital that can enrich both the profession and society at large.

Status of the work:

This study covers a two-year span with implications to future training provisions offered by the Let Me Learn Centre – Malta. This study is concluded but the analytic part is still in progress.

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