

A N N N N N N N A N 4TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM SYMPOSIUM



THE FUTURE IS NOW
EDUCATORS' VISION FOR TOMORROW

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Institute
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CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN MALTA AND THEIR READINESS FOR THE LABOUR MARKET

Christine Fenech, Genise Formosa

Abstract

In view of challenges related to global teacher shortages (Shanks et al., 2022) and teacher shortages and attrition in Malta (Galea, 2020; Attard Tonna & Calleja, 2021; Arena, 2022; Attard, 2022; Farrugia, 2022), attracting individuals to the teaching profession and retaining them is crucial. In this regard, Peixoto et al. (2018) identified students' personal life as the strongest predictor of resilience in Maltese teacher education students besides self-efficacy, social and emotional competence, and self-efficacy in behaviour management. Therefore, the objective of this research is to investigate the social and economic conditions of teacher education students to understand their specific needs and evaluate the extent to which these needs are being met through present education programmes in Malta. This research focuses on the profile of teacher education students (n=142) based on the overall EUROSTUDENT VII dataset for Malta (n=1,226). Considering the factors that influence teacher education students' resilience identified by Peixoto et al. (2018), the research investigates teacher education students' satisfaction with their workload related to studies and paid work and difficulties encountered related to studies, work and personal life. It will also explore teacher education students' self-reported readiness for the labour market.

Keywords

Teacher trainee students, higher education, social and economic conditions, assessment of studies, resilience

Biographical notes

Christine Fenech is the Senior Manager Research and Development at the Institute for Education, which aims at supporting teachers, parents, and students to address the challenges they face through evidence-based guidelines. Previously she worked as Manager for Research and Policy at the National Commission for Further and Higher Education. She holds a Magister Artium in History of Art, Political Science and Philosophy from the Free University of Berlin and a Master degree in Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies from the University of Malta. She is currently undertaking her PhD focusing on the academic achievement of migrant students in Malta.

Genise Formosa has been teaching Year 9, 10 and 11 Biology for the past seven years. She has graduated from the University of Malta with a Bachelor of Education in Science Education specialising in Biology. In her Bachelor degree research, she focused on the acceptance of the theory of evolution in education amongst others. She has also earned a Master degree in Comparative Education from the University of Malta. Her main areas are student grouping policies, educators' perceptions, and Biology education. She is also currently working as a Research Support Officer at the Institute for Education.

SOCIAL DIVERSIFICATION AND THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN MALTA

Christine Fenech, Milosh Raykov

Abstract

The population in Malta has grown substantially in the past decade, by about 25% and this change is mainly due to an increase in non-Maltese residents. Such rapid growth of migrant populations increases demands for public service provisions, such as transport, health, and education. In addition to the increased need for additional capacity and administrative demands, educational practice needs to adapt to the new requirements for teaching and learning in the increasingly diverse educational environment. Yet, despite the increasing diversification of the Maltese general and student population, analyses of the composition and diversification of Maltese society and education are limited. The paper provides some new evidence about the changing structure of education to fill the gap by drawing on data from the 2011 and 2021 Census of the Maltese population (NSO, 2014, 2023) and PISA (2018). Based on the conducted analysis and literature review, the paper also provides some suggestions for the adaptation of education to meet the need of the increasingly diverse student population as well as some suggestions for future studies.

Keywords

Malta, demographic change, diversification, migration

Biographical notes

Christine Fenech is the Senior Manager Research and Development at the Institute for Education, which aims at supporting teachers, parents, and students to address the challenges they face through evidence-based guidelines. Previously she worked as Manager for Research and Policy at the National Commission for Further and Higher Education. She holds a Magister Artium in History of Art, Political Science and Philosophy from the Free University of Berlin and a Master degree in Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies from the University of Malta. She is currently undertaking her PhD focusing on the academic achievement of migrant students in Malta.

Prof Milosh Raykov is a Professor in the Department of Education Studies at the University of Malta. He teaches courses in the sociology of education and research methods in education. His research interests include lifelong learning, learning in labour organizations, wellbeing and quality of work life, and the long-term outcomes of community service-learning. Prof Raykov is a co-editor of the Malta Review of Education Research (MRER).

EXPERIENCES OF GIFTED MATHEMATICS STUDENTS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS

Maria Galea

Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the educational experiences of gifted mathematics students in mainstream classrooms in Malta. Gifted students have their own special educational needs, mostly the need to be provided with an intellectually challenging environment commensurate with their abilities. However, little is known whether the intellectual needs of gifted students are met in Maltese mainstream classrooms. Online interviews were conducted with 9 gifted mathematics students in Year 8 and Year 9, attending various schools in Malta. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings of this study indicate that the experiences of gifted mathematics students are enhanced when they are actively involved in learning. Secondly, it appears that participants lack relevant and meaningful experiences, and a challenging learning environment. Finally, evidence suggests that differentiated teaching strategies are underutilised or not appropriately implemented resulting in participants having excessive extra time at hand. The study highlights the need for the teaching of mathematics to move away from a whole-class approach. Thus, it is suggested that, both on a national level and at a school level, there is commitment to provide training for educators on student-centred approaches that include active learning and differentiation.

Keywords

Inclusion, gifted, mathematics, student-centred, active learning, differentiation

Biographical note

Maria Galea is a mathematics teacher. She graduated from the University of Malta in 2001 with a Bachelor Degree in Education and has since taught in a church school. She obtained her Master Degree in Inclusive Education from the University of the West of Scotland in 2021. Through the years she has experimented with different teaching strategies to cater for the different needs and abilities of all her students. She is a strong believer in a student-centred approach to teaching and learning.

THE FUTURE IS NOW: EDUCATORS' VISION FOR TOMORROW

Mario Mallia, Janice Darmanin

Abstract

Education is never far from the news. It is intimately tied to the past, the present and the future. Some say that the past is where education has remained in terms of vision and practice. The more optimistic see education as taking stock of the past to create a present and a future. We are on the threshold of several important national milestones. The National Strategy for Education is up for review in the next two years as well as the National Curriculum. Then there is the collective agreement for educators which is up for review in 2023. The future of educators, hinges on the present and the future itself. The present research, therefore, invited educators to reflect on the future of education and educators themselves. Nine focus groups were conducted with 45 participants in total. Five key themes emerged from the data as influencing the future of education and educators, namely teaching and learning, leadership and climate, the education system itself, policy, and a changing society. The insights may serve as the basis for reflection and as a springboard for the generation of policy and practice on a national level.

Keywords

Malta, education, educator, future, consultation

Biographical notes

Mario Mallia is a full-time lecturer at the Institute for Education. He was a Head of School for sixteen years, and a deputy head for three years. Before that, he was a teacher of Physics, Biology, Integrated Science and Maths with teaching remaining a part of his duties as a head of school. He holds a Masters in Education, a Post Graduate diploma in School Administration and Management and a B.Ed (Hons) from the University of Malta. He is a board member of the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality and served as a Board member on the Foundation of Educational Services besides being active in the social sphere for many years.

Janice Darmanin holds a Bachelor in Maltese and Early & Middle Years from the University of Malta and a Master in Applied Educational Leadership from the Institute for Education. She has been a primary school class teacher for 11 years and an Assistant Head of a Primary School for 9 years. Janice is currently the Manager Research Analyst within the Institute for Education with the aim of working, through research, to support teachers in their professional and educational development at all levels within the educational sector in Malta. Her research interests include working with educators and parents to create a culturally receptive school community, improving the learners' education by understanding child development and learning, fostering parenting skills and self-reflective strategies among educators as well as supporting the implementation of the emergent curriculum.

EDUCATION.COOP: MORE THAN A NUDGE INTO THE FUTURE

Mario Mallia, Anna Zarb, Bernard Cauchi, Andrew Camilleri

Abstract

The role of education is one which reads and transforms. In a capitalist neo-liberal environment, the consuming and competitive individual is cast as the protagonist at the expense of communities that struggle for a common good. Especially in the global north, this is exacerbated by lifestyles and leisure patterns which have been heavily influenced by the onslaught of digital technologies, fragmenting to a considerable degree the physical community and the spaces for social interaction strongly associated with well-being. This is evident in a number of trends in society at large, including the organization of labour, which pit workers against each other, eroding solidarity, and dissipating class consciousness. In this context, many educators try their best to provide hope, a sense of belonging, and a struggle for justice. This they do despite being considered, as pegs to plug holes in a system struggling to cope and where knowledge is considered technical and practical, rather than emancipatory. A cooperative model, which provides a greater sense of belonging, an ethos underpinned by social justice and democratic principles, and ultimately a sense of trust and well-being, will be proposed. This model can provide a sound but permeable matrix which empowers educators collectively and, a better community experience for a diversity of learners.

Keywords

Cooperatives in education, vision, ethos, community, transformative leadership, emancipatory education, well-being

Biographical notes

For the last decade or so, the authors worked together on an educational vision as part of a church school set-up until the middle of 2022 when the project, which ruffled feathers, was deemed too 'dangerous' for it to continue. The authors, now working in different institutions, seek to foster a similar ethos and new alliances in different ways and in different spaces. The authors are among the founding members of 'This is Coop', a fully-fledged cooperative which provides work to young people who find it difficult to be meaningfully employed.

TEACHING AS A PROSPECTIVE CAREER: MOTIVATORS AND DISINCENTIVES

Angele Pulis

Abstract

There is a growing sentiment that teaching, as a prospective career, is losing its attractiveness. Encouraging young people to pursue a career in teaching is becoming a challenge. A teacher shortage crisis is being experienced globally, and locally, a similar situation has evolved. Young people are shying away from teaching as a career. In this scenario, a quantitative study to investigate 16 to 18-year-olds' perspectives on teaching as a potential prospective career will be conducted. Through a questionnaire survey, 16 to 18-year-olds in post-secondary institutions will be invited to share their opinions and ideas on the topic. The aim of this research is to comprehend the factors that encourage or discourage 16 to 18-year-olds when considering teaching as their prospective career. The research findings could help inform future decisions at a policy level to help render teaching a desirable profession. The motivators and disincentives, as perceived by young people, could provide a valuable perspective to different stakeholders who are interested in overcoming the teacher shortage crisis and in attracting the best talent from young people for the teaching profession.

Keywords

Teaching career, young people, teacher shortage, quantitative study

Biographical note

Angele Pulis is a full-time lecturer at the Institute for Education. Her research domains include educational leadership, pupil voice and mixed methods research. She holds a PhD from the University of Leicester, a Master of Philosophy from the University of Wales, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Administration and Management and a Bachelor in Education (Hons) from the University of Malta. Her career in schools included various roles. She was a Head of a Primary school and an Assistant head of a sixth form and a secondary school. She has taught Integrated Science, Biology and Chemistry in various schools.

ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUSION AND UTILITARIAN-PROGRESSIVE PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATIONS: A SURVEY STUDY OF MALTESE STATE PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS

Gabrielle Said, Matthew Muscat Inglott, Heathcliff Schembri

Abstract

This article conceptualises Maltese educational philosophy according to a utilitarian-progressive dualism, with critical theory as a source of antagonism between the two positions. Education for work and economic development, in this sense, serves as a utilitarian or technocratic justification of the prevailing socioeconomic status quo, while education for personal and social development serves more progressive or humanistic goals of personal empowerment and socio-political emancipation. Given that inclusion is a relatively explicit feature of Maltese educational policy and practice, we asked how attitudes towards inclusion currently interact with the broader foregoing philosophical orientations among Maltese primary school educators. A survey of educators ($n=62$) in a large state primary school was carried out, consisting of an existing scale for measuring attitudes toward inclusion, as well as a locally contextualised bespoke scale designed to measure philosophical orientations. Factors including role, experience, as well as initial and ongoing training were included as explanatory factors. The results suggest overall positive attitudes toward inclusion, combined with a juxtaposition of utilitarian and progressive views about education. Based on the findings, we argue that initial training is a particularly important opportunity for educators to engage more fully with philosophy of education and critical pedagogy, since they are less likely to do so later in their careers in the Maltese primary state school setting.

Keywords

Attitudes to inclusion, inclusive education, Malta, philosophy of education, primary education, progressivism, utilitarian

Biographical notes

Gabrielle Said is a Learning Support Educator employed within the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation (MEYR) in Malta. She has been actively engaged in supporting early years and primary years students for the past seven years. Gabrielle's academic journey includes the successful completion of a Higher Certificate in Inclusive Education from the Malta College of Arts, Science, and Technology (MCAST). Recently, she has achieved her Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Inclusive Education, further enhancing her expertise in the field.

Matthew Muscat Inglott is a Senior Lecturer and Researcher within the Institute of Community Services at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). He obtained his Ph.D. in Educational Research and Development from the University of Lincoln, UK, and currently does research in pedagogic theory and vocational education from a critical theoretical perspective.

Heathcliff Schembri is a Senior Lecturer within the Institute of Community Services at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). Previously he held the roles of Head of Department (Curriculum), Primary Support Teacher and Primary Classroom Teacher within the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) in Malta. He holds a B.Ed. (Hons) in Primary Education and an M.A. from the University of Malta. Heathcliff is currently reading for a Ph.D. in Education at the University of East Anglia, focusing on system-wide change, curriculum theory, educational leadership and the teaching and learning processes in Maltese primary schools.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCHOOL EXPERIENCE IN MALTA: VIEWS ON SCHOOL SATISFACTION, SCHOOL RELATED PRESSURE AND STRESS, AND TEACHER AND CLASSMATE SUPPORT

Jeannine Vassallo, Maria Pace

Abstract

Adolescents who enjoy being in school and experience school as a nurturing and supportive environment are more engaged with school, leading to improved educational outcomes, better health, and higher wellbeing (WHO 2004; Rathmann et al., 2018; Coelho & Dell'Aglio, 2019; WHO, 2020). High levels of school pressure are associated with lower self-reported health, increased psychosomatic health complaints and school-related stress, and decreased life satisfaction (WHO, 2016; Cosma et al., 2020). This paper delves into the school experience of secondary school students in Malta. It analyses school satisfaction and school-related pressure and stress, perceived school performance, support from teachers and classmates; how these interrelate and whether they are underpinned by demographic factors (school year and gender). Data was collected as part of the 2022 WHO Health Behaviour in School Children study, which was conducted in 2022 among 3456 young people attending Years 7, 9 and 11 in Malta's schools. The findings help to inform education policy and practice with a view to making classrooms, schools, and the education system more conducive to students' wellbeing and educational achievement.

Keywords

Adolescents, Malta, School Satisfaction, School-related Stress, School-related Pressure, Teacher support, Classmate Support, Perceived School Performance

Biographical note

Jeannine Vassallo is currently employed as Senior Manager within the Education Ministry's Research Unit. Jeannine has worked in the delivery, regulation, research and policymaking of welfare and education services and at the House of Representatives. Jeannine holds a B.A. (Hons.) Anthropology (Melit.), M.Sc. Social Research (Edin.), M.Sc. Integrative Health and Social Care (Derby) and CMI Level 7 Extended Diploma.

Maria Pace is currently employed as an Education Officer within the Education Ministry's Research Unit. Maria has previously worked as a primary school teacher and a nurture group teacher. She also lectures educators. Maria holds a B.Ed Primary (Hons) (Melit.), a M.Ed SEBD (Melit.), a Master in Applied Education Leadership (MAEL) (Melit.) and an Ed.D in Children, Schools and Families (Sheffield).

EXPLORING THE AFFORDANCES AND PROPENSITIES OF MULTIMODALITY IN NARRATIVE PEDAGOGIES THROUGH MULTIMODAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Edward Wright

Abstract

Ample research shows that student-centred pedagogies can become even more relevant if they manage to connect students' everyday life experiences to the content of their curriculum. Through narrative pedagogies, the sharing of and reflection upon life experiences become a way to enhance learning and engagement, as students are provided with opportunities for meaning-making as well as new interpretations of life experiences, especially those marked by adversity and uncertainty. Moreover, research shows that through multimodality, made possible by the advancement of creative digital technologies, narrative pedagogies can become even more effective. This transpires from the fact that multimodality expands the range of resources available for students to construct and share their narratives. It integrates the auditory, visual, gestural, linguistic, and spatial modes, augmenting the overall narrative experience. This paper presents an exploration and discussion of several propensities and affordances of multimodal ethnography as an approach to ethnographic research, that can lead to a better understanding of how multimodality possibly enhances narrative pedagogies, especially when applied to humanistic subjects like RE, PSCD, and MLE. Such an approach combines the analysis of multiple modes of expression and communication and recognizes that human communication and cultural practices extend beyond written and verbal modes. Furthermore, it acknowledges that the various modes of communication work together, creating understanding and meaning within specific cultural contexts. The paper will also argue, based on recent research, that through an analysis of multiple modes of communication, researchers can capture a more complete and refined understanding of human behaviour, cultural practices, and social interactions. However, since human experiences are interpreted and re-interpreted continuously, especially every time they are narrated to an audience, multimodal ethnography could greatly benefit from having a narrative-hermeneutical perspective. This combination can also contribute to the students' identity exploration and construction. This will also be discussed.

Keywords

Multimodality, ethnography, narrative learning, narrative pedagogies, critical reflection, self-reflexivity, identity exploration

Biographical note

Edward Wright, a teacher for 22 years and HoD for 9 years with the Secretariat for Catholic Education, Edward is currently a Doctoral student at Bournemouth where he had graduated at Master's level in Media and Communications. He is in possession of an Honours degree in Psychology, a post-graduate certificate in Education with specialization in PSCD and another in the Learning Outcomes Approach, and degrees in Theology, including a Masters. In the past he taught PSCD, Social and Environmental Studies, Religious Education and Media

Literacy Education. He also lectures in Philosophy and Psychology with the Lifelong Learning Department. Edward is interested in the holistic formation of teachers, especially of the humanities. He is currently investigating how digital technologies, especially photography and film-making, can contribute to meaning-making and identity formation in adolescence through narrative pedagogies. He is an experienced teacher and a teacher trainer and mentor.



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