

Malta





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Social and emotional education in Malta

Carmel Cefai

Abstract

Malta is a small island state, the smallest member state of the European Union. With only 50 years of independence behind it, it is to be expected that the country's social, economic, political and educational institutions developed at a rather slow pace when compared to other European countries. Compulsory education for all children, for instance, was introduced only in 1946, while compulsory secondary education for all started in 1970. Despite a late start, however, the country's educational system has moved fast and today the general quality of Maltese education compares quite well with that of other referent countries and EU standards. This chapter focuses on the developments which have taken place in social and emotional education in Malta in the past decades.

The subject Personal and Social Education (PSD) was introduced as a compulsory subject into Maltese secondary state schools about thirty years ago. It was introduced as a preventative response to the high level of drug use on the island at the time and challenging behaviour, amongst other factors. Students aged 12 – 16 have two 40 minute lessons of Personal and Social Education each week. The sessions are child-centred, skills based and experiential, with no formal assessment. Recently, PSD sessions have also begun to be offered in Maltese primary schools on a limited basis.

In the case studies Carmel introduces some of the recent approaches to social and emotional education being taken in Malta. In particular, Carmel describes how an approach called Circle Time has been introduced in some primary school classrooms. In Circle Time the teacher takes a more facilitative and less directive role, and the children participate actively in the activities, which include brainstorming, role play, small group work, processing and writing and drawing activities.

"Before Circle Time the children did not listen to each other. I feel that now they are observing what is happening in class more, they are using problem-solving strategies and are coming up with solutions themselves..." (classroom teacher).

Another interesting approach described by Carmel in this chapter is that of Nurture Classes. Nurture Classes provide an early intervention programme for young vulnerable students on a part-time basis. The Nurture Class provides a short term, safe learning environment which is responsive to the pupils' needs, with the objective of facilitating their eventual reintegration into the mainstream classroom. Children spend up to two terms in the group which usually consists of 8 to 10 young children, and follow a structured programme, which includes circle time, social and emotional education, breakfast, creativity, structured play as well as academic learning. International research has shown that Nurture Classes have been found to be effective in promoting the healthy social, emotional and cognitive development of vulnerable young children.

The final section in this chapter describes the challenges which still need to be addressed to provide an adequate and meaningful social and emotional education in Maltese schools, and proposes a social and emotional education framework, drawing both on local good practice and the international literature. The framework proposes a positive health and well-being perspective of child learning and development, depathologising mental health, and positioning school staff as effective and caring educators in both academic and social and emotional education. It underlines the need for a whole school, multilevel and school based approach to social and emotional education, focusing on health promotion, prevention and targeted interventions involving the whole school community in collaboration with the parents, the local community and the external support services.

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Context

Malta, 8th September 1565. The church bells rang endlessly across the ruined towns and villages as the remaining galleys were hastily leaving the island and making their way towards Constantinople to the east. It was a long, bitterly fought siege, with the 8000 defenders repeatedly assaulted by 30,000 troops who were supported by 200 vessels. The Knight Hospitallers of St John and the Maltese inhabitants had fought bravely for more than three months at the peak of the hot summer period, with very little water and food and with limited resources. At the end of the first month of the 'great siege', they had lost the key fort of St Elmo at the mouth of the Grand Harbour, with the last few soldiers on the bastion walls fighting to the end. But the military might and determination of the Knights and the zest and bravery of the inhabitants, withstood the onslaught of one of the most prized armies of the time, led by the Sultan's own elite infantry units, the Janisseries, and refused to surrender.

The great siege of 1565 was the beginning of the end of more than two millennia of colonisation and domination by Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Anojovines, Castillians, Swabians, Geonese and Sicilian rulers, and the start of the path towards the birth of a small nation state. The Knights of St John had arrived on the island only 35 years before the great siege, and were given Malta by the Spanish Emperor Charles V, to halt the advance of the Ottoman Empire from the southernmost post of Europe. An early stage European Union of sorts, the Order was formed of eight European branches called langues, namely from Castille and Leon, Aragon, Italy, France, Avignon, Provence, England and Germany, each with their own auberge and church, and run by an elected Grandmaster. The Knights were not very impressed with the scantily resourced island when they arrived in Malta in

1530, but after the great siege of 1565, they decided that Malta was going to be their home, and they started to build the infrastructure to turn the island into a fortress island state, starting with the foundation of the walled capital, Valletta, now a world heritage site. The first stirrings of Maltese nationhood were already evident when they departed from Malta upon the arrival of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798, with Vassalli, the father of the Maltese language, presenting a bill of rights for the 'Maltese nation'. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Malta became part of the British Empire, gaining self-government in 1921 and independence in 1964. In 1974 it became a republic, 1979 saw the closure of the last foreign military base on the island, while in 2004 it became part of the European Union. It is the smallest EU member state, both in terms of land size and population (about 400,000 inhabitants). Maltese (an old Semitic language with a strong Italian influence and written in Roman script) and English are the official languages.

Having experienced only 50 years of independence, it is to be expected that the country's social, economic, political and educational institutions developed at a rather slow pace when compared to other European countries. Compulsory education for all children, for instance, was introduced only in 1946, while compulsory secondary education for all started in 1970; school leaving age was raised from 14 to 16 in 1974. Kindergarten centres for 4 year olds were opened in 1975 and extended to include 3 year olds in 1987. Free child care centres for the under three year olds were only introduced in 2014. The 1988 Education Act update established that every child, whatever his or her characteristics, was entitled to public educational provision, while the Equal Opportunities Act in 2000 provided a legal framework to ensure accessibility to all and protect any individual against discrimination on the basis of any difference.

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Despite a late start, the educational system has moved fast and today the general quality of Maltese education compares quite well with that of other referent countries and EU standards. In the last decades the erstwhile British based educational system, developed over the past two centuries, has undergone considerable growth and development, as the country has sought to adopt a system suited to its needs as a developing small island state. Reforms included a more inclusive education system, a more relevant and meaningful curriculum, decentralisation of the local educational authority giving more autonomy to schools, introduction of psychological support services at school and service levels for students with learning and social and emotional difficulties, continuing professional development of teachers, and more parental engagement in education. More recent reforms at the start of the 21st century include

clusive vision for education, and a number of very recent changes in secondary schools such as the introduction of co-education, the middle school, and vocational education in 2013-2014. In view of the high number of early school leavers (still the highest percentage in the EU) there are also ongoing efforts to encourage more students to pursue post-secondary education² while ensuring that those leaving secondary school do so with adequate certification and vocational skills.

Education in Malta is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16 years, with state schools catering for approximately 65% of the Maltese school population, and church and independent schools taking the remaining 35%. There are about 160 state schools, 35 church schools, and 20 independent schools, ranging from kindergarten centres, primary

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a college based-comprehensive system¹ replacing a grammar school secondary education based on the 11+ examination, a revised national curriculum framework promoting a humanistic, democratic and in-

schools, secondary schools and post-secondary schools (such as vocational and pre-tertiary colleges). The vast majority of children attend mainstream schools with less than 0.5% of children attending specialised

resource centres. Although formal education starts at 5 years of age, 95% of children would have already spent two years in the kindergarten, which is usually located within the primary school. State primary schools, situated in every locality, cater for children from 5–11 years (Year 1 to Year 6), with one classroom teacher focusing on the core subjects, including English, Maltese, Mathematics, Religion, Social Studies, Physical Education and Science, while peripatetic teachers provide lessons in art, music, and Personal and Social Development amongst others. The languages of instruction are Maltese and English, though for the majority of Maltese children, Maltese is their first language. At the end of Year 6 in primary school, students from each specific region (Malta is divided into ten regional school colleges) attend the secondary school for their region, one for boys and one for girls. As from 2014–2015, however, all state secondary schools will become co-educational, with boys and girls attending the same secondary school regional college. In the same scholastic year, some present secondary schools are also being divided into two schools within each college, namely a middle school for 11–12 year olds, and a higher secondary school for 13–16 year olds. At the end of secondary school, about 80% of students aged 16 – 18 start post-secondary education, which offers various pathways for the students according to their career aspirations. Those who would like to further their studies at tertiary level and have the required qualifications, will spend two years at Junior College, studying a number of subjects at intermediate and advanced levels. Following the successful completion of this programme, students may then proceed to university. Those who are more vocationally oriented, join instead the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, where they can follow a range of courses at different levels in various technically oriented professions. The University of

Malta, founded more than 500 years ago, is the only university in Malta, with around 10,000 students doing a range of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees across a range of disciplines and professions. About twenty percent of Maltese students continue their studies at university level.

Social and emotional education in Maltese schools

Personal and social education

Personal and Social Education (PSD) was introduced about thirty years ago as a compulsory subject in the secondary school curriculum in Maltese state schools. Through a skills-based approach, students (aged 12–16 years old) have the opportunity to develop intra and interpersonal competencies such as self awareness, self expression, healthy living, responsible behaviour and decision making, critical thinking skills, problem solving, conflict resolution, dealing with peer pressure, respect for others, healthy relationships, and celebration of diversity, through experiential sessions where the teacher takes a more facilitative role. They have two 40 minute sessions of PSD per week. The primary objective of PSD is to prepare young people for the opportunities and responsibilities of life, helping them to develop the attitudes, knowledge and skills to become happy and fulfilled individuals in a healthy and supportive environment (Ministry of Education, 2005). More immediate objectives leading to its introduction, however, included a response to the social and educational challenges facing young people in Malta in the 1980s, such as the increasing concern about illegal drug use in adolescence, and challenging behaviour in state schools (Sultana, 1992). It also sought to avoid the trappings of examination oriented teaching and traditional teacher-oriented instruction (Borg & Triganza Scott, 2009).

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PSD lessons are child-centred and experiential, with no formal assessment. In the middle school (11 - 13) the topics include establishing a positive environment, respecting oneself and others, the use of social and communication skills, roles and responsibilities within different social contexts, understanding the changes that take place when growing up and making responsible choices, and making good use of time. In the senior secondary years (from age 13 - 16), the major topics include understanding oneself within a social context, the importance of relationships, co-operation, teamwork and respect, exploring similarities and differences between people and accommodating diversity, feeling positive about one's changing self,

primary school, students have one session every two weeks taught by a peripatetic PSD teacher.

The introduction of PSD in Maltese schools has been positively received by schools and by staff, students and parents (e.g. Borg and Triganza Scott, 2009; Camilleri et al., 2011; Muscat, 2006). In one of the few studies which sought to evaluate PSD in Maltese schools (Muscat, 2006), over 400 early secondary students (12-13 years old) in state and church schools completed self administered questionnaires, while a small number of these were also interviewed; and a focus group was held with the PSD teachers. The students found the subject interesting, enjoy-

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and reflecting on one's lifestyle choices. More recently, PSD has also been introduced on a part time basis in the junior primary school through the services of visiting peripatetic teachers. Students would usually have one session of 40 minutes every week or two weeks. Primary school topics include developing a sense of wellbeing, use of social and communication skills, and good decision making skills. There are presently plans to restructure PSD as personal, social and career education, adding career education as part of the curriculum from 2014. In secondary school, all students have two lessons per week taught by trained teachers, while in

able and engaging, with topics like sexual education and health education addressing their needs and concerns. They also liked the experiential mode of instruction, particularly the use of discussions, videos and group work. In another study on students' perceptions of PSD, Borg and Triganza Scott (2009) explored the views of 1750 11- and 16- year old students through a self-administered questionnaire. They reported that the majority of students of both ages and genders found the subject very interesting and enjoyable. The 11 year olds liked particularly the discussions, group work, and sharing of ideas, while the 16 year olds liked the subject

because of interesting and meaningful lessons relevant to their lives. Assertiveness and decision making were the most popular subjects for both groups, while sexual education was most popular with the 16 year olds. Finally, Camilleri et al. (2012), referring to an unpublished evaluation study, reported that post-secondary students (16-18 years old) said that PSD helped them to understand themselves and others better, and understand particularly their emotions during the adolescent years, and that they appreciated the use of discussion and small groups.

Although students and staff found the subject useful, enjoyable and meaningful, there is little empirical evidence on the impact of PSD on actual student behaviour (Borg and Trig-

was 10% in 2011 (compare to 8% in 1995 first ESPAD study); and although there was a decrease of 3% in the use of inhalants, the 14% rate in 2011 is still above the EU average; similarly the 4% rate in the use of cocaine and 3% use of ecstasy are above the EU average. Alcohol use remains high at 86% compared to EU average of 79%, though it had gone down by 1% since the previous survey four years earlier. Malta ranked second in binge drinking (56%), drunkenness stood at 20% (EU average 17%), while physical fighting as a result of alcohol (14%) was also above EU average. The present rate of teenage pregnancy (3.4%) is also above the EU average (NSO, 2013). While these figures cannot be interpreted as evidence that PSD and other prevention efforts are not effective,

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anza Scott, 2010). For instance, although PSD may have started in part in response to the concern of drug use amongst young people thirty years ago, the substance use situation is still a cause for increasing concern despite various drug prevention programmes run in schools, including PSD, during the past decades. The latest European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) in 2011 (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2014) shows that although drug use amongst 15-16 year old Maltese students declined since the previous study in 2007, this was related to the decreased use of cannabis but otherwise the regular use of illegal drugs is comparable to the EU average. The lifetime use of marijuana

they do underline the need for more objective and rigorous evaluation of the impact of PSD and other drug prevention programmes in schools and their impact on students' behaviour.

One of the main issues with programmes such as PSD in Maltese schools is the generalisation of the skills learnt to other, real life contexts. In order for such programmes to be effective in the long term, there is a need for systems integration across developmental stages and levels of care, with all the elements of effective programmes and policies fitting together in an overall school-wide approach, and coordinated, multi-year programmes implemented effectively across developmental

periods (Greenberg, 2010). Programmes need to be supported by a school wide approach to wellbeing and mental health, including whole school policies, positive school climate and culture, collaboration with parents, and liaison with the local community

sessions like these are unlikely to have a long term impact, while sessions delivered by the classroom teacher are more likely to be effective as the teacher will have the opportunity to infuse the social and emotional skills being learnt into the classroom practice, ped-

Social and emotional education is still seen as the remit of particular subjects like PSD, Social Studies/Citizenship, Home Economics and Religion, while other subject teachers have received little training in social and emotional education (e.g. Askeff Williams and Cefai, 2014; Pace, 2011)

(Ibid., 2010). In a review of the effectiveness of promoting social and emotional education in primary school, Adi et al. (2007) reported that the most effective interventions were multi-component programmes which focused on the curriculum and school environment, together with programmes for parents.

In Maltese secondary schools, PSD has largely remained a stand-alone subject and has made very few inroads into the other areas of the curriculum or at the whole school level. Social and emotional education is still seen as the remit of particular subjects like PSD, Social Studies/Citizenship, Home Economics and Religion, while other subject teachers have received little training in social and emotional education (e.g. Askeff Williams and Cefai, 2014; Pace, 2011). At primary school level, PSD has been introduced for the junior years but it is organised as a peripatetic subject, with one 45 minutes session every fortnight taught by a visiting PSD teacher. The classroom teacher is not involved in the session and is usually asked to withdraw from the group. The international literature, however, has repeatedly underlined that add-on

agogy, management and relationships and into the academic subjects (Adi et al, 2007; Cefai and Cavioni, 2014; Weare and Nind, 2011). The greatest impact of the SEAL programme in the UK was when it was embedded in the curriculum, with the classroom teachers developing an understanding of students' social and emotional learning skills, and using that understanding to adjust their pedagogy according to the students' needs and to develop healthier relationships in their teaching and classroom management (Ofsted, 2007).

Circle Time

Recently, a number of primary schools have been introducing Circle Time in some of their classrooms. Circle Time (CT) is a child-friendly and child-directed approach to education, where children are encouraged to learn and practice social and emotional learning in a safe, caring and democratic environment, with the teacher taking a more facilitative and less directive role (Mosley, 2009). It runs on key principles called 'golden rules'³ such as respect for one another and for different opinions, active listening, and

(Circle Time) runs on key principles called ‘golden rules’ such as respect for one another and for different opinions, active listening, and collaborative problem solving, and makes use of experiential learning, with techniques such as games, role plays, and group work

collaborative problem solving, and makes use of experiential learning, with techniques such as games, role plays, and group work. Students sit in a circle and participate actively in the activities, including brainstorming, role play, small group work, processing, and writing and drawing activities. The session, which takes about half an hour to forty-five minutes, follows a specific structure, namely meeting up, warming up, opening up, cheering up, and calming down (Ibid., 2009). Sessions are usually organised with various groups of students by the Nurture Class⁴

and attention, better relationships, higher self esteem, improved behaviour, and enhanced social and emotional learning (Collins, 2011; Coppock, 2007; Doveton, 2007; Hennessy, 2007; Lown, 2002; Miller and Moran, 2007; Mosley, 2009; Wood, 2001). In a qualitative study on a whole school approach to CT in a Maltese primary school, staff, students and parents viewed CT as a positive experience for the whole school community, including better teacher-student relationships, positive classroom climate, enhanced student motivation and engagement in academic learning,

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teacher at the school, with one session per week for one school term. Topics include self awareness and self management skills, problem solving and decision making skills, as well as social awareness and relationship building. Sessions may also be organised around immediate particular issues, such as incidents of bullying or aggression.

Though large scale, rigorous studies on the effectiveness of CT are scarce, various small scale studies have underlined its benefits in terms of positive academic, social and emotional outcomes, including improved listening

positive behaviour and social and emotional learning, such as listening skills, communication skills, and self-esteem. The staff also reported less challenging behaviour and bullying at the school (Pace, 2012).

In another mixed method study in a primary school in Malta, Cefai et al. (2014) reported that CT students, compared to control group, showed more positive academic and social behaviours and fewer social, emotional and behaviour problems. The teachers reported that CT had a positive impact on the students’ behaviours, such as listening, attention,

collaboration, and better relationships with peers. The students said that CT helped them to make friends and have better peer relationships, to improve their behaviour and to control their emotions. The great majority of the students enjoyed CT and would like to have it in their curriculum; similarly the teachers found CT a useful and meaningful experience and would like to do it again next year. When asked what aspects worked well, both teachers and students underlined the experiential, practical, and enjoyable aspects of the sessions, such as energisers, visualisation, games, singing and play.

CT is organised in a number of primary schools particularly through the Nurture Class, but there are plans to introduce CT in all primary schools in Malta through a staged approach, starting with the early years (4–8 years) and then followed by the junior primary school years (9–11 years). The plan is that the classroom teacher will first start using CT as a medium of instruction for the academic subjects, which will subsequently be followed with the use of CT for social and emotional education.

Inclusive education

One of the major reforms in the recent history of the Maltese educational system has been the introduction of inclusive education about two decades ago. The vast majority of children and young people in Malta receive their education in mainstream schools and are provided with support according to their needs. More than 90% of children and young people with individual educational needs (IEN) attend mainstream schools, with less than 0.5% of the total school population attending special schools (European Agency for the development of SEN, 2010). Special schools have been turned into resource centres providing their expertise and resources to children and young people attending mainstream schools, while still catering for a small

group of children with multiple and complex learning difficulties. This reform also saw the employment of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) to support students with individual educational needs, in both state and non-state mainstream schools. Initially the LSAs started providing their support on a one to one basis, but over the past years, the system is moving towards a classroom LSA who supports the teacher in delivering the curriculum to all the learners. The classroom teachers are thus taking more responsibility for inclusive education, seeing LSAs not as teacher-substitutes for students with IEN, but as a whole classroom resource. Recently Inclusive Coordinators (INCOS) have also been introduced into all state schools to coordinate and mobilise support for students with IEN, working with LSAs, staff, parents and professionals, to ensure the educational needs of all learners are adequately addressed. This includes holding school-based, transdisciplinary case conferences to assess the educational needs of the students and develop Individual Educational Plans accordingly. Educational and psychological support services, such as early intervention teachers⁵, complementary teachers⁶, the specific learning difficulties service and the school psychological service, also provide support to schools in this area. Level descriptors for each subject of the national curriculum areas have also been adapted for children whose level of functioning is below those levels usually achieved by 6 year olds. These are intended as key resources for teachers and LSAs in ensuring the engagement of students with intellectual disability in all the curriculum subjects. Various programmes of initial and continuing training of teachers and LSAs have also been organised to complement these reforms.

Another recent reform has been the networking of all state schools in Malta in ten regional colleges, whereby students now remain with their peers throughout their school

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life, with all primary school students in one regional college going to one secondary school (boys or girls). This replaces the former system where students were selected according to their 11+ examination and channelled to different secondary schools, according to their performance at the end of their primary school cycle. Students now attend and learn together in one school, where each learner has access to learning opportunities adapted according to his or her needs.

The Maltese educational system has gone a long way towards providing an educational system which adequately addresses the individual educational needs of all learners. Inclusive education, however, is an ongoing process, and various challenges remain in ensuring that schools operate as real inclusive communities. For instance, there is some concern that what is still happening in some schools is mainstreaming, namely simply placing children with individual education needs in regular schools, rather than inclusion which implies a change in the curriculum, structures and school ethos to facilitate the meaningful participation of each learner (Bartolo, 2010). Some of the most pertinent challenges in this regard include amongst others:

- to ensure that all students complete their secondary education with success: at the moment a substantial number of students leave school without functional literacy skills and/or any certification or qualification; this group is at high risk of unemployment, poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion;
- to ensure that more students complete post-secondary education, as Malta has the highest rate (22%) of early school leavers in the EU. This group of students is at risk of social exclusion and social disadvantage once they enter the adult world;
- to provide more support for children coming from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (22% of Maltese children live in poverty) who may be at risk of learning difficulties, school failure, absenteeism, social exclusion and mental health problems;
- to ensure a quality education for children of immigrants and refugees, particularly those with different cultures, religion and languages, and promote a culture of diversity and appreciation of multiculturalism in schools;
- to support the inclusive education of students with challenging behaviour and reduce their risk of segregation and exclusion;
- to improve the educational support services to ensure timely, adequate and regular assessment, intervention and reviews in schools;
- to continue strengthening and sustaining the participation of children, teachers, parents and community members in the work of each school; the collaboration and engagement of parents and community members in schools is critical to the success of inclusive education;
- to continue providing resources and regular training of school staff in inclusive practices: this does not include only knowledge and skills such as the use of inclusive-friendly and flexible curricula, resources and pedagogy adapted to students' diverse needs, but what is equally

important is to inculcate the beliefs and attitudes conducive to inclusive education.

Social, emotional and behaviour difficulties

One of the challenges of inclusive education is the education of students with challenging behaviour. These children are often at risk of exclusion, disengagement, absenteeism and mental health problems. When asked to consider the teaching of students with individual educational needs, classroom teachers prefer students with other forms of difficulty than those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) (Kalambouka et al., 2007; Tanti-Rigos, 2009). Indeed students with SEBD are usually the least liked and understood students (Baker 2005; Kalambouka et

Students with SEBD in Maltese schools are entitled to the provision of adequate and tailored support for their learning and behaviour in their own schools (Bartolo et al., 2002), and the great majority of such students are supported in mainstream schools, with less than 1% of such students in special settings. Nurture Classes have been introduced in mainstream primary schools in the last decade, providing an early intervention programme for young vulnerable students on a part time basis. In Nurture Classes, students are supported to develop the requisite social and emotional learning competencies within a safe and caring environment (see Case Study 1). A similar service, Learning Support Zones, is provided in secondary

Indeed students with SEBD (social, emotional and behavioural difficulties) are usually the least liked and understood students (Baker 2005; Kalambouka et al. 2007), the least likely to receive effective and timely support (Kalambouka et. al. 2007; Ofsted, 2007), and the most vulnerable to school failure and premature school leaving, social exclusion and mental health problems (Cole, Daniel & Visser, 2005; Colman et al., 2009)

al. 2007), the least likely to receive effective and timely support (Kalambouka et. al. 2007; Ofsted, 2007), and the most vulnerable to school failure and premature school leaving, social exclusion and mental health problems (Cole, Daniel & Visser, 2005; Colman et al., 2009). They are the only group for whom punitive, exclusionary responses are still permitted by law, making SEBD the only IEN category which exposes the student to increased risk of exclusion as a function of its identification (Jull, 2008).

schools, where students are provided with behaviour support and social and emotional learning on a part time basis to facilitate their learning and social inclusion in the mainstream classes. A small number of special schools, called Learning Centres, cater for the more severe cases of SEBD, with the long term objective of reintegrating the students back into the mainstream school. A number of support services are also available for students exhibiting SEBD, including *School Psychological Service, Educational Social Work*

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Services and Guidance & Counselling Services, while other agencies provide more specialised support, such as *Anti-Bullying Service*, *Anti-Substance Abuse Service*, *Child Safety Unit*, *Specific Learning Difficulties Service*, *Child Guidance Clinic*, after school literacy and family support programmes, and parental training (Cefai & Cooper, 2006).

The education of students with SEBD, however, remains riddled with various problems in both universal and targeted interventions. In contrast to other forms of individual edu-

sources to deal with very challenging behaviour. The support services are in many instances plagued by inadequate human resources, particularly such services as the School Psychological Service and the behaviour specialists, while a national behaviour support service for schools to integrate the various services in this field has not yet been set up (Cefai, Cooper & Camilleri, 2009). Nurture Classes in primary schools and Learning Support Zones in secondary schools have not yet been evaluated for their effectiveness as centres for emotional literacy, re-

There is also a lack of school staff education in responding effectively to challenging behaviour, with a number of schools lacking the expertise and resources to deal with very challenging behaviour

cational needs, some schools and teachers remain unsympathetic towards the inclusion of this group of students due to their challenging and disruptive behaviour. In a review of studies on the narratives of Maltese secondary school students with SEBD, Cefai and Cooper (2010) provide a grim picture of students who feel unloved and unwanted by their teachers, victims of an unjust and oppressive system, unsupported in their needs and excluded from the academic and social aspects of everyday life. There is also a lack of school staff education in responding effectively to challenging behaviour, with a number of schools lacking the expertise and re-

silience and behaviour support, while Circle Time in primary schools continues to be held sporadically in some schools but does not occur in others.

Social and emotional education within the new National Curriculum Framework

After a long process of consultation, the new National Curriculum Framework (NCF) was published in 2012, replacing the 1999 National Minimum Curriculum. The framework is built on the overriding principle of providing children and young people with “an appropriate entitlement of learning that enables them to accomplish their full potential as

individual persons and as citizens of a small State within the European Union” (Ministry of Education, Employment Family, 2012, pxiii). Amongst the key principles informing the curriculum, we find *entitlement*, namely that every child is entitled to a quality education experience, with all learners being supported to develop their potential and achieve personal excellence (including the development of a holistic education relevant for life); *diversity*, whereby all children can learn, grow and experience success by respecting diversity in all its forms, promoting an inclusive

education. It includes Physical Education and Sport, Personal and Social Education, as well as aspects of Home Economics. The learning experiences in this content area are aimed at “equipping learners with the necessary knowledge, competencies, skill, attitudes, and values which they need to maintain, promote and enhance physical, emotional, psychological and social wellbeing throughout their school life and as lifelong learners. Educators are encouraged to collaborate with parents and the wider community to ensure meaningful and long-lasting experiences in

... research evidence indicates the ineffectiveness of fragmented, add-on programmes in social and emotional education, while clearly underlining the effectiveness of programmes taught and reinforced by the classroom teacher (Durlak et. al, 2011; Greenberg et al., 2003)

environment, and ensuring policies and practices that address the individual and specific needs of the learners and learning community; a *developmental approach* whereby within and across all learning areas and subjects, the curriculum meets the needs of learners according to their stage of development; and a *learner-centred approach* to learning, including active and personalised learning, relevant and meaningful learner engagement, negotiation among learners and teachers, and the promotion of self directed and lifelong learning.

The curriculum includes a number of learning areas which are directly related to social and emotional education, such as religious and ethics education, education for democracy, and visual and performing arts, but Health and Physical Education is the content area most focused on social and emotional

order to inculcate a deep understanding of ‘self’, ‘other’ and the impact of choices and actions upon individuals, communities and the environment” (Ministry of Education, Employment and Family, 2012, p35). It is interesting to note, however, that while the classroom teacher in the primary school is directly responsible for teaching most of the content areas of the new curriculum framework, including Physical Education, Home Economics and Citizenship, personal and social education is still the responsibility of peripatetic specialist teachers from outside the school. As already mentioned, research evidence indicates the ineffectiveness of fragmented, add-on programmes in social and emotional education, while clearly underlining the effectiveness of programmes taught and reinforced by the classroom teacher (Durlak et. al, 2011; Greenberg et al., 2003). In their meta-analysis of over 200 studies,

Durlak et al. (2011) found that when classroom programmes were conducted by the teachers themselves, they were found to be effective in both academic and social and emotional literacy, and that only when school staff conducted the programmes did students' academic performance improve. They recommend that social and emotional education needs to become a core area of the curriculum without the need for outside staff for its effective delivery.

The NCF also includes seven cross-curricular themes, namely Literacy, Digital Literacy, Learning to Learn and Co-operative Learning, Education for Sustainable Development, Education for Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation, and Education for Diversity.

would have been given a more central role at both curricular and cross curricular levels, where students would have the opportunity to learn, observe and practice the social and emotional skills across the curriculum (cf. Cefai & Cavioni, 2014).

Good practice in social and emotional education

Against the background described in the previous section, various initiatives have been going on in a number of schools in Malta to promote social and emotional education, ranging from universal interventions such as Personal and Social Education (PSE), Circle Time and creativity, resilience enhancement, and staff education at both initial education and continuing professional development lev-

(Nurture Classes) provide a short term, safe learning environment which is responsive to the pupils' needs with the objective of facilitating their eventual reintegration into the mainstream classroom, thus operating as a transitional early intervention provision

While some of these cross-curricular themes address issues related to social and emotional education, such as Learning to Learn and Co-operative Learning, and Education for Diversity, social and emotional education is a fundamental aspect of education and pervades all aspects of the teaching and learning process. The NCF makes little mention at both primary and secondary levels of the alignment of social and emotional education with the other subjects of the curriculum. In view of the clear and consistent evidence of the crucial role which social and emotional education plays in learning, academic achievement and social and emotional wellbeing, hope had been held that social and emotional education

els, to targeted interventions such as Nurture Classes, transformative drama, and pastoral care support for students with social and emotional difficulties. This section provides three detailed case studies illustrating good practice in social and emotional education in Maltese schools.

Case study 1: Nurture Class, Circle Time and drama in a primary school

Birzebbugia is a middle sized town at the mouth of the south eastern harbour of the Maltese islands, facing the North African coast 300 km to the south. Its ancient remains include Ghar Dalam (the Dark Cave) with fossil bones of dwarf elephants, hippopotami and

other animals dating more than 500,000 years old, indicating that the island was once linked to continental Europe. The cave also contains human remains dating back to 10,000 years, suggesting the first known human activity on the island. The town is also the place of a 4,000 year old Bronze age fortified settlement. It was also at this harbour that Napoleon Bonaparte's warships landed and ousted the Knights of St John from Malta at the very end of the eighteenth century. Today the town has developed into a popular seaside resort with a population of about 10,000 inhabitants, it has also a substantial group of African migrants who arrived on boats from across the Mediterranean in the last two decades or so.

Nurturing education. The local primary school forms part of the regional St. Benedict College, and caters for about 600 students with a staff complement of 65, including administration, teachers and learning support assistants. A considerable number of pupils come from low socio-economic background, and about ten percent of the students receive support for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, including social, economic and family issues. The school organises a number of initiatives and services to promote social and emotional education. At the centre of these initiatives is the Nurture Class (NC) led by a teacher and an LSA trained in Nurture group principles and practices and in social and emotional education. NC have been introduced in a number of primary schools in Malta to provide young children experiencing SEBD with the necessary skills to enable them to fully engage in the social and educational experiences at their school. They provide a short term, safe learning environment which is responsive to the pupils' needs with the objective of facilitating their eventual reintegration into the mainstream classroom, thus operating as a transitional early intervention provision. They

offer a flexible, age-appropriate learning programme within a structured and carefully paced learning environment to help pupils develop secure expectations and consequently a sense of emotional security, as well as social emotional learning (Cooper & Tinnaz, 2007). Children spend up to two terms in the group, usually consisting of 8 to 10 young children, and follow a structured programme, which includes circle time, social and emotional education, breakfast, creativity, structured play, as well as academic learning. There is close collaboration with the parents as well as with the mainstream classroom teachers.

The original Nurture groups were developed in the UK in the early 1970s, operating according to Bowlby's attachment theory in seeking to recreate early experiences in order to address the unmet social and emotional needs of young children (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000). Since then, they have been introduced in other countries such as Canada, New Zealand and Malta (Cefai & Cooper, 2011; Colley, 2009; Reynolds, MacKay & Kearney, 2009), and have been found to be effective in promoting the healthy social, emotional and cognitive development of vulnerable young children (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; Reynolds, MacKay & Kearney, 2009).

In Malta NC operate both as a prevention and early intervention provision, as well as strengthening the respective schools' capacity to accommodate for the needs of pupils with SEBD by expanding mainstream teachers' understanding of SEBD and equipping them with the skills necessary to respond effectively to these difficulties (Cefai & Cooper, 2011). While Nurture Classes in Malta operate on the principles and practices espoused in this therapeutic approach to education, they have been modified to reflect the espoused values upon which the Maltese educational system is

based, making use of its existing strengths and resources (Ibid., 2011). One of the characteristics of Maltese NC, in line with the inclusive education system in the country, is that they are located in the local mainstream schools and that they operate on a part-time basis, with pupils spending only three half-days in the NC, with the remaining time spent in the mainstream classroom. Cefai and Cooper (2011) have proposed a framework for Maltese NC operating as inclusive early intervention centres for students experiencing difficulties in their social and emotional development, a resource centre for school staff

evaluation on the present NC in primary schools is being carried out.

Early intervention. The NC at Birzebbugia Primary School is housed within the mainstream school, consisting of a large classroom divided into various sections, including the play area, the learning area and the kitchen. It is run by a specially trained teacher in Nurture groups and social and emotional education, together with a learning support assistant. The class consists of a small number of early primary school students (usually around 8), aged between 5 and 7 years old, who attend the class

This is in line with the concept of the nurturing school, whereby the NC (Nurture Class) generates a positive ripple effect across the whole school, and thus the school itself becomes a nurturing community, eventually making the nurture class itself redundant (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; Reynolds, MacKay & Kearney, 2009)

in behaviour support and social and emotional education, and a centre for parental support and education. While some NC may be operating along the same lines as those described in this case study, this may not be the case with other NC, and the two authors have long argued for an assessment on the operation of NC in Malta.

Preliminary results from a number of pilot nurture groups in Maltese schools suggest that NC provide effective support for pupils with SEBD, facilitating their social emotional learning and educational engagement and their consequent inclusion in the mainstream classroom (Ibid., 2011). Presently a national

three times a week on a part time basis for one school term. The students are referred by the Head of school/Head of Pastoral Care with the consent of the parents, and they are then assessed by the NC teacher who identifies their needs and draws up learning outcomes in the form of an individual educational programme. The activities and interactions during NC time are focused on creating a safe, secure and structured learning environment where the children develop emotional security and social and emotional learning which will facilitate their engagement when they are back with their mainstream peers. Activities include circle time where students practice social and emotional

A day in the life of a Maltese Nurture Class (from Schembri-Meli, 2010)

The day started with the pupils being registered in their respective mainstream classes so that they maintain links with their own classes. This is crucial in the development of relationships between the pupils and their class teachers and peers. The nurture group staff then collected the pupils and brought them to the nurture group room. First, the nurture group and the pupils sat in a circle on a large carpet and went through the group's own register. This offered an opportunity for counting and working out simple number problems. The pupils and the staff talked about the day and the date and discussed what the weather was like. The pupils were given the possibility to express their own feelings and stick their name tags under the state of emotion that matched their feeling. Later the group discussed the time-table for the day, with the pupils following a visual time-table. Circle time was always concluded with action songs, with new songs introduced gradually so that the pupils could build on their favourite repertoire.

The literacy and numeracy sessions were based on material used in the mainstream class and were held in consultation with the respective class teachers. The pupils were given individual attention according to their specific needs.

Breakfast was shared in the kitchen and pupils were given an opportunity to practice speaking and listening skills. They laid the table and also took turns to clear up and help with the washing up. The concept of rotation for different duties helped to instill responsibility in the pupils and fairness in sharing duties.

During free play the pupils were able to choose their preferred game from the various ones available. The most popular games were board games such as snakes and ladders, sand play, and the dressing up corner. These activities enabled pupils to choose games according to their likes and individuality while promoting team work and creativity at the same time.

During the brain gym sessions, the pupils engaged in a series of simple physical exercises coupled with clear directions of movement. The arts and crafts session boosted the pupils' self-esteem while promoting their creative skills by allowing them to express their ideas in a semi-structured, enjoyable activity. Music and drama, cooking and gardening were used alternately during this session. During storytelling, the use of social stories helped the pupils to tackle and discuss particular targeted behaviours together with the staff. The objective was to communicate ways to modify particular behaviours in a non-threatening, positive way.

A typical day at the nurture group came to an end as it started, that is, with circle time. During this time of the day, pupils and staff celebrated the successes of the day, and ended on a positive note before returning to their respective mainstream classes. This procedure boosted the pupils' self-esteem, with positive ripple effects in the mainstream classrooms

learning, structured play, art and crafts activities, and group breakfast. The relationship between the students and the NC staff is at the core of all the activities taking place in the class, serving as a scaffold for students to engage in academic learning and prosocial behaviour. Other mechanisms underlying the

operation of the NC include the relationship between the staff themselves serving as role model of social and emotional learning, positive reinforcement of targeted behaviours, and active engagement in practical, hands-on and developmentally-appropriate activities.

Support to school staff. The NC staff also work in close collaboration with the mainstream classroom staff to ensure continuity of support, so that mainstream staff are clear about the aims of the NC, and remain actively involved in the education of the students. The NC staff hold frequent discussions with the

whole school in the provision of breakfast and lunch clubs, the latter for students in need, and the former for the whole school. They also support the after school Club 3+, where children are able to remain at the school to do their homework, art and crafts, cooking, and similar activities.

Parents are welcome to visit the NC (Nurture Class) and they can attend the activities taking place there, such as circle time sessions

class teachers, while the NC LSA also provides support to the NC students in their mainstream classroom. The NC staff also provide their expertise to the mainstream staff in social and emotional education and behaviour management in various ways, such as providing consultation and peer support to individual members of staff, holding staff training in circle time and behaviour management, and conducting whole school initiatives in emotional literacy and positive behaviour support. This is in line with the

Parental education. The NC staff also work closely with the students' parents, seeking to collaborate closely with them in the education of their children as well as supporting parents through information, parental education, family support, as well as material support, such as the provision of books, stationary, a school uniform and school lunch, when needed. They are also referred to the available support services in the community, both for their children and for the family as a whole. Parents are welcome to visit the NC

I feel that on a school level there has been a change in behaviour. The children are more aware of how they should act in school (Classroom Teacher)

concept of the nurturing school, whereby the NC generates a positive ripple effect across the whole school, and thus the school itself becomes a nurturing community, eventually making the nurture class itself redundant (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; Reynolds, MacKay & Kearney, 2009). The NC staff also liaises with the

and they can attend the activities taking place there, such as circle time sessions. They are also frequently informed about the progress of their children. In this way the NC also operates as a centre for parental education, although this is limited to the parents of the children attending the class.

Staff's and students' experience of CT in a primary school in Malta (from Pace, 2012)

There are a lot of things that are different (since the introduction of CT). If you look at behaviour, the children have changed. If you look at self-esteem, there were parents who told me their children got better. I had children who didn't want to come to school and now they are coming. Children are more cooperative with each other. Sometimes children used to come to my office and tell me that they fought with each other. Many of those children aren't coming anymore. Also one teacher told me how much the children are now listening to each other. (Head of School)

I feel that on a school level there has been a change in behaviour. The children are more aware of how they should act in school... Before I started Circle Time in class, there were children who bullied others. Others resorted to challenging and aggressive behaviour. I feel that the children in my class are opening up more. The children also learned different strategies like anger management strategies or walking away from children who make them angry instead of fighting. (Classroom Teacher)

Before Circle Time the children did not listen to each other. I feel that now they are observing what is happening in class more, they are using problem-solving strategies and are coming up with the solutions themselves...(Classroom teacher)

Before we started doing Circle Time, there was a lot of fighting and competition in class. They became more aware of issues such as bullying, fighting and teasing. In Circle Time we dealt with these topics in a positive and proactive way. The fighting decreased. (Classroom teacher)

I liked the activity when we had to be responsible for a friend in class for a week. I took care of a friend and a friend took care of me (Student)

I liked it when we changed places because I used to sit next to different people and I managed to make new friends...We learnt about teasing and about bullying and what should we do when we see someone hurting someone else. (Student)

I learned new words about feelings and I can understand why I feel in different ways sometimes. (Student)

We did activities on how each person has good things like for example I am good in Maths and my friend is good in drawing and how we could help each other. (Student).

Circle Time. The NC also runs Circle Time (CT) sessions both at a universal level (whole mainstream class) and through targeted interventions (with a small group of identified students). The NC staff has three types of CT programmes at the school, namely a universal intervention programme, a targeted intervention programme, and a mixed programme. The first is a CT programme for whole classrooms, which usually takes place

through referral by the classroom teacher, with the NC teacher holding a CT session in the mainstream classroom with the participation of the classroom teacher. One session is held every week for one school term. The programme focuses on particular social and emotional competencies according to the needs of the group, such as bullying, problem solving and conflict resolution, and collaboration. Similar but shorter sessions are held

with the kindergarten classes, with a particular focus on strategies such as singing, storytelling and the use of puppets. Sometimes these sessions focus on particular social and emotional skills addressing concerns raised by the kindergarten assistants about the behaviour of particular children. Again these are held for one whole school term. In both

lar meetings at the college, including case conferences on the provision of psycho-educational support for students experiencing learning difficulties and/or SEBD, either making use of resources from within the college itself or by referral to external support services, such as psychological services, social workers, youth workers, and family therapy.

(The drama project) encouraged both teachers and parents to listen more and to provide their children with more opportunities to voice their feelings, thoughts and ideas (Ms Audrey)

these programmes the mainstream classroom staff are also present and they continue to build on the CT skills during and after the completion of the programme. The NC staff also organises a CT programme for a small number of older children (junior primary school, 9–11 years) in the NC classroom. The students are referred by the classroom teachers and the Assistant Head for Pastoral Care and the programme is developed according to the students' needs. Frequent areas of intervention include anger management, problem solving skills and conflict resolution. Weekly sessions of 45 minutes are held over one school term.

Transdisciplinary working. The NC staff also works closely with the school administration, particularly the Assistant Head responsible for Pastoral Care, as well as the College Interdisciplinary Team. The College Team is formed of a number of professionals such as vocational guidance teachers, school counselor, prefect of discipline⁷, and inclusion coordinator, and it works on both policy development and implementation, as well as on providing support for individual children experiencing difficulties. The team holds regu-

lar meetings at the college, including case conferences on the provision of psycho-educational support for students experiencing learning difficulties and/or SEBD, either making use of resources from within the college itself or by referral to external support services, such as psychological services, social workers, youth workers, and family therapy.

Drama for social and emotional education. The NC is also participating in a school drama project focused on the daily challenges of students and their families, with the aim of equipping the children with the requisite skills to cope with such challenges. A group of children from the school, including some of those attending the NC and the CT programmes, first brainstormed and discussed personal and family issues and how to address those challenges, and then wrote down their reflections in a journal with the help of the staff. The objectives of the brainstorming sessions and group discussion were to enable students to become more aware of the different difficulties that can be faced in a family, to understand more deeply the different challenges of their own families, to learn to address difficult situations more positively, and to share experiences and acknowledge that all families go through difficult periods in life. The students then used their journals to write, together with the drama teacher, a sketch with two endings, one positive and



A drawing of their family by one of the pupils who took part in the project

one negative, to facilitate discussion following the role play. The journal writing was intended to encourage the students to become more self-reflective, develop their analytic and problem solving skills, enhance their intra- and inter-personal skills, and to develop positive and constructive solutions. The children then filmed the sketch and presented it to the NC students, who discussed the play and the two endings with the help of the staff, underlining the most appropriate ending. A song with lyrics related to the theme was also performed during the drama session for the NC (see box below). Through drama the students were expected to enhance their listening and concentration skills, to develop more self awareness, to strengthen their language and communication skills, to build their confidence through creativity and positive collaboration, and to discover the art of script- and song-writing. The students then participated in an arts and crafts session where they developed a number of artefacts related to the theme of the play, which were then exhibited at the school. The Art and Craft activity was intended to help the pupils develop higher thinking skills, build their self esteem, gain positive emotional responses to learning, engage in a variety of learning styles, and develop entrepreneurial skills through the production of their own craft-work. Ms. Audrey, NC teacher and one of the school's project coordinators, describes her thoughts on the outcomes of the project:

I Will Be Here

Lyrics by pupils of the Drama Group
Music by Ms Isabella Incorvaja

Your smile fills my heart with joy.
 I love to hear your laughter.
 I'm glad to have you in my life.
 We'll walk this road together.

When I look at you I see
 The beauty that surrounds you.
 You are a precious gift to me.
 You always carry me through.

Chorus: I'm here for you
 When you stumble when you fall.
 Take my hand.
 Take my hand
 And I'll help you conquer all.
 I will always be your friend.
 Will be with you till the end.

In your arms I safely rest
 I know how much you care.
 Through the tears, through life's many
 storms.
 You will always be there.

When you feel like you're alone
 You don't have to look afar.
 Here beside you standing I will be
 Will be right where you are.

Chorus: I'm here for you...

I will listen when you speak
 I will hold you when you cry
 I will smile when you are smiling
 Will be your stronghold till I die

Chorus: I'm here for you...

A poem by the school's drama group for the project

The children's participation was active and enthusiastic. All the written material was originally processed and written by the pupils themselves. This included the writing of the script of a sketch, the lyrics of a song, and the making of a big book. The children had the opportunity to voice their thoughts and enhance their creative talents. The weaving of the children's ideas was appreciated and commended by everyone present during the Literacy Evening organised by the College. The pupils' efforts and hard work were received by comments of praise and appreciation. The event was enjoyed by all, including students, parents, and educators. The whole project inspired educators to reflect more on their attitude towards childhood. It encouraged both teachers and parents to listen more and to provide their children with more opportunities to voice their feelings, thoughts and ideas. Most importantly, students with different academic levels from different social backgrounds teamed up and were all included in this beautiful celebration of talents, ideas and resourcefulness.

Case study 2: St Martin's College: a pioneer in inclusion, diversity and wellbeing

Our high standards of teaching for learning are embedded within an enquiry-based, knowledge-rich and inclusive environment. We plan stimulating and active learning experiences that arouse curiosity and fire the imagination. By developing emotional intelligence, encouraging effective communication and critical thinking, learners become responsible and autonomous. Every member of the community aspires to be a collaborative and creative lifelong learner able to confidently face new challenges in a fast-changing world (from the School's Mission Statement)

St Martin's College is an independent middle and senior school established about 20 years ago in Malta as an extension of an Early Years and Junior School founded about one hundred years ago. Together they form the largest independent educational establishment on the island, one of the first secondary schools in Malta to offer mixed ability and co-education. St Martin's College was purpose built in 1993 in a newly developed area in the centre of the island, according to the requirements of a leading modern college. Besides Maltese students, the college hosts students from 47 different nationalities (20% of the whole school population), with English being the language of instruction at the school. The middle and senior schools at St Martin's have a population of over 500 students, consisting of Levels 6, 7, 8 (10-13 years old) (Middle School) and Levels 9, 10, 11 (13-16 years old) (Senior School), and a staff complement of 100, including school administration, support staff, classroom teachers and learning support assistants. There are about 20 students in each classroom. The school is a fee paying independent school with the majority of students coming from the higher socio-economic, professional groups.

St Martin's College seeks to offer a broad based and well balanced curriculum, seeking "to remain at the cutting edge of educational development...with a strong academic team ensuring continuity and innovation in both content and delivery" (from the School Prospectus, 2014). At the same time, however, the school has invested heavily in creating a school ethos and climate promoting the wellbeing and social and emotional growth of its students. The following section describes some of the initiatives taken by the school in social and emotional education.

*School was fun, it was n't dull.
Always bright with delight,*

*Level 8 was so great.
If only I could do it again and again.
(13 year old student)*

Inclusion. “Inclusion is at the heart of the school ethos. The inclusive approach centres on students and their specific needs, recognising that all children learn in a different way and at different rates” (from the school’s website). Well before the introduction of comprehensive college-based secondary education in Malta, St Martin’s College was one of the few mixed ability secondary schools on the island. The college seeks to address the diverse individual educational needs of students by providing a differentiated curriculum in mixed ability, inclusive classrooms. It provides an Alternative Learning Programme, led by an inclusion coordinator and including a team of specialists, where students with particular educational needs are provided with individual attention and small group intervention by specialist teachers. The Programme ensures that the needs of the student and his/her family are recognized, that the environment is adapted to reflect individual students’ needs, that services are coordinated to ensure that the needs of the student and their family are adequately met, and that staff are provided with continuing support and education in working with students with individual educational needs.

While co-education at a national level is being introduced in Malta in 2014-2015, St. Martin’s has been one of the few co-educational secondary schools on the island in the past decades. Co-education has been described by the school support staff as a very positive experience for the school, contributing to the formation and healthy development of the adolescent students at a crucial phase in their development. While the school faces challenges related to behavior problems or learning difficulties, these are not related to co-education as

feared by some other schools which are wary of co-education.

*When I first arrived at the school I was worried that I would have a hard time fitting in. However, I have a great group of friends and I have become closer to the other students in my class. The teachers are very helpful and kind. Due to this, I enjoy lessons at school, as the teachers are understanding and make the students feel comfortable. My favourite lesson would have to be drama, as it is a subject I’m interested in, and our drama teacher comes up with unique ways to make our drama lessons more interesting
(12 year old student)*

Personal, social and health education (PSHE). This is a timetabled mandatory subject for all students, with a number of lessons per week. The content areas include amongst others, self awareness and understanding, peer pressure, responsible decision making, relationships, sexuality and sexual health, drugs education, citizenship education, and careers education. Lessons are child centred and experiential, with no formal assessment. The topics in both middle and senior school are the same ones as those in state schools, as described earlier in the section on PSD. In both middle and senior schools, PSHE also includes career guidance and education, study skills, and preparing for transitions. Students are also given the opportunity to spend two to three days in the college’s dormitories (called Lived-Ins) participating in themed educational and recreational activities together.

Pastoral Care Team. The school’s Pastoral Care Team (PCT) consists of the Pastoral Care coordinator, the Head of School, the school counselor, career guidance teachers, year coordinators called level coordinators and form tutors. It has two main roles, one

Virtue and Ethics Education Programme

(adapted from <http://chs.edu.mt/>)

This programme seeks to provide all learners, regardless of their belief system, a holistic education that leads to a process of self-discovery which nurtures and enhances a sense of moral and spiritual self, contributes towards their capacity to value, appreciate, perceive and interpret the world they live in, encourages an appreciation of the dignity of the human being and the responsibility of each individual towards others for the building of a better society, and promotes values that include justice, personal responsibility, respect, reflection and active engagement in moral issues.

It seeks to nurture the learners' character by encouraging them to become virtuous agents by formulating, exploring and becoming committed to the question of "Who should I become within the context I live in?" By exploring one's own and one's family's belief system, as well as the concepts, narratives and practical wisdom developed by different individuals and human communities through an inquiry-based learning approach, learners will be able to connect to their human nature in order to fulfil their unique potential.

Through **Symbol Literacy** learners are empowered to connect and relate to their contextual realities, seeking to answer such questions as: What is a good reason? What constitutes a fair society? Why does a global world create groups? The **Spiritual Dimension** seeks to raise issues that may answer such questions as: What do animals need to live good lives? Does anyone own the forests, oceans and the atmosphere? How should we treat living things? Finally, in developing **Character and Virtues**, learners will seek to answer such questions as: When should we give reasons? What are secrets and when and why is it OK to share them? What is prudence? Why is patience important in the modern world?

focused on all the development of all the pupils in the school, and the other targeted at students experiencing SEBD. In its first role, the team seeks to promote a whole school approach to social and emotional education, such as organizing events at the school (e.g.

level. A long term goal of the PCT is that of 'anchoring' the social and emotional skills learnt during PSHE lessons in the whole school, linking what is happening in the classrooms and the school through a more coherent and integrated approach to social

(The Pastoral Care Team) carries out a needs analysis of the school in social and emotional education every year through which policies, staff education and interventions are then planned and implemented

Kindness Week, Disability Week, Wellbeing Week), developing policies, and broadening the PSHE curriculum issues at a whole school

and emotional education. The second role is focused on targeted interventions for 'students of concern', particularly students

The School of Performing Arts (adapted from <http://chs.edu.mt/>)

Originally a summer school for theatre arts, the school has been offering comprehensive theatre training to children and young people for about 15 years. It provides students with a safe and exciting environment where they are able to grow, create and gain self confidence while honing their artistic skills. The courses aim to develop vocal and physical expression, stimulate imagination, nurture ensemble work and strengthen concentration skills. Above all, we aim to boost young people's self esteem while having a fantastic time doing so! Classes are delineated according to age (4 to 18 years) and ability (Beginner Level to Company). Lessons range from acting and improvisation to music appreciation, ballet to hip hop, singing to drums. All course content is appropriate to age and ability, and aims to expose our young artists to various genres and styles of theatre arts. Open classes are held annually in order to give parents the opportunity to watch their children at work, while newsletters and assessments provide regular information about school activities and student progress.

experiencing high levels of stress or exhibiting behavioural difficulties. This role includes discussions, case conferences, assessment, intervention referrals to agencies, collaboration with parents, and extra support provided by the PSHE teachers. The approach is child-centred and focused on encouraging the child to take responsibility for his or her behaviour and its consequences. The PCT underlines the key role of the classroom teacher in resolving behaviour issues through a staged, positive behaviour management approach, making use of behaviour incidents as opportunities for learning social and emotional skills and positive behaviour. It also works around supporting the child as well as the child's family. The team meets once a week to discuss issues arising from these two aspects of its remit. It carries out a needs analysis of the school in social and emotional education every year through which policies, staff education and interventions are then planned and implemented.

Our school is busy and always bursting with activity...the teachers are demanding but fun and I mostly enjoy participating in break time fairs, the Langfest, the Junior Chef course and several other organised activities. This year I joined the

drama trip and spent a week in London. What an amazing experience. Roll on next year.
(12 year old student)

Year 8 became a family in just a few months. It was inspiring to learn about our plan for the future and preparing us for Senior School.
(13 year old student).

Creativity and Value-integrated Sports. Drama, art, music and film making activities feature regularly in the school's timetable, and are a key medium for the promotion of social and emotional education, particularly in self awareness, self expression and self regulation. Over the summer months, the school also organises courses in drama, singing, ballet, jazz, hip-hop, dancing, circus skills, singing and recording, puppetry, make-up skills, prop-making, 'improvising Shakespeare', and short film production. At the end of the programme, students are given the option to participate in a mini production or a concert. Other initiatives include drama productions for the public, art exhibitions, and drama trips abroad. The school also pays particular attention to the students' physical development with sporting activities of all

types organized during breaks and during afternoon programmes and the summer school. The Value-integrated Sports programme seeks to inculcate values such as participation, teamwork, and respect towards opponents, colleagues and officials, through sports. The programme seeks to promote a culture amongst students that sport is not just about performance but about finding a balance between performance and teamwork.

Our drama classes are out of this world, you have inspired me and given me confidence to enjoy drama. I cherish the monologues I've written and learned and will keep them at the tip of my tongue, one never knows when one needs to recite a piece off the cuff!
(12 year old student).

Parental Coaching. The school has recently introduced a parental coaching programme where a parenting coach provides training, education, and psycho-educational support to referred parents, in cases of transitions, life

Everyone on staff has been wonderful to both William (not real name) and myself, and the teachers have been really fantastic as well, they truly appreciated him for who he was. They didn't try to stifle his creativity or his sense of humour. I also really appreciate the consideration for his issues with ADD, and will miss the benefits and philosophy of the school
(a parent of a 12 year old student).

Case Study 3: Primary schools as resilience-building communities

A semi-ethnographic, grounded theory project was undertaken by this author in three primary schools in Malta, seeking to unravel the mechanisms underlying the promotion of social and emotional education in the classroom. Extended participant observations were carried out in various classrooms in three schools which were operating as optimal learning environments and healthy social and emotional contexts for students, while semi-structured interviews were also held with classroom teachers, students and the school administrative staff. The study sought to capture the

The school has recently introduced a parental coaching programme where a parenting coach provides training, education, and psycho-educational support to referred parents ...

events and family stress and difficulties. Self awareness as parents, understanding children, making decisions and responding effectively to challenging situations, are some of the issues addressed during coaching. Parents are coached to reach agreed targets, through discussing the options available, making informed choices and developing and implementing a plan of action.

processes taking place in these classrooms and how these contributed to the promotion of positive social, emotional and academic behaviours amongst all the students in the classroom, including vulnerable ones.

Profile of the three schools⁸.

St Anthony's is a medium-sized primary school in an affluent town in the centre of the island, serving a relatively mixed community

although more pupils come from the higher socio-economic groups. It has a student population of 500, with about 25 classes ranging from the kindergarten to Year 6 (age 11, final primary year), and a staff complement of 40 including administration, clerical staff, class teachers, kindergarten assistants, and learning support assistants. One characteristic of the school is the spacious, welcoming and student friendly environment, with murals of fairy tales and pupils' work exhibited in all parts of the school. Apart from a large, well equipped hall for whole school activities, the school boasts a library and a resource centre for teachers and pupils. The school has developed a reputation as a centre of excellence in student achievement, high staff commitment, and parental involvement.

St Mark's is a small primary school in the inner harbour area, a region with relative high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. It has a school population of about 200 students, with 15 classes, - with an average of 16 students per class,- and a total staff complement of around 30. The school has a large

investing in staff education, and recruiting parents' active involvement and support.

St Joan's is a relatively large primary school in the north of the island, with a student population of over 600, with most students coming from low socio-economic groups and from different cultural backgrounds. There are more than 30 classes with an average class size of 20 and a staff complement of 50. The school is spacious, with a large playground, a library, a resource centre and a large auditorium where school activities are held regularly. It has taken a number of initiatives to improve pupils' learning and behaviour, such as promoting inclusion and celebration of diversity in view of the considerable number of students with different nationalities, recruiting the support of specialist teachers, professionals and parents in students' learning and behaviour, and participating in national and international projects.

Schools as resilience enhancing contexts. A universal framework was developed from the study on how the classroom context may be organised in a way which promotes social

In resilience enhancing classrooms, classroom members are connected to each other, forming part of a 'common house of belonging'

playground and a state-of-the-art complementary teaching room where students with learning difficulties receive literacy support, while students' work is exhibited in the main entrance hall and the school's corridors. The school has engaged in a number of initiatives to improve student learning, attendance and behaviour, such as reducing class size, increasing specialist support for literacy difficulties, providing adequate support to students experiencing psychosocial difficulties,

and emotional learning and resilience amongst all students in the classroom. The framework construes classrooms as caring and inclusive learning communities, characterised by caring and supportive relationships, an ethic of support and solidarity, active and meaningful student engagement, collaboration amongst classroom members, inclusion of all students in the learning and social processes, positive beliefs and high expectations on the part of the teachers, and student

autonomy and participation in decision making. These processes are explained in more detail in the following section, illustrated with students' and teachers' own narratives.

Caring and connecting relationships. In resilience enhancing classrooms, classroom members are connected to each other, forming part of a 'common house of belonging'. Students feel safe, valued and trusted. They are supported in their learning and are encouraged to support each other. Teachers take on a dual role as effective and nurturing educators, supporting students' learning and academic success, while seeking to address their socio-affective needs. They appreciate the need to know the students well and to adapt their methods according to their needs. They reach out to their students, showing interest and respect, listening to their stories and concerns, expressing warmth and encouragement, providing nurture and support, and underlining their potential and strengths. They invest heavily in building relationships and in creating teaching and learning experiences within a culture of care.

We like her (classroom teacher) because she is always joking with us...explains everything so that we can understand... When I make a mistake she does not shout at me... Even if we are many pupils, the teacher still takes care of us. (James, a 9 year old student at St Mark's Primary School).

My target is to win them over, then we can work together for the whole year. But I emphasise that they are very important for me, that I care for them as individuals, they are not just numbers in a group; what happens to them in their life is also important for me. (Ms. Maria, Year 4 teacher at St. Mark's Primary School).

I am very open with them...and I try to be friends with them and help them behave better... Last year I had three difficult boys...but...the classroom climate helped them, I talked with one of them and I told him, I want us to become good friends because we have to work together. (Ms. Maria, Year 4 teacher at St. Mark's Primary School).

An ethic of support and solidarity. Care, support, solidarity, collaboration, respect and celebration of diversity are the key values underlining student behaviour in the classroom. Students care for and support each other, and they work and play together collaboratively. They solve conflicts amicably and constructively. Instead of competing with each other, they help each other with their work. Supporting one another is a celebrated classroom value, competition is discouraged, and bullying and put downs are not tolerated. Peer mentoring, peer tutoring and buddy systems are key practices in the daily life of the classroom community.

We share between us...we help each other to finish work...we play together and do projects together...we help each other to finish early so that we can learn more... We work in all sorts of ways, but we like it most when we work as a team. (A group of 9 year old students at St Joan's Primary School).

I do stories on helping one another, forgiving others, making friends, respecting one another, accepting each other, solving conflicts peacefully. I choose appealing books with pictures suited to the pupils' level, but occasionally I download the stories from the internet, invent the stories myself or make use of stories the pupils themselves might have written as part of their class or home work. I use many animal stories as children love

animals and relate very easily with them.
(Ms. Bernie, Year 2 teacher at St Joan's Primary School).

Although I prepare work beforehand, I do a lot of spontaneous teaching and activities according to the situation.
(Ms. Gertrude, Year 4 teacher at St. Anthony's Primary School)

Active and genuine student engagement. Students are provided with opportunities for real engagement in the classroom activities. They participate actively and enthusiastically in experiential and meaningful activities that make use of student-centred and activity-based instructional strategies connected to the students' own life experiences. Learning is an enjoyable, inherently motivating, authentic process. The focus is on learning rather than just performance, away from the excessive emphasis on academic pressure and examinations. The celebration of the students' and group's achievements and efforts is a common practice. There is space for both Head and Heart in the classroom, a dual focus on academic and social and emotional learning.

'Everybody participates, everybody enjoys it, no one is bored in our class.'
(Mario, 7 year old student at St Joan's Primary).

Although I prepare work beforehand, I do a lot of spontaneous teaching and activities according to the situation. I prefer to go with the flow of the children, using spontaneous and creative improvisation...and I take ideas from children themselves because sometimes children teach you themselves.
(Ms. Gertrude, Year 4 teacher at St. Anthony's Primary School).

Inclusion and success for all. All students are included in the academic and social activities

taking place in the classroom. Classroom membership is open to all irrespective of any difference in ability, background, interest or any other student characteristic. All students feel an important part of the community, and they have the opportunity to participate in the activities and to be successful in their learning. Support is made available to students with learning, social, behavioural and emotional difficulties through individual attention, peer support and additional support. Teachers encourage the practice of respecting and helping each other and frequently act as role models for such behaviours themselves. They have high but reasonable expectations for all their students and genuinely believe that all students under their care have the potential to be successful.

We did an exhibition together...and we went to show it to the Head and she was pleased with us, and we congratulated each other, and I was also happy that the others did something nice as we
(Andrew, 9 year old pupil at St Joan's Primary School).

Everybody is good in this class not only me... Everybody has something special...pupils who finish work quickly, others who have many friends.
(Paul, a 9 year old student in St Anthony's Primary School).

We respect each pupil as an individual with his or her own needs, whoever he or she is... I think this is one of the important characteristics of this school... For me it is very important that we work all together, everybody, no distinction between good and weak, in fact those who are ready then help those who are still working.
(Ms. Maria, Year 4 teacher at St Mark's Primary School).

We are very united as a staff. I really liked to work with my colleagues this year... We fit like a jigsaw puzzle in our work...it worked out really well for both of us and for the pupils. (Ms. Gertrude, Year 4 teacher at St Anthony's School)

Collaborative learning and working. The students are supported to work collaboratively and construct learning experiences together. They do not compete with each other and do not need to measure their learning and achievement against those of their peers. All students contribute to the group tasks, each according to his or her own ability, and are rewarded for positive interdependent work and effort. The use of small group work and pair work, the recognition and celebration of the group's efforts and achievements, the discouragement of competition, the emphasis on learning for all, the teamwork between the class teacher and other adults in the classroom, such as Learning Support Assistants, and the collaboration between the class teacher and the parents, are all processes which help to promote collective and interdependent communities.

I like to work in groups because it is like you are building something, one knows something, another something else...and also because in a group you share and help others and you feel happy helping and doing group work.

(Albert, a 9 year old student at St Anthony's Primary School).

I don't like pupils competing with each other for grades. I discourage them from doing it and emphasise that we learn together. For instance, during group work I give a group rather than an individual score.

(Ms. Pauline, Year 4 teacher at St Anthony's Primary School).

We are very united as a staff. I really liked to work with my colleagues this year... Even when I am at home preparing, I phone them and tell them, look we are going to do this next week, let us meet...working together as a team sharing and exchanging material...we keep close contact with each other all the time...we adjust the lessons together to make sure we work in unison... We fit like a jigsaw puzzle in our work...it worked out really well for both of us and for the pupils.

(Ms. Gertrude, Year 4 teacher at St Anthony's School).

Choice, voice and high expectations. The students are provided with opportunities where they can be influential and autonomous in their learning. They are consulted on classroom activities and behaviours, given choices in their work, and valued as learners and individuals through recognition, positive beliefs and high expectations. Opportunities and encouragement for the students to set their own learning goals and direction, to evaluate their own learning, to make choices on how to behave and contribute to classroom rules, to find their own solutions to difficulties and conflicts, and to take roles of responsibility and leadership, address the students' basic need for autonomy. The recognition of students' efforts and achievements, the promotion of their academic and non-academic strengths, and the opportunity to be successful, help to affirm students' belief in themselves as able learners.

I like it when we make a mistake and we have to do it again, instead of the teacher giving me the answer, and similarly when we go to help others with their work, we also don't give them the answer...and in extra work we just do it ourselves, the teacher tells us: 'You don't need to come to me.'

(Jeremy, a 9 year old student at St Joan's Primary School).

One of the things the teacher tells us all the time is to try things out, not to give up. She says, 'If there is a difficult sum, we have to win, not the sum, we must not be afraid, we have to use our brains'...and when it is examination time, she tells us not to be afraid... I had many difficulties in Years 1 and 3 but with this Miss I have made a great improvement.

(Amanda, a 9 year old student at St. Joan's Primary School).

I involve the pupils in everything that happens in the classroom... We used to say that children are to be seen but not heard...but I listen to the pupils, it is important to listen to them, and let them express themselves. I do Circle Time in my class and pupils are given time to have their say, to express themselves, it works very well, the pupils love it. When somebody misbehaves, I make it a point to listen to what he or she has to say, and if I am wrong, I admit it...

(Ms. Erika, Year 3 teacher at St Joan's Primary School).

A multilevel, school-based framework for social and emotional education

Since independence fifty years ago, the Maltese educational system has undergone considerable growth and development as the country sought to adopt a system suited to its needs as a developing small island state. Various ongoing national, college and school level

reforms have taken place regularly during these years, seeking to provide high quality education for all children and young people. The new National Curriculum Framework (Minister of Education, Employment and Family, 2012) provides a roadmap for an inclusive, humanistic, democratic and equitable system of education, underlining the provision of an appropriate entitlement of learning to enable all Maltese children and young people to reach their full potential as autonomous citizens. There is still a long way to go however, before the vision enshrined in the curriculum framework and other documents is actually translated into effective practice in schools and classrooms. Inclusive education has gone a long way to provide more access and opportunity to children with disability and learning difficulties, with Malta having one of the highest rates for mainstreaming in the EU. As mentioned earlier, however, ensuring the full participation of all students within a comprehensive school system, including vulnerable and disadvantaged children, remains one of the current challenges. As Maltese society becomes increasingly more diverse and multicultural, schools need to invest more in the development of more effective practices promoting inclusion, equity and social justice. Early school leaving still poses a significant challenge, remaining the highest in the EU, while absenteeism and literacy problems in particular communities and localities are a cause for concern. The relatively poor results of Maltese students in reading, mathematics and science when compared to international standards have raised considerable concerns about the performance of Maltese students despite the high investment in education at a national level. In the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) amongst secondary school students in 74 countries, Malta was placed in the 45th position in reading, 40th position in Mathematics, and 41st position in Science, all three below the EU

and OECD averages (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2013a). The International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) ranked Malta 40th out of 50 countries in science and 28th in mathematics (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2013c), while in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Malta was placed in 35th position out of 45 countries in literacy and

bored and stressed by a performance-driven, competitive system. Within such a model of education, a broader, social and emotional education, has little currency, and may even be seen as a waste of time and resources. School staff and parents, for instance, may have doubts about the relevance of social and emotional education to academic learning, and may see it as taking precious time away

As Maltese society becomes increasingly more diverse and multicultural, schools needs to invest more in the development of more effective practices promoting inclusion, equity and social justice

reading skills (Ministry for Education and Employment (2013b). These results underlined the deficits of the Maltese education system in developing higher order cognitive skills such as creative and critical thinking, problem solving skills and enquiry based learning, due to its focus on lower order cognitive skills such as memory work and simple transmission of knowledge (Carabott, 2013).

There is also the danger that efforts to raise the academic standards of Maltese students to bring them more in line with European and international standards may lead, even if inadvertently, to a return to a culture of competition, examinations, and selection, with schools driven by the ‘science of deliverology’ to deliver results and reach set targets and performance indicators (Pring, 2012). International standards such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS could turn out to become another League of Tables, underlining the segregation of rich and poor into separate schools resulting from competition (Ibid., 2012), with children and young people being

from the latter which may lead to lower achievement (Benninga et al., 2006). The evidence shows, however, that a focus on social and emotional processes in education does not weaken or detract from achievement. On the contrary, social and emotional education is at the heart of teaching and learning, providing a foundation upon which effective learning and success can be built and social and emotional learning developed. It promotes academic achievement, engagement, positive behaviour and healthy relationships (Dix et al., 2012; Durlak et al., 2011; Payton et al., 2008) and acts as an antidote against both internalised and externalised problems (Battistich et al., 2004; Blank et al., 2009; Waddell et al., 2007). It enables students to regulate their emotions, cope better with classroom demands and frustrations, solve problems more effectively and relate better and work more collaboratively with others (Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg and Rhoades 2008).

There is also the ongoing debate on the ‘rise of therapeutic education’, with concerns

(Social and emotional education) promotes academic achievement, engagement, positive behaviour and healthy relationships (Dix et al., 2012; Durlak et al., 2011; Payton et al., 2008) and acts as an antidote against both internalised and externalised problems (Battistich et al., 2004; Blank et al., 2009; Waddell et al., 2007)

about the potential labelling and stigmatising of vulnerable children through the introduction of social and emotional learning programmes, particularly programmes targeting specific groups of children, such as Nurture Classes (cf. Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009; Watson, Emery & Bayliss, 2012). In addition it is argued that education is not about mental health and wellbeing, and that teachers are educators and not surrogate psychologists or mental health workers (Craig, 2009). This is a particularly salient point in contexts where teachers face increasing pressure to ensure ever higher levels of academic performance. Social and emotional education, however, does not equate with mental health difficulties or with turning schools into therapeutic centres. The traditional deficit discourse may have hijacked the idea of what social and emotional education is about, namely promoting wellbeing and maximizing growth and potential for all children, including those facing risks in their development. It is about preparing children and young people for the tests of life in the twenty first century, leading to the formation of academically, socially and emotionally literate young people who have the skills and emotional resilience necessary to navigate the uncertain but fast moving present and future (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014, Cooper and Cefai, 2009). Children and young people will need to be creative in problem solving and effective in decision making in their academic and social

tasks, to build and maintain healthy, supportive and collaborative relationships, to mobilize their personal resources in times of difficulty, and sustain their psychological and social wellbeing. Within this perspective, the goals of education become both cognitive and affective, and teachers are effective and caring educators in both academic and social and emotional learning. As Martin Seligman and colleagues put it (2009), for centuries schools have been about accomplishment, “the boulevard into the world of adult work...imagine if schools could, without compromising either, teach the skills of wellbeing and the skills of achievement”.

In the line of the present needs and strengths of the Maltese educational system as well as the evidence emerging from the international literature, this chapter concludes with a framework for a whole school approach to social and emotional education. The framework proposes a positive health and wellbeing perspective of child learning and development, depathologising mental health, and positioning school staff as effective and caring educators in both academic and social and emotional education. It underlines the need for a whole school, multilevel and school based approach to social and emotional education, focusing on health promotion, prevention and targeted interventions involving the whole school community in collaboration with the parents, the local community

and the external support services (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014). Such an approach consists of the following components:

- Explicit and regular teaching of evidence based and culturally responsive social and emotional education as a core competence, with a set curriculum, available resources and trained staff to support consistency and adequacy of delivery. The structured teaching of social and emotional learning takes place throughout the school years, involving a similar process to that of other academic skills, with increasing complexity of behaviour, and social contexts requiring particular skills at each developmental level.
- Infusion of the social and emotional competencies into the other academic subjects in the curriculum in a structured way, thus reinforcing the competencies across the curriculum.
- A positive classroom climate where students feel safe and cared for, and where they have the opportunity to practice the social and emotional skills being learned; classroom relationships are the key to a positive classroom climate.
- A whole-school approach where the school community, together with parents and the local community, promotes social and emotional education in all aspects of the school, and where the skills addressed in the classroom are promoted and reinforced at the whole-school level in a structured and complementary way.
- Parental involvement and collaboration in promoting and reinforcing the learnt social and emotional skills at home.
- Targeted interventions: a staged, school-based approach with the onus on the school, in partnership with professionals, parents, services and the community, to provide the necessary support for students experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). This requires integrated, interagency working, with professionals and services working collaboratively together and with parents, school staff and the students themselves, where possible at the school, to support the social and emotional needs of children and young people. Provisions for students experiencing SEBD provide a continuum of services and settings matched according to the needs of the child.
- Social and emotional education becomes more central in initial teacher education, with the whole faculty engaged with students at curricular and cross curricular levels, both in providing social and emotional education for universal and targeted interventions, as well as supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the student teachers themselves. This will be sustained in continuing professional learning in social and emotional education provided regularly by schools for their staff.
- The social and emotional wellbeing of the staff and parents themselves also needs to be addressed within a whole school approach. For adults to be able to teach, role model and reinforce social and emotional education, they first need to be socially and emotionally literate and healthy themselves. This requires support structures which provide information and education for staff and parents in developing and maintaining their own social and emotional learning, wellbeing and health.
- Any social and emotional education initiative undertaken by schools requires a needs assessment to match the intervention to the needs of the school. This includes identifying existing good practice at the school and incorporating it into the initiative. The school also makes provision for organisational supports and policies to safeguard the success and sustainability of the initiative, including supportive management, active participation by the whole school community in

Becoming a citizen of the twenty first century requires a ‘change in consciousness’, away from performance, competition and sheer individualism to human growth, development, learning, collaboration, justice and peace (Cefai and Cavioni, 2014; Clouder, 2008; Noddings, 2012)

planning and implementation, provision of adequate resources, and alignment with regional and school policies.

- Finally any initiative needs to be monitored, evaluated and improved regularly at individual, classroom and whole-school levels.

Conclusion

Becoming a citizen of the twenty first century requires a ‘change in consciousness’, away from performance, competition and sheer individualism to human growth, development, learning, collaboration, justice and peace (Cefai and Cavioni, 2014; Clouder, 2008; Noddings, 2012). Martin Seligman (2009) calls this a ‘new prosperity’, one that combines health with wealth, with our resources geared to generate more wellbeing. Now we have the evidence and the tools to promote this ‘new prosperity’ amongst our children’s and young people; not do to so, would be shortchanging our children by providing them with an inadequate education for the challenges and realities of the present century (Clouder, 2008).

Endnotes

- ¹ State schools in Malta are grouped into ten regional colleges, with each college responsible for all primary schools and the middle and secondary schools in the region.
- ² Post secondary schools usually cater for 16–18 year olds and provide vocational education or prepare young people for tertiary education.
- ³ The golden rules for circle time are: *We listen to people, we don’t interrupt; We are gentle, we don’t hurt others; We are kind and helpful, we don’t hurt anybody’s feelings; We work hard, we don’t waste time; We look after property, we don’t waste or damage things; We are honest, we don’t cover up the truth* (Mosley, 2009).
- ⁴ Nurture class is a special class for young primary school children experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, situated in the primary school itself, with children attending the nurture class on a part-time basis for emotional literacy sessions.
- ⁵ Peripatetic teachers who provide specialist support for young children in kindergarten and first years of primary school with individual educational needs.
- ⁶ Primary school specialist teachers who provide additional support for early primary pupils experiencing literacy difficulties.
- ⁷ The prefect of discipline is responsible for student behaviour and discipline in secondary schools, including correction of behaviour, application of disciplinary procedures in case of repeated misbehavior, and policy development, amongst others.
- ⁸ The names of the schools have been changed. Details on the profile of the school were correct at the time of data collection; for more details on the project, please see Cefai (2008).

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