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The Educator

A journal of educational matters

The objective of this annual, peer-reviewed journal is to publish research on any aspect of education. It seeks to attract contributions which help to promote debate on educational matters and present new or updated research in the field of education. Such areas of study include human development, learning, formal and informal education, vocational and tertiary education, lifelong learning, the sociology of education, the philosophy of education, the history of education, curriculum studies, the psychology of education, and any other area which is related to the field of education including teacher trade unionism.

This journal accepts articles from teachers, academics, administrators, graduate students, policy-makers, education specialists and any other author or researcher whose work contributes to the different facets of education and related areas.

It is the aim of ***The Educator*** to publish articles which cover particular dimensions such as:

- a. The integration of education with other academic disciplines including history, law, linguistics, anthropology, demography, philosophy, economics, psychology, political science, and sociology, among others.
- b. The examination of educational issues from a cross-cultural perspective.
- c. The inclusion of substantive findings that may be of help to policy-makers and practice.
- d. The examination of information technology in the field of education.
- e. The implementation of research methods and measurement processes which are clearly presented.
- f. The presentation of theories, models or conceptual frameworks in the field of education.
- g. The exposition of research findings derived from comparative and cross-national studies in education.
- h. The presentation and discussion of material derived from primary sources including archival documents, primary data and resource persons.
- i. Any other dimension which the editorial board deems compatible with the overall objectives of the journal.

Authors who are interested in having their work published in ***The Educator*** may contact the editor on **george.cassar@um.edu.mt**

**A musical educational programme
for primary schools with
a local band club in Gozo**

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The *International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)* (UNESCO, 2011) defines education as those processes by which societies deliberately transmit their accumulated information, knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values, skills, competencies and behaviours across generations. The definition underlines that education involves communication designed to bring about learning. The term 'education' derives from the Latin *educere*, that is, "to lead forth" (Livingstone, 2006). The ISCED framework compiles and presents education statistics both nationally and internationally (UNESCO, 2011) and includes three clear definitions of formal, informal and non-formal education.

Formal, informal and non-formal education

Formal education is defined as "... institutionalised, intentional and planned through public organizations and recognised private bodies, and – in their totality – constitute the formal education system of a country" (UNESCO, 2011, p. 11).

Formal educational programmes are those recognised by the national educational authorities. The initial education given to our children is considered as formal education. Vocational education, special needs education and part of adult education are often also categorized as formal education. The qualifications that are given out at the end of the year in formal education are recognised and are within the scope of ISCED. Usually, formal education takes place in educational institutions that provide fulltime education for those students in the system. In the ISCED framework, an institutionalised education occurs "when an organization provides structured educational arrangements, such as student-teacher relationships and/or interactions, that are specially designed for education and learning" (UNESCO, 2001, p. 11). Formal education is also defined by Livingstone (2006) as that form of learning that happens when people learn a curriculum taken from a pre-established body of knowledge. Shugurensky (2006) defines formal education as "a highly institutionalised system that goes from preschool to graduate studies". In most cases of formal education there is also a compulsory period of basic education. The formal education system is generally a top-down system. At the top lies the Ministry for Education and at the bottom the students. The state usually approves the curriculum that needs to be taught in the state schools. Schools need to adhere to this prescribed curriculum that typically has a set of goals and evaluation mechanisms. The activities that usually happen in schools are also controlled by the state, and the state is also the main funding provider for its schools. The formal education system relies heavily on certified teachers and at every stage the students are given a certificate or a diploma that enables them to progress to the next level of studies or to enter the formal labour market. According to the *International Encyclopedia of Adult Education* (English, 2005, p. 310), formal learning "occurs inside the curricula of institutions providing

educational activities". The objectives, methodology, criteria and materials are planned and determined beforehand by professionals. It is then in the hands of teachers to make the important decisions and to make learning happen.

Non-formal learning is also well defined by UNESCO (2011), according to whom this type of education is institutionalised, intentional and planned by an education provider. What makes it different from formal education is that it is an addition to it. Non-formal education complements formal education within the process of lifelong learning. Non-formal education provides a guarantee that education is there for all. Education provided non-formally caters for all the ages and it does not necessarily follow a continuous pathway structure. Non-formal education is often offered as short-courses or workshops. The completion of non-formal education programmes may not lead to qualifications that give access to higher educational levels, but they may help to improve or adapt existing qualifications and skills. Non-formal education is not always work-related. In some cases non-formal education includes learning activities intended for self-development. It is the process whereby learners decide to acquire further knowledge or skill by studying willingly with the help of a teacher (Livingstone, 2006). The teacher is there to assist the self-determined learner's interests by using a curriculum. Schugurensky (2006, p. 164) defines non-formal education as "all organized educational programs that take place outside the formal school system". Some examples include second-language programmes, cooking classes and driving lessons. As in formal education, the non-formal requires a teacher and a curriculum. However, there are some cases in which a teacher is not present, yet non-formal education still takes place. For example, a study group may meet regularly in order to learn something; this is a form of non-formal education. Unlike formal education, non-formal education programmes do not usually require prior knowledge in terms of previous schooling. It is usually associated with adults, but there are also cases in which children and adolescents experience this type of education. For example, evening music classes, scouting programmes and weekend religious classes are all examples of non-formal education. Shugurensky (2006) argues that the term 'non-formal education' is not appropriate since it gives the impression that this is second-class when compared to formal education.

UNESCO (2011) also provides a clear definition for informal learning: it is intentional or deliberate education but at the same time not institutionalised. It is less organised and structured than formal and non-formal education. Informal learning can happen in the family, the workplace, daily life, the community. It can be self-directed or family-directed. On the other hand, just like formal and non-formal education, informal learning can be distinguished from incidental or random learning. Shugurensky (2006) prefers the term 'informal learning' to informal education. He explains that in formal and non-formal education there is an element of institutional

design and organised teaching, while this is not the case for informal learning. Shugurensky (2006, p. 165) define informal learning as “learning that occurs outside the curricula of educational institutions, or the courses or workshops offered by educational or social agencies”. Many of the things that students learn in school are not part of the curriculum and this could be considered as informal learning. This also includes learning from the interactions between classmates. Indeed, socialization plays an important role in informal learning and this type of learning occurs throughout life. Contrary to popular perception, informal learning is not only about adult education. There is a distinction between informal learning and informal settings. Although informal learning happens mostly in informal settings, it does not mean that informal learning requires an informal setting. On the contrary, informal learning can take place in both formal and non-formal educational sites. According to the *International Encyclopedia of Adult Education* (English, 2005, p. 310), informal learning refers “to the acquisition of new knowledge, understanding, skills or attitudes, which people do on their own and which has not been planned or organised in a formal setting”. Informal learning is about how people learn from daily interactions with each other.

Formal and informal music education

Formal music education usually concerns classical music (Jenkins, 2011, p. 188), while informal music education is associated with popular music. The syllabuses of many music conservatoires provide formal music education that leads to certification required to advance from one level of musical education to another. Usually conservatoire exams are based on classical music and that is the main reason why formal music education is commonly associated with this form of music.

Regarding informal music education, Lucy Green (2002), a leading British music philosopher of our time, talks at length about this form and its importance. She gives insights on how to improve the music education that is taught in schools. She observes that though many students stop composing music after they finish school, it does not mean that they stop listening to music, especially popular music. This led Green to study the ways in which popular musicians learn and how these ways could be utilized in formal music contexts. Her research showed that popular musicians learn in a completely different way from that of traditional music schools. In another important study by Green (2008), the author introduces some informal ways of learning music in a number of music classrooms in the UK. The aim of her research was to determine whether informal ways of learning music could be integrated with formal music education and to see which of these worked best. She identified five main characteristics of informal music education that could be applied to formal music education. These are:

...using music that pupils choose, like and identify with; learning by listening and copying recordings; learning with friends; engaging in personal, often haphazard learning without structured guidance; and integrating listening, performing, improvising and composing in all aspects of the learning process (Green, 2008, p. 23).

Green (2008) applied these characteristics in twenty-one schools in the UK between 2002 and 2006. Some of the teachers were rather sceptical about this project but at the end they all agreed that enthusiasm, student participation and educational benefits were very high.

Children and music – the benefits

Considerable research shows that when learning music, children sharpen other skills as well, especially those associated to the cognitive. The Royal Conservatory of Music (2014) published a list of the various benefits. Studying music, for example, helps in language abilities, increases self-confidence, extends the attention span and improves the focus of the learner. This study found that learning how to play an instrument leads to changes in the child's brain. These changes make the child more disposed to reach its full cognitive and academic potential. This was proven by neuroscientists who used functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) and electroencephalography (EEG) technologies to understand what happens to the brain when it processes music. Schellenberg (2004) found a link between music and improved IQ. The research project was conducted at the Royal Conservatory of Music on students that had music lessons and others that had drama lessons. The results of the IQ level of both classes was then compared. It showed that music students reached a higher IQ level than those studying drama. Recent studies show that there is a major link between music learning and the working memory (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2014). Working memory helps us to remember things even if we are doing something else. This type of memory is highly used in mental arithmetic and in reading comprehension. Individuals who are musically trained exhibit a better working memory than those who are not musically trained. It was also found that musically trained students have better phonological skills. Music helps them to learn words faster and gain a much richer vocabulary. Another benefit is that music education and training helps children to be more creative than students who do not learn music (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2014).

Robert Zatorre, a neuroscientist at the Montreal Neurological Institute of McGill University, made a very bold statement: "Everybody responds to music". Zatorre studies the impact that music has on the brain. In one of his research studies, a group of volunteers were asked to listen to or play music. This study showed that the brain worked exactly like an orchestra. Zatorre stated that "the brain is not a mosaic of independent little sections. It is the ensemble activity that yields overall patterns." This may

be compared to the orchestra, since the orchestra's full sound is heard when all the instruments are playing together, and that the individual sound of each instrument has less meaning if it is played in isolation (Fick & Shilts, 2006, p. 34).

Indeed, Albert Einstein held that music plays an important role in brain development: "The theory of relativity occurred to me by intuition, and music is the driving force behind this intuition. My parents had me study the violin from the time I was six. My new discovery is the result of musical perception" (Beer & Birnbaum, 2019, p. 81).

Curriculum Development

The curriculum development process entails designing and developing integrated plans for learning, and the implementation and evaluation of these plans, along with their implementation and the outcomes of the related learning experience (El Sawi, 1996). Curriculum development, therefore, consists of a critical thinking exercise aimed at framing better the teaching and learning that occurs at school. Curriculum development is all about translating broad statements of intent into specific actions and plans.

Alvior (2014) adds that curriculum development is a "planned, purposeful, progressive, and systematic process to create positive improvements in the educational system". It needs to be updated constantly so as to address society's needs in a proper way. Within it curriculum development does not only incorporate the school, the learner or the teachers, but also the development of society in general. In today's world, curriculum development plays an important role in improving society and the national economy. For example, in order to develop a society, there needs to be a sequence of developmental processes.

Music curriculum development

Hanley and Montgomery (2005) reflect on some challenges that music education faces and focus on a reconceptualization of the curriculum. Since the 1980s, the term 'curriculum reconceptualization' has been gaining popularity among educators but unfortunately this cannot be said regarding the curriculum of music education. Postmodernism led to many questions that started the change in the music curriculum. Some of these questions include:

Should music education be teacher-centred, subject-centred, or learner-centred?

Should we focus on skill development or musical understanding?

Should we emphasize musical learning or cross-curricular connections?

Should we be trying to improve our students' musical tastes or

welcoming the diverse kinds of music relevant in their lives? (Hanley & Montgomery, 2005, p. 18)

Experts in the field of musical education argue that past practice is now outdated when it is compared to the current knowledge on learning, and that past practice is now irrelevant to contemporary children and youths. In their study, Hanley and Montgomery (2005) describe how the curriculum and the way we teach needs to evolve just like society does. The educators themselves need to change their mentality. One way that can help music educators to cope with change is constructivism, which is explained as

a theory of learning and knowing with the following characteristics:
knowledge and beliefs are formed within the learner;
learners personally imbue experiences with meaning;
learning activities cause learners to gain access to their experiences, knowledge and beliefs;
learners play an essential role in assessing their own learning.
(Hanley & Montgomery, 2005, p. 19)

Implementing an informal musical project in formal education

A pilot project conducted by Green (2008) had seven stages. The first stage consisted of an initial discussion with the students. Afterwards, students were given the possibility to choose their own song from a CD and pick any instrument that was available in the classroom. After selecting the instrument, the students were allowed to choose their own friendship groups and copied the song they had picked on their selected instrument. Usually these friendship groups consisted of three to five students. As early as the first stage it can already be realised that Green made use of some of the characteristics of informal music learning mentioned above. The second stage consisted of giving the children a CD with a pre-selected musical track on it. Alongside this track, there was another track where the song was divided into fifteen pieces. This made it easier for the students to copy the song since they could copy it in smaller parts rather than all at once. These parts are called 'riffs' in musical terms. The students needed to learn these riffs on their own. Afterwards they had to put together the whole song. The third stage consisted of an exact repeat of the first stage, while the fourth stage involved informal composition. In this stage, the students "synthesized what they learned to make up their own compositions" (Green, 2008). In the fifth stage, the students were surprised with an experienced band which made it clearer to the students how the band composed their own music. This gave the students an opportunity to learn how it is possible to compose your own song informally. The sixth and seventh stages of this project consisted of students copying and then performing classical music. The classical musical pieces were chosen by the teacher.

The method of implementing informal characteristics in formal learning may have several positive aspects but there are also some negative ones. For example, when students choose their own song or genre, their motivation is increased. However, the question arises as to whether it limits the genres that children learn. Should one base learning only on what children already listen to? Or should one broaden their musical knowledge? As Jenkins (2011, p. 190) argues, "the implication in studies like Green's is that learning one's own favourite music is a start to a more complete music educational experience." Although the copying of recordings has many benefits, these co-exist with the risks mentioned above. It does not help students to get out of their comfort zone. Jenkins (2011, p. 192) also observes that by having students perform classical music in the final stages does not necessarily mean that they come to like it. The students' responses were not as positive as they were when they performed their own choice of music.

Non-formal music education – an introductory programme

Built on the basic elements of music, a curriculum plan for an introduction to music through an encounter with notation, rhythms and instruments commonly used in bands was devised. The core element of this plan consisted of three workshops. The aim of these workshops was to trial the use of a non-formal approach in the teaching of music to the Year 4 pupils of three primary schools. The pupils were to participate in three workshops. The learning was to be sequential and cumulative; the activities of one workshop would lead to the other. The goal was to make these three workshops fun and interactive. Each of the three one-hour workshops introduced particular elements of music to the pupils. Following the input of the President and the Secretary of the Leone Philharmonic Society band club, which was cooperating with me in this exercise, the curriculum plan was modified to include a tour of the theatre and hearing band musicians play live in an ensemble on the theatre stage. This curriculum modification gave the pupils a hands-on experience in the natural setting, typical of most non-formal education. It also introduced pupils to the idea of the band club as a community of musical practitioners.

The first workshop was planned to focus on *Tempo* and *Rhythm*. These elements are foundational; every piece of music is built on them. It was planned to introduce pupils to the theatre and take them on a tour of the theatre so that they could become familiar with the place since some had never been given the opportunity of visiting an opera theatre. After the tour the pupils were to come on stage to be introduced to me as well as to the purpose of the workshops. The workshop included the pupils learning about *Tempo* and *Rhythm* and playing two games related to each.

Table 1: Plan of Workshop 1

1	Tour of the theatre	5	Tempo clapping
2	Pupils on stage	6	Tempo-name game
3	Introducing myself and the purpose of the workshops	7	Defining rhythm
4	Defining tempo	8	Rhythm creation

The second workshop was planned as a follow-up. The pupils were to find a place on the theatre stage. The plan was to start with a revision of *tempo* and *rhythm* so that a direct link would be created between the first and second workshops. The workshop then was to introduce the children to notation using the Kodaly Method, which includes using syllables in order to teach music. It was to end with the pupils playing percussion instruments together in an ensemble.

Table 2: Plan of Workshop 2

1	Pupils on stage
2	Revision of tempo and rhythm
3	Developing rhythms – <i>notation</i>
4	Ensemble playing

The third and final workshop was planned to cover more of the elements of music as well as to revise the material covered in the previous workshops. The revision was planned to start right after the pupils found a place on the stage. The elements that were to be covered in this third and last workshop were *High & Low* and *Loud & Soft*. These elements would be learned by hearing instruments being played live. The plan of the workshop was such that the pupils would be able to see and listen to these instruments being played by an ensemble formed of local band musicians.

Table 3: Plan of Workshop 3

1	Pupils on stage
2	Revision of previous workshop
3	Instruments found in a band club – <i>High & Low, Loud & Soft</i>
4	Demonstration of these instruments
5	Keeping a steady tempo while someone is performing

As project leader and researcher, I prepared the musical arrangements and rehearsed them with the band club ensemble over two rehearsals prior to the performance with the pupils. The workshop would end with the pupils keeping a steady tempo on percussion instruments while the ensemble played.

Modifying the curriculum plan

Given the importance of collaboration with members of the non-formal education community, my original plan was modified slightly following the negotiation of access meetings with the Leone Band Club President and Secretary. Prior to this meeting, the original plan was that the researcher would go to schools to promote the musical education given by local band clubs. In this first plan, it was envisaged that as a music teacher, the researcher would give primary school pupils an overview of what a band club community is, as well as an introduction to music through a series of workshops. However, during the meeting held at the band club, it was pointed out that this lesson would leave pupils without a clear idea or experience of what being part of a band club community involves. During the discussion, the two senior band club officials contributed to the reformulation of the project. It was decided that if the schools agreed, the pupils would come to the band club themselves. They would attend specially developed music workshops on the stage of the theatre. Both the President and the Secretary reassured the researcher that the musical instruments available at the band club could be used during the workshops. Moreover, all facilities at the band club would be made available to the pupils and their class teachers. These facilities included theatre lights, sound systems, projectors and screens.

This process of negotiation set the stage for what was to come next; it continued over weeks when dates were set and other logistical arrangements were made, which included preparing the music to be played and contacting the musicians that were to form the ensemble. While the President assured me that enough musicians would be willing to perform in these workshops, he pointed out that it would be very difficult for them to attend all three sessions since the workshops were to be held during working hours. He promised that he would contact the musicians and ensure their participation in Workshop 3.

The Workshops – Implementation

Workshop 1

Workshop 1 was held on Friday, 3rd May 2019. The same workshop was held twice – one for the Victoria primary school (referred to as Group 1), and the other for the Laura Vicuna and Xewkija primary schools (referred to as Group 2), who formed one group. Workshop 1 for Group 1 started at 9.00 am and ended shortly before 10.00 am. That for Group 2 started at 10.30 am and lasted until 11.30 am. The workshops commenced with a tour of the theatre. The pupils had the opportunity to see the theatre from the VIP Box, where the researcher explained that apart from staging opera, the theatre was also used as a cinema until the early 1990s. Later the pupils were able to see the old film projectors. The pupils were

fascinated by the theatre and the VIP Box as for many of them this was their first visit to a theatre.

The second phase of Workshop 1 consisted of getting the pupils on the stage of the theatre in an orderly and safe manner. This small tour was conducted so that the pupils would gain a clear idea of the premises of a band club. This tour was an introduction to the other workshops. Given that I had not met the pupils before Workshop 1, since it was their teachers who told them about the project, it was the right moment to introduce myself. I also rehearsed the workshop goals – introduction to music at a band club. The whole purpose of Workshop 1 was to introduce the pupils to music while learning about the music education facilities available at a local band club. The pupils were asked if any one of them had learnt music at some point or was currently learning music – to which there was quite a low response. The pupils were asked if any of them had ever heard of the word *tempo* and its meaning. There were several correct answers. With the help of a PowerPoint presentation, a basic introduction to this term was given. To aid comprehension two recorded songs were played. The first song was rather slow while the second one was fast. It was intended that these songs would be played live by band club musicians but unfortunately this was not possible for Workshop 1. Pupils were asked to clap along with the song being played. There were several songs that the pupils needed to adapt to. This was done in order to create a challenge and to instil in them the idea of a fixed *tempo*.

Another exercise that helped the pupils grasp the concept of *tempo* was a game I devised for this workshop. The pupils were asked to sit in a large circle. They had to listen to a metronome beat (click) and afterwards call out their own name, one after the other, in synchrony with each click. With the help of this game, the pupils were able to follow the click (which gave the *tempo*) and learn to wait for their turn. The same principle of playing in *tempo* is followed when playing in a band or whenever one plays in an ensemble. The *tempo* of the metronome was changed several times, sometimes faster, at other times slower. After the *tempo* name game, and thanks to the encouragement by their teachers and myself, Group 2 pupils started to participate more and more. It could have been the case that because Group 2 was composed of pupils from two schools, they were initially more inhibited. Even though they participated less in the beginning, pupils were getting on well with the exercises.

After the section about *tempo* it was time to learn about *rhythm*. The pupils were asked if they knew what the word '*rhythm*' referred to. Few of them had heard of this word. With the help of the PowerPoint presentation, the word '*rhythm*' was explained. It was made clear that *tempo* and *rhythm* were two different terms, but that they worked together. The *rhythm* exercise that was used in this workshop consisted of first repeating a clapping rhythm which I had devised. This rhythm followed a slow beat

on the metronome and the pupils were asked to take turns and play it. The speed was then increased and the rhythm was clapped once again. Following this exercise, three pupils were chosen to create their own rhythm that everyone needed to repeat. These exercises were carried out while the pupils were sitting on cushions laid out in the shape of a circle. The pupils of both groups grasped the concepts of *tempo* and *rhythm* and seemed to enjoy themselves. The workshop ended with the pupils lining up and going down the stage in an orderly manner.

Workshop 2

Workshop 2 was held on Wednesday, 8th May. As with Workshop 1, this was held twice but in a reverse sequence; first with Group 2 and then with Group 1. The second session with Victoria primary was from 11.00 am to noon. The sessions started with a revision of what had been learned on *tempo* and *rhythm*. There was a rehearsal of the *tempo* name game, followed by a new element whereby, in turn, one pupil created a rhythm while the others repeated it. The activities kept a sequential structure according to the curricular programme in order to make learning cumulative.

The second part of this workshop was on developing the rhythms and using music notation. With the help of a PowerPoint presentation, the pupils were shown the basic notation that is used in music. Pupils were able to clap to these notations. Afterwards, they were each given a percussion instrument commonly used by band club musicians, such as shakers, triangle cymbals and drums, on which they played the notes they had learned. The researcher did not use formal terminology with the pupils. Syllables were associated with rhythms using the Kodaly Method. Such “syllables and word groupings are typically used as a device to help the students decode and perform rhythms either visually or aurally” (McGuire, 2003, p. 59). The exact syllables used in the workshop can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Notation Covered During Workshop

<i>Syllable</i>	<i>Proper Notation</i>	<i>Note Duration</i>
Ta	Crotchet	1 beat
Ta-a	Minim	2 beats
Ta-a-a	Dotted Minim	3 beats
Ta-a-a-a	Semibreve	4 beats
Ti-Ti	Two Quavers	1 beat
Ti-Ri-Ti-Ri	Four Semiquavers	1 beat

In the third part of the session pupils were encouraged to compose their own rhythms, this time by using the proper music terminology. For this task more time was allocated since it was quite demanding for pupils to transfer their newly learnt knowledge of notation to composition and performance. Several pupils were asked to stand before their peers, who were seated in a circle on the stage, to demonstrate their rhythm. The pupils also had to name the note duration that was used to create the rhythm. This exercise helped them remember the note names (syllables) and their respective durations, as seen in Table 4. When the pupils were creating their own rhythms by using the newly learnt syllables, some of them got confused; however, it was observed that some pupils helped others complete the exercise. Those who were able to articulate the syllables helped the others to do the same. This was followed by a quick revision. This situation emerged in Group 2 since the pupils in the other group grasped the concepts immediately.

The last part of this workshop was on ensemble playing. For this purpose, the pupils were divided into four groups. Each group was given a different rhythm to play. These rhythms had words allocated to them so that it would be easier for the pupils to remember them. I started off with a demonstration of what was required, after which the pupils practised their assigned rhythms. Following some practice of these rhythms, the pupils were told that when these rhythms were played simultaneously, a samba rhythm would be created. The pupils were told to continue to play the rhythm and repeat it until told to stop. This exercise started with the first group playing their rhythm for some time, following which the second group were signalled to join in with their own rhythm. The two other groups followed suit and came into the *samba* ensemble. The last part of the exercise required the four groups to play together from the start of the *samba* after a count-in of four beats was given. When the exercise was successfully executed, a signal was given to stop playing.

The most difficult part of this workshop was the third section in which the pupils were split up into groups and had to learn different rhythms. The words that accompanied the rhythms helped the pupils to remember them. This was mostly noted when the pupils practised the rhythms since they also spoke out the words associated with the rhythms. The pupils of Group 2 seemed more competitive, even though I intentionally composed the smaller groups with pupils from both schools. However, an unintended consequence was that the competition led to the pupils getting to know the rhythms better and being more focused on the task than the pupils of Group 1 during the ensemble playing. I also observed that Group 1 pupils were not very focused when playing and learning the rhythms. As a result, another session of repeating the rhythms had to be held which took away time from the ensemble playing session, which was thereby shortened. Once the workshop was over, pupils again left the stage in the orderly way that had been established as a safe and decorous mode to exit a stage and a theatre.

Workshop 3

The third and last workshop was held on Friday 10th May. Group 1 attended from 10.00 am to 11.00 am while Group 2 attended from 11.30 am to 12.30 pm. Both sessions opened with the pupils performing as an ensemble, revising what had been learnt in the previous workshop. In order to give every pupil the possibility of playing a different rhythm and percussion instrument from the previous workshop, the four small groups of the previous workshop were changed. This was challenging; pupils had to learn a different rhythm in a short time. At the same time, it was observed that both Group 1 and Group 2 pupils were very eager to learn a different rhythm to the one they had played in the previous workshop. The workshop continued with a PowerPoint presentation in which the instruments commonly found in a local band were presented. The pupils were able to name some of the instruments before the start of the PowerPoint presentation.

A small group of musicians from the band club were present during the workshop so that the pupils could listen to the instruments being played live. The ensemble was made up of a flute, two clarinets, one baritone and a drum kit. Several musical arrangements of different songs were prepared for this workshop. The chosen songs were 'Baby Shark', 'Believer' and 'Perfect'. The chosen songs were currently being played on several platforms such as YouTube and Spotify; it was hoped that the pupils would be familiar with the songs. Apart from playing together, each member of the ensemble played a small piece on their own. The aim was for the pupils to hear each instrument individually. When the ensemble was playing, the pupils appeared to be enraptured by the performance. Some pupils in both groups knew of other instruments that did not feature in local bands.

With Group 2, I moved from showing the instruments on PowerPoint to the actual handling of the same instruments on site. It was observed that handling real instruments increased the pupils' attentiveness. This was also evident in the detailed questions they asked about the instruments.

During this listening part of the workshop, the pupils could explore two more elements of music – dynamics and pitch. These elements were referred to as *High & Low* (Pitch) and *Loud & Soft* (dynamics). The pupils could listen to the difference between an instrument that could play high pitch notes and another that could play at low pitch. Pupils could also note when an instrument played loudly or softly. The intention of the exercise was for the pupils to recognize that each instrument can produce both loud and soft notes, regardless of the size of the instrument. However, pupils found it difficult to distinguish between the size of the instrument and its loud or soft sound. At this point a practical example was given. The pupils were told to imagine a tall person and a short person, and these two persons shouted

in front of them, one louder than the other, while the pupils kept their eyes closed. It would be impossible to tell which one of them was the louder even though one was taller than the other. The same applies with instruments; every instrument can play either softly or loudly, irrespective of its size.

The last part of Workshop 3 focused on the ability to keep a constant pulse with music played by the ensemble. Pupils were each given a percussion instrument in order to carry out this exercise. This created a link with the knowledge that the pupils had gained in the first workshop. This exercise was repeated since this time the music was live and within the pieces a *tempo* change could easily happen. Pupils therefore needed to quickly adapt to these *tempo* changes. Each of the three pieces played had a different initial *tempo* making it more challenging for the students. Both groups were very motivated to play the percussion instruments together with the ensemble. Some pupils were so enthusiastic that they approached me at the conclusion of Workshop 3 to tell me that they would really like to learn to play an instrument.

As a conclusion to the three workshop sessions, the pupils were briefed on how band clubs taught music on their premises. They were told that both the instruments and the lessons were given free of charge in a band club. The lessons in the band club did not follow the scholastic year; anyone could join classes at any time during the year.



Aurora Theatre in Victoria, Gozo, the place where the pupils were introduced to an experience in music and performance

Teachers' views of non-formal education: an analysis

The teachers from the Victoria primary school participated in the first focus group together while the teachers from Laura Vicuna and the Xewkija primary schools participated in the second focus group. The analysis of the data produced certain themes which are discussed hereunder.

The current music education provision in primary schools

Probing questions during the focus groups explored not only practice but also attitudes to music education.

Teachers were first asked to confirm that their pupils did have the mandated one music lesson a week. The teachers of Group 1 (Victoria primary) stated that the music lesson took place every two weeks and not every week. The teachers believed a contributing factor to this anomaly was that the school had many pupils but only one music teacher. They reported that if the pupils missed this lesson due to, for example, an outing, this was not replaced. The pupils would have to wait for another two weeks for their next music lesson.

On the other hand, the teachers of Group 2 (Laura Vicuna and Xewkija primary) reported that pupils did have a weekly music lesson. However, they felt that music should be given more importance. Indeed, they argued that one lesson a week was not adequate, especially since the lesson was just 45 minutes long. The teacher from the Xewkija primary observed that music education offered opportunities for those who might be interested in learning a musical instrument or singing.

When asked if they thought young learners were given adequate exposure to a musical education, the three teachers in Group 1 stated that they themselves were not into musical education; however, they felt that music was fun for the pupils. One teacher said that using music in other lessons also helped the pupils remember more, giving an example of when this teacher used a song to teach the students about prepositions. The pupils made a link between the song and the knowledge that the teacher was delivering. Another teacher explained that music lessons in school was a good idea since not everyone could afford sending their children to private tuition. At this point, the researcher pointed out that the music education offered in local band clubs was free of charge.

The teachers in Group 2 did not believe that the pupils were exposed enough to musical education. One of them stated that:

Jiena naħseb li saru passi 'il quddiem fil-mużika għat-tfal imma mhux biżżejjed naħseb. Naħseb bħala istituzzjoni nistgħu nsibu aktar opportunitajiet bħal concerts u outings related to music. U oħra, ħadd

ma jiġi jkellew lit-tfal fuq il-mużika bħala karriera u b'hekk it-tfal ma jafux li tista' tagħmel karriera bil-mużika. [I believe that though progress has been made in music for children yet, it is not enough. I think that as an institution we should find more opportunities such as concerts and outings related to music. Moreover, no one comes to speak to the children about music as a career and thus children do not know that one can have a musical career.]

Another teacher in the group reported that there were more opportunities of learning music outside school; they just needed more promotion.

Music education: its place in the primary school curriculum

The teachers of Victoria primary (Group 1) argued that if a music lesson was missed it should be replaced at another date. They would like their school to hold music lessons once a week, as per the primary curriculum, rather than once every two weeks.

One of the teachers in Group 2 stated that, "Music education should not be considered as a secondary subject but at par with the social sciences and even with maths and languages". The teacher from Xewkija primary said that pupils should have more than one music lesson per week.

When asked about their views on benefits accruing from an education in music, teachers mentioned that it improved listening skills. They also noted the cross-curricular links between music and other subjects, a point made repeatedly. They argued that in today's world pupils were finding it very hard to just stop and listen to instructions being given. When they were learning music and playing with others, listening to and waiting for others was very important. The teachers believed that these social skills were significantly enhanced by music education. They remarked that when babies listened to music it helped them to improve their memory. Teachers concluded that when learning music, pupils gained other benefits.

The teacher from the Xewkija primary opined that pupils could greatly enhance their motor skills and hand-to-eye coordination when learning a musical instrument. The colleague from Laura Vicuna pointed out that when using background music during the lessons, the pupils tended to focus more. Both teachers mentioned that with music, learners tended to be 'calmer' during the lessons.

Teachers' knowledge about non-formal education initiatives of local band clubs'

Most of the teachers who participated in this research were not aware of what band clubs could offer to young learners of music. Only one of the five teachers who participated was able to report that in a band club

music lessons were taught for free. One teacher asked whether there were any age restrictions as to when children could start learning music in a band club. The researcher pointed out that there were no age restrictions for those wishing to start learning music.

As a follow-up, participants were asked to consider how the music education programmes of local band clubs could be better promoted. All the teachers reported that the band clubs did not make any promotion in schools. This contrasts with efforts to promote the learners' opportunities to engage with other 'extra-curricular' subjects at school, like sports. Many guests went to the schools and talked to the pupils on the benefits of sports. This had a great impact on pupils, according to the teachers. They stated that no one ever came to talk to the pupils about music education. They suggested that if pupils were more in touch with what happened in a band club regarding music education, more pupils might get interested in learning music in such societies. Furthermore, they opined that if more promotions were conducted in schools, there might be a higher interest among the pupils to join a band club. One stated that,

Hafna mill-ġenituri jassocjaw il-baned mal-marcijiet jew inkella post soċjali. Naħseb li hemm bżonn aktar promozzjoni minn naħa tal-każini tal-banda li tolqot lit-tfal tal-lum biex tinbidel din il-mentalità u ssir qabża ta' kwalità ġewwa dawn l-istess każini. [Many parents associate band with marches or else with social spaces. I feel that there is a need for more promotion by band clubs aimed at today's children so that this mentality changes and a quality leap takes place in these same clubs.]

Teachers' review of the non-formal music education project

Teachers were asked to review this non-formal education project and to comment on what and how much they felt pupils had learned. The teachers from the Victoria primary remarked that the most striking component of the project for the pupils was the opportunity they were given of playing the percussion instruments. As educators, they believed that pupils learned more when they were at the centre of the learning environment. They continued that there was no music room in their school; the music lessons were held in class. In the absence of a proper music room, the resources used during the lessons were limited. According to teachers, this non-formal music education project gave pupils a basic but comprehensive introduction to the theatre where music education and performances were held. They thought that it was received very well by the pupils.

Group 2 teachers insisted that holding the workshops in the band club was more beneficial for the pupils than in the schools. They remarked that the pupils learnt many things about the instruments of a local band

and enjoyed the ensemble performance. These teachers thought that the pupils did indeed learn some basic concepts of music theory.

The non-formal music education workshops: taking up the opportunity

When asked if they thought their pupils would take up the opportunities to learn an instrument offered by local band clubs, teachers agreed that the hands-on experience and opportunity to play with the ensemble created some interest in going to learn music in a local band club. The Xewkija primary teacher believed that "experiencing the environment and the instruments might serve as a great aspiration [for the pupils] to join the band club".

The teachers felt that the workshops were successful from the perspective of promoting an interest in furthering a music education in the non-formal setting. The fact that the pupils left the school premises and visited a theatre was an enriching experience, according to the teachers. They stated that most of the pupils had never had the opportunity of entering a theatre or of going on stage. They were glad that the pupils had the opportunity to see and play some instruments for the first time.

Teachers raised some additional proposals, including the suggestion that a programme of the type they had just participated in should be extended to all primary schools. According to them, this programme should be considered part of the music curriculum since "the more hands-on the experience, the more they learn". According to the teacher participants, not only was it an "*idea brillante*" [an excellent idea] to introduce young learners to our local band clubs, it was also an example of how other bands could collaborate with local schools in order to promote music education further. However, the teachers believed that the level of commitment of pupils required to pursue such an education with a band club may be too demanding for some of them.

A look at the outcome of the workshops

The aim of this study entails the exploration of the possibility of introducing children to alternative, non-formal forms of music education as a means of fostering a musically educated generation. A main characteristic of non-formal education, following Schugurensky (2006, p.164), is that the learning takes place outside the formal school system. The non-formal setup for this musical education in this research were three workshops. These were designed as a curriculum development plan that followed the stages mentioned by Herring and Bryan (2001). The workshops took place outside the formal structure of the school. The location chosen was an opera theatre which is managed and owned by a band club. Some of the pupils had never visited a theatre or a

local band club. The location created more interest among the pupils in learning music since they were immersed in a musical environment. The workshops were devised and implemented using a student-centred approach. In order to follow the aim of fostering a musically educated generation, these workshops focused on the principal elements of music and served as a basic introduction to music. Moreover, these workshops served as an introduction to the musical education that is offered in a band club.

On reflection, the workshops would have been more effective had they been smaller than the average size of 43 pupils per group. This would have also enhanced the non-formal aspect of the workshops. With smaller groups (consisting of 10 to 12 pupils), the researcher would be able to give more individual attention and thus reach pupils better, which most probably results in more effective learning.

In my view, when one considered whether the workshops were an ideal way to introduce music to the pupils, the answer would be in the affirmative. The main reason behind my conviction is that the pupils were visibly enjoying themselves during the workshops and the learning taking place was natural and spontaneous.

As a researcher and teacher, I noted more solid evidence that the pupils were learning. An example of such evidence was that the pupils were able to remember what had been done in previous workshops. Another factor indicating that the pupils were actually learning from the workshops was their active participation throughout the three workshops. The third and last factor regarding learning taking place was the on-task collaboration among the pupils during the workshops. This indicated not only that individual pupils were learning but also that they were able to pass their knowledge to their peers.

From the data collected during the focus groups two main themes emerge. The first concerns the importance of having regular music lessons in school. Pupils spend considerable time at school; having the opportunity to learn music satisfies the pupils' entitlement to music education. It may also encourage an interest in learning a musical instrument with a local band club, since in primary schools only music theory and basic recorder playing are taught. The second theme, which emerged very consistently from the responses, relates to the lack of outreach being experienced by our pupils regarding music education offered in a band club. Teachers were very open about the fact that the promotion of opportunities to learn music in non-formal education settings is not offered in primary schools. With more promotion in the schools, and by organising more musical experiences for pupils, higher interest in learning music with a local band club could be fostered.

Conclusion

This study concerned an exploration of the feasibility of a non-formal music educational programme. It included research on ways of implementing a curriculum development project in the form of three sequential music education workshops in a non-formal music education setting. A programme of basic cumulative learning in music was designed over the three consecutive workshops. The pupils and teachers of the Year 4 classes of three schools participated in the project. Some differences in the reception by pupils of the musical programme were noticed among the schools; namely, pupils who had experienced more music education at school demonstrated a better participation. The negotiation of access to carry out this exploratory study and the collaboration with the schools and the band club were pivotal in conducting the project. It suggests that by working with the non-formal education sector, a collaborative approach can be fostered.

This study had some limitations. One of these was that the teachers' role was too passive in the workshops though through no fault of their own. The difficulty of engaging musicians to participate in all three workshops, which were held during school and work hours, also proved to be a limitation. Due to the short timeframe of this exploratory research study, feedback from the pupils was not sought; which would have given more validity to the conclusions made. This notwithstanding, this research study, involving six teachers, seven LSAs, eighty-eight pupils and five musicians, shows that a small-scale project of this type is feasible, contributes to musical knowledge and helps in exposing learners to the non-formal musical education setting with the opportunities that this may offer.

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The concept of time in history teaching and students' cognitive development

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Historians define history as the study of the past, or rather, the study of past societies from the perspective of the present. The 'man in the street' perspective of history would, on the other hand, see history as the study and memorizing of a collection of dates and events. History teachers should be wary not to fall to the misconception of regarding history as the latter, as this impacts negatively on the intrinsic value of the subject they teach.

In essence, however, whether you are a historian, a teacher or any other person, there is the shared element that history and time are interrelated. It is argued that nowadays, "the balance of emphasis in history teaching [is] beginning to swing too far away from chronology".¹ Although part and parcel of the subject, there is a tendency to take historical time for granted, forget it, or not considering its full potential to gain and maintain the students' interest in the subject itself. This attitude tends to be reflected also in the dearth of studies about this concept.

Although 'New History' Teaching was introduced in Malta in the 1980s, traditional methods have to some extent continued to be used in local classes. This leads to stereotypical lessons that stick to the same pattern of recounting events, one after the other, with dates and details. However, students still do not really get the grasp of the concept of time as some teachers tend to assume. One must enquire why this is happening. Is it because teaching the concept of time in all its aspects is more complicated than one would expect? Is the problem linked to a syllabus that is too crammed to give the teacher room to experiment with different methods? Is it because there is a lack of resources from which a teacher can get ideas? Is it lack of pedagogical preparation or is it mere reluctance to apply more novel methods of teaching?

The aim of this article is to discuss how the concept of historical time is being dealt with in Maltese secondary schools.

The concept of historical time

This concept involves more than just dating systems and chronology of events. Chronology itself incorporates other aspects such as ideas of 'periods', 'eras' and 'centuries', of rapid change and/or of relatively slow change.² Terry Haydn classifies time into four categories, which he labels T1, T2, T3 and T4.³

T1: refers to the mechanics of time – such as, dating systems and conventions, time vocabulary like A.D. and B.C., etc.

T2: refers to the framework of the past – thus the building of a map of the past in terms of development through history; the chronology and sequence of strands of history, for example, the evolution of transport

in Malta, the island's constitutional development, or periods in Maltese history like the Age of the Megalithic Temples, the British Period, etc.

T3: refers to the building of a map of historical topics and episodes to show the order in which events unfolded – which may include key events or turning points in the Great Siege of 1565 or World War Two. Pupils have a confident grasp of the order of events and why each has occurred, i.e. pupils will be familiar with the concept of causes and consequences.

T4: refers to 'Deep Time' – involving an understanding of the scale of the past from the "Big Bang" to the development of writing and on to A.D., and helping students to do away with any misconceptions, especially anachronisms.

Ian Dawson listed different categories to show the different aspects of the time concept that students need to cover by the age of 14.⁴

Objective 1: Understanding of the vocabulary of chronological understanding, which includes:

- a. descriptive vocabulary, e.g. before, after, decade, millennium, etc.
- b. technical vocabulary, e.g. A.D., B.C., the use of the 14th century for the year 1345, etc.
- c. conceptual vocabulary, e.g. change, continuity, sequence, duration, period, chronology, etc.

Objective 2: The development of a sense of period. This enables students to relate the term 'Roman' to people, events and developments; and also to do the reverse: recalling key events, people and developments, when working on a given period, such as, Prehistory, Roman, Punic, Medieval, Renaissance, Colonial, etc.

Objective 3: Knowledge and understanding of a 'framework' of past events related to the Key Stage 3 programme of study.⁵ This can be divided into:

- a. a basic knowledge of sequences of events and their dates,
- b. an understanding of how the relationships between these events contribute to both thematic overviews and wider overviews or 'the big picture',
- c. knowledge and understanding of the detailed chronology of some of the major events within the programme of study.

Objective 4: The ability to set Objective 3 within a knowledge and understanding of a wider overview of history, both chronologically and culturally. This includes placing topics and periods studied within a broader historical outline and also relating different topics to ones studied earlier in school. In this way students will get used to the idea of 'Deep Time' as mentioned by Haydn.

These are two examples of the various ways in which the concept of time can be approached. There is no right or wrong way and individual teachers can devise their own categories to help them teach time. Whichever one uses, it is however important to realize that these different aspects of time cannot be taught once and then forgotten. Each aspect or objective has to be revisited again and again throughout the secondary school years. In this sense the teaching and learning of the concept of time has to be taken from a developmental perspective, i.e. that each aspect has to be interwoven and build upon another in a developmental way so that by the end of secondary school, students would have a good grasp of time in history.

The process of learning and cognitive development – some theories

Before proceeding with the discussion on the mastering of the concept of time it is useful to consider some theories dealing with cognitive development and the process of learning. Knowledge of such theories help towards a better understanding of how children develop cognitively thus enabling teachers to devise the appropriate tasks for the students they are teaching according to their level of development. Educational researchers and pedagogists base their studies mainly on Jean Piaget, Leo Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner. These three thinkers proposed highly important and influential theories on cognitive development. Their studies started from an analysis of the cognitive development of children but then led to two separate and opposing conclusions.

In his studies Piaget identified four stages / periods of mental growth and divided them into the following four categories:

- i. 0-2 years: the Sensory-Motor Stage. At this stage the child is concerned with gaining motor control and learning about physical objects.
- ii. 2-7 years: the Pre-Operational Stage. At this time the child begins to develop verbal skills and s/he is able to distinguish between past, present and future.
- iii. 7-11 years: the Concrete Operational Stage. At this point the child is able to conceptualized abstract concepts like numbers and relationships but only in very concrete ways.

- iv. 11-adulthood: the Formal Operational Stage. At this stage the child, now an adolescent, begins to reason logically, hypothesizing, understanding causal links, and gains the ability to conceptualize without concrete examples.⁶

Piaget, therefore, concluded that cognitive development is determined by biological time, meaning that a child cannot move from one stage to the next before his/her time; for example, a child cannot enter the pre-operational stage before the age of two. A teacher is thus limited to teach only the things that a child is able to learn at each stage. Criticism of this theory stressed that it was too structured. Piaget seems to have implied that the teacher's role in the process of learning does not matter.⁷

In his studies Vygotsky agrees with Piaget regarding the existence of different stages of cognitive development. However, the similarities end there. Vygotsky based his work on the social context of learning. He developed the theory of Zone of Proximal Development which indicates the point where a child can move to his/her next stage of cognitive development. However the appropriate aid and cognitive development does not rely on age but on social interaction that the child has with peers and others, especially teachers.⁸ This theory completely revolutionized the pedagogic ideas prevalent at the time and gave the teacher a new, and perhaps more complicated role.

This theory goes hand in hand with Bruner's 'scaffolding method',⁹ a technique to give students increased support when they are faced with a new skill and/or concept. The teacher offers extra assistance to help them in accomplishing the task, until they are capable of doing it on their own – in other words providing a writing frame to develop writing skills.

The concept of time and students' cognitive development

Piaget's theory one can say that secondary school students, between the ages of eleven and fifteen, are in their concrete operational stage and moving on to the formal operational stage. This also means that they gain the ability to reason logically and systematically at the age of fifteen, when they leave school. It automatically implies that it is useless to teach them history before the age of fifteen because they would not be able to grasp the concepts. It also means that by the time students leave secondary school they would be able to understand that a day has 24 hours, a week has seven days; a century has 100 years and so on. On the other hand they would not manage to recognise how long 100 years ago was; how long ago was the Victorian period; or the perspective difference that exists between today and the Middle Ages. For them the Middle Ages could have been last week while the Victorian period just yesterday. Their knowledge may well stop at what Terry Haydn refers to as T1 – the mechanics of time, while others, such as Peel (1967), essentially agreed with Piaget.¹⁰

However, Vygotsky and Bruner changed the parameters offering the possibility to assert that students at any age can grasp abstract historical concepts, like the concept of time, with the appropriate help. Other studies also tend to agree with their proposal. Jehoda (1963) argued that the concept of time depends on the social and intellectual climate to which the child is exposed.¹¹ Bernot and Blancard (1953) refer to the cultural aspect.¹² Smith and Thomlinson (1977)¹³ studied the understanding of historical duration in children aged 8 to 15. It showed that when a sequence of development is recognized, teachers are able to focus more on the stage of the child's understanding and hasten it.

The importance of the concept of time in history teaching

The importance of teaching the concept of time is tied to the fact that it is a basic skill, and is also a concept that is essential to all other historical skills and concepts. According to Stow and Haydn: "The concept of chronology has a central place in the development of a child's historical understanding.... For historical evidence itself derives its meaning from the time-frame in which it is set".¹⁴

Lomas affirms that, "Without a grasp of the concept of time there can be no real understanding of change, development, continuity, progression and regression".¹⁵

P. Lee and R. Ashby¹⁶ developed a model of cognitive development in terms of students' ability to understand past behaviours and beliefs:

- The 'divi' past: where the past is considered as remote as being populated with ignorant people.
- The stereotyped past: past people are viewed in categories and given specific labels.
- Everyday understanding: students try to empathize with past people but they give them contemporary values.
- Restricted historical understanding: students do not make anachronistic mistakes but are unable to view events in a wider context.
- Contextual historical understanding: students are able to understand historical events in their wider context.

Without mastering the concept of historical time students remain trapped in the 'divi' past and their sense of time will be restricted.

The concept of time is not only important to get a deeper understanding of history. It is also important because students will appreciate more the past and the present characteristics of our society – which they will link not only to the history lesson but also to subjects like science, where they can appreciate that scientific inventions both reflected and changed their own times; or the Maltese language, where they appreciate that the development of the language is deeply linked with the developments in Malta across time. They will also realize that we are all products of a historical reality, formed by past values and other cultures, apart from particular events and happenings.

The pedagogical perspective – in Maltese secondary classes

This part relates to teachers' dealings with the concept of time in the classroom. The focus is, therefore, on methodology: how they teach it; when and how often; difficulties encountered and how they assess students' response to such a concept. Most of the information comes from lesson observations and interviews with teachers carried out by the present researcher.

All the interviewed teachers stated that the concept of time is a basic concept for history teaching and no one can imagine history lessons without the mentioning of dates and events. One teacher said that it gave a context and also helped him to tackle the syllabus according to periods and it also helped students to study history as it provided a way by which to organise the syllabus. Therefore, that the concept of time is an integral part of the learning of history emerges as a general and attested belief among history teachers.

When it comes to the teaching of the concept of time, however, teachers do not deal with all its aspects and tend to just skim the surface, focusing mainly on the chronology of single events and the mechanics of time.

Even these two aspects seem to be poorly addressed. One teacher felt that students should learn the mechanics of time by the end of form 1 (year 7) as this aspect is rarely revisited during the following years due to a crammed syllabus. When dealing with the mechanics of time, teachers seem to focus more on teaching the meaning of A.D. and B.C. while not focusing on other time vocabulary such as 'century' or 'decade'. This is shown from the students' inability to give meanings to these words in the set questionnaire.¹⁷ The development of language is therefore linked with the concept of time, and is thus useful to have a defined core of vocabulary.¹⁸

Chronology is given as a series of dates and the sequence of singular events during teacher exposition. Students are not given many exercises to practise, and usually the only time when they face a chronological

exercise is during an exam. Another problem with chronology is that teachers focus too much on the particular event, neglecting other factors. For example, they focus on the invasion of Malta by Count Roger and they recount the sequence of this event; but they neglect to place the event in the wider historical framework, thus precluding the students from realising that these events took place in the Middle Ages; they cannot even connect this event with the other happenings in the Mediterranean, namely the tension between Islam and Christian Europe, and the expansionist policy of the Normans. In essence the students are being deprived of a deeper and wider picture of the past.

Another issue is the absence of timelines during lessons. Although in the school where the present research was carried out there were two history rooms, yet, in neither of them was there a timeline so that reference could be made to it by the teacher. One teacher often begins the lesson by saying, "Let's go on the time machine and go back to the times of the Romans", in an attempt to transport the students to the period which would be discussed. However, by not using any timeline and visuals the students tend to struggle to grasp in which past time they are – indeed, Roman times may have been yesterday for that matter! This method, therefore increases the risk of misconceptions and anachronisms and this is something that is apparent from the results of the questionnaire given to the students for the present study. A timeline would, it is assumed, provide a more concrete base to an abstract concept.¹⁹ One teacher admitted the preference for using timelines especially with the low-achievers since discovering that timelines helped them to understand better. During a lesson this teacher showed the students a timeline outlining the period from the Norman rule to the beginning of the Order's reign over Malta. The timeline was to scale and this helped the students more. On their own accord the students noticed that the Angevins ruled for a very short time when compared to the Aragonese and one student even commented that he had never realized that Malta had so many different rulers before the Knights of St John and concluded: "so these were here [in Malta] a long, long time ago!" It becomes evident that visualising the past with the aid of a timeline helps students' understanding of this concept.

Regarding anachronisms, teachers do not really focus on these by devising specific exercises, but rather by simply making reference to anachronism as they go along during the lesson. For example, one teacher indicated that he referred to anachronism through humour by asking questions like: "If Frederick II wanted to communicate something to a nobleman who lived far away would he have used a sms or a letter?" It seems, however, that teachers do not address more abstract anachronisms such as those related to democracy, universal suffrage or education. From the results of a questionnaire prepared for the present study, it emerged that the majority of students were unaware that in the Middle Ages there was no such thing as democracy, primary schools and newspapers, or that the

welfare state / society to which they are used, did not exist. This is another instance where students are deprived of a deeper understanding of the past.

When asked if they referred to the concept of 'deep time', teachers admitted that they did not usually relate to it, and one teacher felt that it was difficult for students to understand the full meaning of 'deep time'.

Pedagogical difficulties

While discussing difficulties encountered when teaching the concept of time, all teachers agreed that there were no particular difficulties when dealing with this historical concept. Teachers interviewed took it for granted that time meant the mechanics and chronology of events. One teacher did point out that there were not many resources that one could use when teaching time, apart from timelines. This teacher admitted that time tended to be very abstract and it was sometimes difficult to come up with ideas that could help students, especially low-achievers, to understand the concept.

When asked what they thought about the syllabus regarding whether this helped or hindered the teaching of historical time, teachers felt that it actually helped. One teacher said that the only problem with the syllabus was that due to its vastness it tended to make it difficult to go into the detail of particular aspects of time during the five years of secondary schooling. Thus, while the mechanics of time are done in great detail in year 7, that is, the first year of secondary school, after that, though it is referred to again throughout the other four years, this was not explained in great detail as it was assumed that the students had enough grasp on the concept already. However, apart from this drawback the syllabus helped teachers with the organization of historical time as it tackled Maltese History in a chronological order. One teacher said that the students were less confused and had the advantage to study in a predefined framework. Teachers were then asked if they saw this same predefined framework of the syllabus as making history too compartmentalized; detaching each epoch completely from the others. Teachers rejected this compartmentalisation assumption since they were able to make reference to syllabus content of previous years; for example, a form 3 (year 9) topic on the island's defence could be linked with a form 2 (year 8) topic dealing with the *dejma*. However, the links are few and apply to segmented sections of the syllabus. The *dejma* theme is done in detail in form 2, referred to again in form 3, but it is not mentioned again in form 4. Form 1 syllabus items are not referred to again until the students arrive in form 5 (year 11) while they are doing environmental studies. And here again, only a few sections from the form 1 syllabus are referred to, namely those connected with historical remains. The situation does not give enough room and opportunity for students to compare one epoch with another and they cannot appreciate the slow

but continuous process of change that takes place throughout history. There is the risk that they see different historical epochs as sharply defined and separated from each other, when in fact they are not and should not be seen as such. Although, teachers said that revising different historical epochs was important, from the results of the questionnaire coming out of the present study it became clear that not enough revision was made, or else teachers did not refer enough or at all to topics covered in previous years. Since teachers seem to take the concept of time for granted and may not usually give exercises that deal with historical time, they will not be able to assess how much the students have understood this concept. Hence, teachers will also be unable to focus on students' difficulties in this area and help them to achieve understanding.

One gets the feeling that teachers may not be realizing the immense complexity of the concept and the effort it demands from students to grasp its various aspects. The difficulties in teaching historical time were always present. In 1967 the Plowden Report referred to difficulties when referring to the teaching of the concept of time. Among other things it stated that it was only at the end of primary school that some children began to develop a sense of time, although there were cases of children who were very keen on the concept. It highlighted the need of further studies of students' understanding of time and proposed the use of time charts to help students understand this abstract concept.²⁰

To mitigate difficulties in teaching time, it has been shown that visual sources can be an effective aid.²¹ Timelines are one such aid, while others include portraits, pictures, artefacts; buildings and the use of historical environments.²² Sequencing exercises should also be given, preferably with the help of pictures that students need to put in chronological order.²³ There seems to be the need for a redefinition of the concept of time. Teachers should move from taking time to mean just dates and chronological sequence. Historical time is complex because by nature it is intimately related to the past. The history teacher is pivotal in teaching this concept. There is a growing belief that the way teachers approach the teaching of historical time will deeply influence the students' level of understanding.²⁴

Towards the grasping of the concept of time

It is clear that the concept of time needs to be being given the importance it deserves. Although many teachers hold that the concept is important and that they cannot imagine history without associating it with time, it may be that they are not focussing enough on this concept in the lessons. They may not be alert to their students' lack of knowledge about this concept. Referring to dates and events, without giving their young learners proper exercises related to time, is surely not enough for teachers to assume that they are tackling this concept during the lessons,

and more so that they are assessing their students on the understanding of such a difficult and complex concept. Husbands argues that, "Pupils do not come into schools as 'empty vessels'. They bring into school, and into the history classroom, their own ideas about their own world, their knowledge, understandings, and as important, misunderstandings about the societies they are learning about, and a set of more general assumptions about the way people behave."²⁵

Recent studies have suggested that the understanding of historical time is not strictly linked with cognitive factors. Rather it is influenced by issues like the teaching context, the nature of tasks and teaching styles among others.²⁶ It is therefore, up to the teacher to be aware of the students' different backgrounds and needs, and to address these factors so that they can achieve a better historical understanding.

One of the best and popular methods employed by teachers nowadays is based on Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Gardner underlines seven different intelligences: interpersonal; intrapersonal; kinaesthetic; verbal-linguistic; mathematical-logical; visual-spatial; and musical. That students have so many different intelligences implies that teachers need to devise a variety of teaching and learning activities to suit the different kinds of intelligences.²⁷

Therefore, teachers have to move away from the idea of a rigid age-related scale of the development of historical understanding. Sequencing exercises alone do not suffice for the improvement in the awareness of historical time. Students need also to be familiar with the language used to describe historical time. Visual representations of time should be consistent throughout the learning process. All students have some familiarity with various images of the past, which should be built upon and widened.²⁸

At a time when the validity of history tends to be questioned, it is important to devise new strategies to bring history to life in the classroom. Devising ways to help students gain an understanding of historical time is a core element in making students achieve a deeper historical understanding. It also helps them to appreciate the past and bygone societies and realise the relevance that history has in the understanding of their own present society.

There are many tools that can be introduced and employed by teachers to teach the concept of time, some of which are presented below.²⁹

Suggestion 1: Key dates bingo

According to the syllabus one can give students a selection of decades; years; months or even specific dates (dates can also include those which students have studied in previous years). Students can choose up to six dates for their bingo card. The teacher can describe an event or two that

happened at the time. From this hint the students have to work out if they have that date on their card and if so, they cross it off and continue until all the dates have been cancelled and then call out 'bingo'. Upgrading the challenge would be asking the winner to explain / relate what happened on each date, or to discuss further a particular event. This exercise aims to make the learning of the concept of time enjoyable, and can be used both as a starter and as a conclusion to a lesson.

Suggestion 2: Card games

These are suitable for low-achievers but can also be a good starter activity for form 1 students to master the mechanics of time. Prepare a set of cards with dates; reveal one card at a time and ask the class to state if it is later or earlier than the previous card. This can be done also in small groups, provided that the teacher monitors them closely.

Suggestion 3: The use of timelines

Timelines are very useful to convey a sense of concreteness to an abstract concept. There are various things one can do with timelines. These can be used during the teacher's exposition but students can also make their own timelines too. It makes good sense that timelines are first related to students themselves; such as envisioning what they do during a school day, a school week, or including key events since they were born. Later on they can delve into more complex elements such as B.C. and A.D., and specific periods, e.g. the Norman rule in Malta; or specific topics, such as Education in Malta through time. Timelines are suitable for classroom displays as well. A teacher can put up a blank timeline on the wall and mark dates that would be covered during the lessons while students can produce pictures that go with a specific date or event and stick it on the timeline in its appropriate place.

Suggestion 4: Using pictures to sequence the past (1)

A good starter to revise an historical event is to teach chronology through pictures. Pictures help students to visualize an event better and make it more real. You can give students a set of pictures of an event e.g. pictures showing the 1919 events of the *Sette Giugno*. Students can put them in the correct chronological order. To make it more challenging one can ask students to indicate an event that goes before and after the correctly arranged sequence. The same activity can be done with PowerPoint where the students can arrange events with the slide sorter.

Suggestion 5: Using pictures to sequence the past (2)

The idea above can be used to sequence particular topics instead of events, e.g. pictures of fashion and clothes through the ages; warfare; and

artistic works. Students can match the picture with the period even by using a timeline.

Suggestion 6: Teaching B.C. and A.D.

The concept of B.C. and A.D. can be quite difficult for young students. This activity helps to make the abstract realities related to B.C. and A.D., and centuries more comprehensible. It involves building up a physical timeline with each student representing a century. Place the students in two groups, each group representing A.D. or B.C., in a straight line. Each student holds a sheet of paper on the top half of which is written the years of a century e.g. 100-199, 200-299. First leave a gap in the middle of the timeline, dividing B.C. and A.D. – ask who should fill that time gap. The answer you are seeking is 'Jesus Christ' – here you put a picture of Baby Jesus.

Leave the 'Baby Jesus' sheet there in the middle throughout the activity. Now ask what B.C. and A.D. mean – refer to the 'Baby Jesus' sheet to arrive at the answers. Now turn to the students in the timeline – explain that each person is a century, and ask how long that is / how many years a century is. Now turn to the first student / century A.D. – and ask 'Which century are you Anno Domini?' The answer should be clear – he or she is first in the row and you can add a large '1' to the sheet of paper below the dates. Repeat with student / century '2' – 'Which century are you?' The second – here you can act confused to evoke the confusion that is often in students' minds, and ask whether they are sure? 'How can you be the second century when the dates on your sheet are 100-199?' Go back and count from the birth of Baby Jesus – first century, second century. Write a large '2' on the sheet below 100-199. Repeat this with all the other centuries. Repetition is important so that the students fully understand the mechanics of time.

Suggestion 7: Teaching anachronisms

Anachronisms can be taught through pictures. You can give students different pictures from which they could detect elements that did not exist in a particular period. One can present pictures of some inventions and ask students to choose which of these existed, or were already in existence, in a particular century instead of a period. For example, featuring a senator in the Classical Rome period with a watch on his wrist, or Grand Master Pinto arriving in eighteenth century Hal Qormi in a car to proclaim the town Casal Pinto. More challenging exercises may include abstract concepts like democracy, or the freedom of the press. This can be done by giving students a set of situations, real or imagined, which happened, for example, during the Middle Ages, and they have to try to identify those concepts that did not exist in that historic era.

Applying such teaching strategies should help students to grasp and hopefully also master historical time. Of course, these are just a few suggestions which teachers may use and many others can be thought out and developed according to one's needs, keeping always in mind the students' ability levels and constraints. These exercises should always be followed and accompanied by an assessment of the students' performance. In this way strategies, tools and methods can be related better to the students' strengths and weaknesses and further developed accordingly.

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**Some deliberations concerning
the value and motivation
of music education**

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Having a philosophy helps one to decide where to go and how to get there. It can point to directions which we may never have contemplated before and offers details about the meaning and implications of a particular material, through an analytical line of reasoning. Owning a philosophy does not mean that it will be relevant to all situations and one should not assume that it will forecast every unforeseen event in teaching and learning. As a matter of fact every teacher who has a philosophy must be prepared to question and challenge it in relation to daily situations. The characteristics of a particular philosophy depend on its rationale and consistency.

Those educators who embrace a music education philosophy investigate and query previous and current beliefs, scrutinize different methodologies, and arrive at several conclusions and suggestions regarding the teaching and learning of music education. Indeed, it is important that music education philosophers uphold a strong sense of the value of music, so as to justify the position of music education in the curriculum, and then have ideas and develop schemes of how these values can be applied in the classroom.

A historical glimpse

Throughout time, commencing with the Greeks, several philosophers have supported the aesthetic notion of music as a basis of their philosophy. Plato (428/427–348/347 BCE), being very much aware that music had an important function in Athenian society, argued that music fell within the category of the philosophy of craft. He was also conscious of the relationship between music and emotions. To this effect, he recognised that some type of melodies aroused particular forms of emotions in listeners. Aristotle (384–322 BCE), was consistent with this notion, arguing that a proper citizen should recognize the value of art, and, acknowledging the advantageous benefits of music education on people, he thus promoted music education.

During the seventeenth century the *Camerata de' Bardi* (a group of humanists, musicians, poets and intellectuals who flourished during the late Renaissance in Florence) explored how music could be emotional and studied the way how music was able to stimulate human emotions. This led to the discovery of the 'arousal theories' of musical expressiveness, where a listener is aroused to a specific emotion when they identify with the music and therefore can feel the emotion that music is expressing. This can also be called the 'sympathy theory'. Subsequently, many music theorists adopted the psychology of the French philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650) on the 'vital spirits'. They argued that sound stimulates and incites these vital spirits (a kind of fluid medium linking up the brain with the senses of the body), and as a result, arouse the human emotions.

During the Romantic period in the nineteenth century, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) proposed the theory of the cosmos and the universe, giving music a high status level as he argued that music represented the cosmic will. Emphasizing and recognizing the importance of music as a valuable art is what promoted the idea of a philosophy of music education.

The philosophy for music education started off when music educators began to feel the need to offer validation and reasons for the existence of music in the curriculum. At first the justification was based on the argument that music had beneficial effects on other subjects of the curriculum. By time music educators realized that as music offers aesthetic experiences, then it is a fundamental matter and can be an end to itself.

Philosophers who thought on these same lines include James Mursell, Harry Broudy, Charles Leonhard and Robert House, with the more important works being those of Keith Swanwick, Susanne K. Langer and Bennett Reimer.

Music education as 'aesthetic education'

For many people music gives rise to an aesthetic experience, which can be explained as a highly memorable and affective encounter. Bennett Reimer proposed the visualization of music education as 'aesthetic education', and attempted to offer the music education profession an established icon of itself. According to Reimer aesthetics is the study of that which is the essence of art, and about people who have throughout history felt that they needed art to form an essential part of their lives. So among all the disciplines of thought that are interested in the arts, aesthetics is the one devoted to an explanation of their intrinsic nature (Reimer, 1989).

Reimer has argued that his notion of aesthetic experience is based on the concepts of John Dewey and Susanne K. Langer. He makes use of a linguistic notion of 'concept' and continues towards a distinction between linguistic meanings, which "point to some things other than themselves", and artistic meanings, which "do not point to or designate or denote feeling" (Reimer, 1989, pp.87-88). Instead they contain these feelings in themselves, as music contains in itself rhythm and melody. These meanings can be experienced and therefore shared. They can also produce an aesthetic experience.

In his book *A Philosophy of Music Education*, Reimer (1989) discusses three different viewpoints regarding aesthetic theories. These are Referentialism, Absolute Formalism and Absolute Expressionism.

According to the Referentialist theory, the sounds in music refer to something, or an experience, outside music itself. In other words, music contains a message which can lead to 'non-artistic' emotions. Reamer

refers to 'Socialist Realism', where music functions as a servant of politics. In music education, Referentialism can be spotted when the music educator seeks to add or look out for a particular message in music. In this case, music serves an extra-artistic purpose. Reimer continues to explain that through the Referentialist point of view, the music teacher has the responsibility to decipher which music is good or bad art, according to its extra-artistic results and outcomes. He continues that, studying music makes one a better person in many ways: it improves learning skills, it imparts moral uplift, it fulfils a wide variety of social needs, it provides a healthy outlet for repressed emotions, it encourages self-discipline, it provides a challenge to focus efforts upon, it gives a basis for worthy use of leisure time, it improves health in countless ways; in short, it is assumed to be a most effective way to make people – non musically – better (1989, p.22). The Referentialist theory holds that art is similar to language; in other words, it is symbolic in nature.

The aesthetic theory of Formalism, can be called Absolutism, and is at the opposite end to Referentialism. Formalism is a consequence and an outcome of the Romanticism of the nineteenth century, which viewed art as an excessive manifestation of emotions. The belief of Formalist philosophers is that art, such as rhythm or sound in music, mean no more than themselves. This makes the experience of art a purely intellectual one, and is referred to as 'aesthetic emotion' by Formalists. In music education, Formalism can be seen in the guiding principle that only the few talented students can be educated musically and most of the time neglects any relationship between art and emotion. Theorists supporting this viewpoint also neglect the connection between the meaning of art and symbols and see no possibility that music can be translated in any sort of language.

After a detailed explanation of these two perspectives, Reimer concludes that neither theory can be given total acquiescence, as both have deficiencies that make them inappropriate and inadequate as a foundation for a philosophy of music education. Neither theory is persuasive. As a result, he discusses Absolute Expressionism, which he claims to be the most suitable philosophy for music education. Absolute Expressionists take concepts from both Formalism and Referentialism. These elements argue that the value of art can be found in itself, but at the same time they do not neglect the connection between art and the cultural and extra-artistic effect on it.

It is evident that if people had a clear insight and knowledge regarding the value of their profession, they would then have a clear understanding of their own personal lives. On the other hand, music educators need to know what is so genuinely unique in teaching and learning music.

Music can and should be considered a subject that contributes towards other curricular subjects such as mathematics, the sciences, the languages,

and so on. However it is also certain that music possesses its own intrinsic values. These values are apparent in music's urge for inspiration and creation that is found in human nature. Therefore it can be argued that if music education were ignored or overlooked, students would tend to miss the importance of aesthetics. Several thinkers have contributed with their ideas to propose a philosophy of music education, and an eclectic view of their proposals can contribute towards an appropriate music education.

The value of music education in the curriculum

In his *Republic*, the Greek philosopher Plato described music as a fundamental and an essential part of education. It is clear that education and the development of the students' personality demand that music education should be included in the school curriculum just as other academic and non-academic subjects. There may be educators who have doubts about whether music education is rich in the possibilities that can contribute to all the areas of the child's development. I am convinced that music education should form part of any school curriculum since it provides social interaction, development of physical coordination, cognitive qualities and memory. Therefore, music education is a subject that is intrinsically worthwhile and its presence is absolutely central to any concept of education. The idea that music education develops certain qualities of mind has a long history and as indicated above, can be traced back to the classical Greek philosophers.

John Paynter argues in favour of including music education in the curriculum on the basis that the arts should be concerned with the development of mental qualities. This type of education should be for all the children rather than for a select few. On the other hand, some curricula tend to focus far too much on cognitive development and pay little attention to the affective side. Certainly, music education contributes to the emotional development, self-expression, self-knowledge and self-feelings. The music curriculum should specifically be concerned with the emotional development of the child through creative self-expression. Another reason for including music education in the curriculum is that regular music education leads to improved performance in other subject areas. R. Gagne suggests that good study habits acquired in any subject are likely to transfer to other subject areas. This principle is not applicable solely to highly talented music students. There are many other students who excel in music education but struggle in almost every other subject. Thus, music can give these children more opportunities to achieve some sense of success.

The present situation

The value of the expressive arts in education is universally accepted and its place in every school curriculum is not in doubt. However,

music is regarded as a weak subject in curricula. As a result of frequent generalizations and misleading comparisons between different artistic subjects, the educational world would not dispute the value of a child's attempts at creative expression in drawing or painting. Yet, similar attempts at creative work in music, although of comparable value, is just looked down upon. Yet, music education forms part of aesthetic education; and aesthetic education is part of the general education of the child. Through experiences with music, the learner will be increasingly capable of feeling, creating, discovering, performing, learning and thinking. It is quite contradictory, therefore, to view music education as lacking in possibilities as a field of study. Is music education of any real human value? The answer is a definite 'yes'.

The value of music education and the cognitive side

Psychologists have frequently turned their attention to music. This is not surprising! Nothing can surpass music when it comes to the chaining together of units of skill, or the examination of muscular coordination, or aspects of aural perception and memory.

The Swiss biologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980), in his theory of cognitive development, speaks of the young learner manipulating objects leading to acquiring concepts of pitch, duration, dynamics and other elements of music that are aural, and not concrete in a physical sense. The content of children's music should include their identity, their bodies and their feelings, because of their egocentric nature. Creative and improvisatory activities are encouraged because of their vital importance in learning. The creative process is necessary for self-fulfilment. It seems that students respond to learning whenever they can become personally involved in this process, regardless of aptitude or socioeconomic background. To be creative is to think in novel and different ways.

The importance of music as a subject in the curriculum

Music involves the cognitive (intellectual) and psychomotor (physical) experiences and is learned through the integration of these areas of learning. Indeed, music education can enrich experience in ways that other subjects cannot. Through music education students learn about themselves, other people and humanity in general, and it is particularly useful in situations of cultural pluralism, arguably being one of the best mediums through which one can understand other cultures. Finally, music is valued because it gives insight into human experience and enables students to delight in living a fulfilling life. It is correct to believe, therefore, that every child has a right to engage directly and practically in music, and this can be achieved by inserting music education in the curriculum in order to provide a platform of skills, knowledge, experience and values.

Benefit from music education

The Maltese Music Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Schools opens with an important statement: "In music education pupils should be engaged in the three interrelated activities of Composing, Performing and Listening / Appraising, thereby acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding and hence enjoyment of the subject".

Music has a distinctive contribution to make to the aims of any school curriculum. Composing, Performing and Listening / Appraising provide opportunity for the upbringing of successful learners. Music education helps students by giving them opportunities to develop their independence and use their creativity. Appreciating the relevance of music to their lives can motivate students to enjoy learning and to develop the skills and attitudes needed to succeed across the curriculum. Students learn to cooperate with others to reach a common goal through singing, playing, rehearsing and performing music. Children develop an awareness of different musical parts and the roles and contributions of different member of a class, choir or ensemble. They learn the value of sustained effort to achieve excellence and the concrete rewards of hard work.

Composing also develops the students' critical skills by offering opportunities to evaluate their own work and that of others – music education promotes the students' awareness of national and global cultures, past and present. Early music education can help develop those parts of the brain involving language and reasoning. There is a link between music and spatial intelligence – i.e. the ability to perceive the world accurately and to form mental pictures of things. This kind of intelligence is valuable for a student and is necessary, for example, to pack the school bag as needed for the day, and even to solve advance mathematical problems. Being a creative art, music helps students to think in a creative way, thus solving problems by imagining various solutions, rejecting outdated rules and assumptions.

Music education helps students to understand themselves and can therefore relate to others, thus creating links between the home, school and the wider world. It provides children with the discovery of other cultures and teaches them to be empathetic to the people from those cultures. This development of compassion and empathy, as opposed to development of greed and a 'me first' attitude, leads to respect of other races, ethnic groups and 'outsiders' from an early age.

Music education brings together intellect and feeling and enables personal expression, reflection and emotional development. The students' challenge is to make their life meaningful and to reach for a higher stage of development. Self-esteem is a by-product of this self-expression. Music performance helps students to conquer fear and to take risks. A

little anxiety is a good thing, and something that will occur often in life. Dealing with it, early and often, makes it less of a problem later on in life. Risk taking is essential if a student is to fully develop their potential. Learning about music in a range of styles, genres and traditions can lead students to develop enquiring minds and to learn to process information, reason, question, and evaluate.

The situation in Malta

Though improving, the situation in Malta regarding music education, cannot be considered as ideal. The post of Education Officer (Music) was vacant for many years. In the Primary Sector, music peripatetic teachers are responsible for the music education in the primary schools. Until a few years ago only eight peripatetic teachers were assigned to render this service. By 2009 another twelve peripatetic teachers were added so that twenty teachers now formed the Music Section in the Primary Schools.

The music curriculum for primary and secondary schools is based on three fundamental concepts, namely, Composing, Performing and Listening / Appraising. However there is much to be desired on the practical side. Primary schools are in possession of some percussion instruments but their quantity is small, especially the definite pitch percussion instruments. The lack of such instruments hinders the realization of the Composing, Performing and Listening / Appraisal objectives. Peripatetic music teachers are not always allotted a music room, while at times the music room may lack equipment such as a monitor, interactive white board and other audio and visual aids. The best musical environment for the students is one in which both the classroom teacher and the music peripatetic teacher are involved in music teaching. Even if there is a music room to which students can go to enjoy tuition by a specialist, students need the stimulation for, and approval of, music in their lives from the classroom teacher. The roles of the peripatetic music teacher and the classroom teacher are somewhat different, in that the specialist is acknowledged to be the primary musical resource, the leading planner and above all one who helps the classroom teacher in their efforts to teach music. But this is practically non-existent. In the secondary schools the scenario is very similar to what is found in the primary sector, with the exception that music teachers are assigned only one or two schools. Years ago music stopped being offered as an option to be studied for the 'Ordinary' level. As from the scholastic year 2009-2010 this situation was reversed with music being offered again as an option in the secondary schools.

Motivation and music education

For a successful education, it is necessary that students and teachers are both motivated; they both have to be aware of the meaning and worth of the material they are dealing with. It is necessary that teachers have

the skill to inspire students with a strong assurance that what they are studying and learning is indeed significant, and not just something to pass the time. In the same way, teachers have to be convinced about the importance of the material they are delivering, and more importantly, be assured that education is an end in itself and not just a means. Motivation is a requisite to learning. Motivated students are more likely to succeed in learning than students who lack the drive. Some theories identify two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic.

Intrinsic motivation is when people engage in an activity, without obvious external incentives. Therefore, intrinsic motivation occurs when the learning activity and the learning environment elicit motivation in the students. It is thought that students are more likely to be intrinsically motivated if they attribute their educational results to internal factors which they can control, such as the amount of effort they put in. Intrinsic motivation occurs when the students believe that they can be effective agents in reaching desired goals – the results are not determined by luck. This type of motivation occurs also when the students are interested in mastering a topic rather than just learning to achieve good grades. One notes that the idea of reward for achievement is absent from this model since rewards are an extrinsic factor. In other words the factors that promote intrinsic motivation are challenge, control, curiosity, fantasy, competition, cooperation and recognition.

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation occurs when the learner is extrinsically induced to participate in the learning activity – it refers to motivation that comes from outside the individual. The motivating factors are external such as rewards, money or grades. These rewards provide the satisfaction and pleasure that the task itself may not provide. Thus extrinsic motivation is needed especially for students who do not appreciate the value of learning. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are closely linked to human needs. Abraham Maslow (1943) proposed five basic levels of human needs (Fig.1) – this hierarchy of needs being:

1. Physiological needs – these satisfy and ensure the physical survival, such as food, water, air, shelter, clothing and sex.
2. Safety needs – these include order, stability, routine, familiarity, certainty and health.
3. Social needs – also known as love and belonging needs, these include love, affection, belonging and acceptance in relationships with other people.
4. Esteem needs – these include the desire for strength, achievement, mastery of competence, confidence, independence and freedom, desire for reputation and respect from other people.
5. Self-actualization needs – once the first four levels of needs are satisfied, then persons can concentrate on addressing themselves to achieve their highest potential.

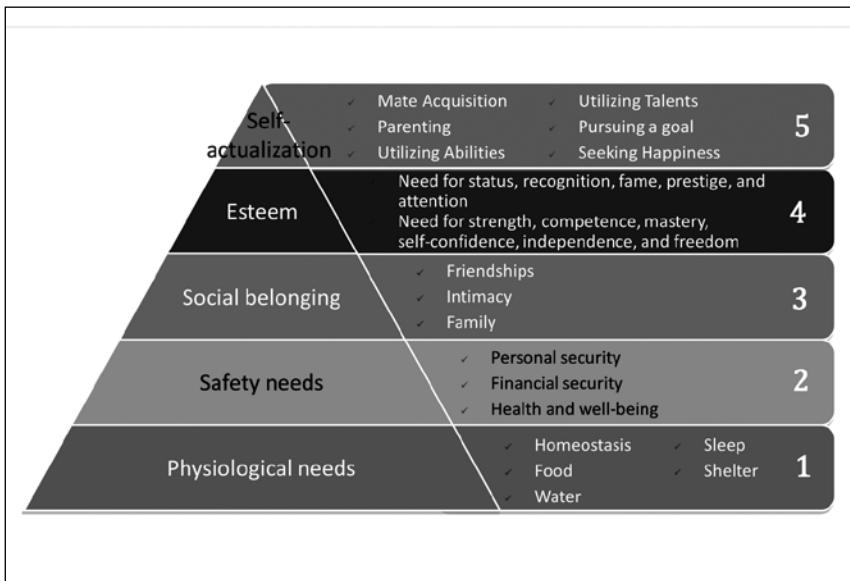


Fig. 1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs (source: <http://yourfreetemplates.com>)

The first four needs are also known as deficiency needs since they can only be met through external sources, such as the environment, people or things around us. Self-actualization, on the other hand, is a growth need. It is always intrinsically motivated because it is promoted for pure enjoyment and the desire to grow. A teacher must ensure that students have fulfilled their deficiency needs (the first four levels of needs), so that one can move on to the growth need. Intrinsic motivation occurs when the students are well fed, feel safe in their environment and can love and respect themselves and others.

Students in Maltese schools know that they can be promoted from one class to the next without needing to be successful in music as a subject. Suffice to say that as a subject, music is usually taught for one term only during a scholastic year, and this will go on for two or three successive scholastic years. This is the situation at the secondary level where only an assessment mark is given. Music is a subject outside the core curriculum. It is not a subject that is required in the same way that reading, writing and mathematics are. Students, and for that matter their parents, know that they can go on about their life course without ever attaining a modicum of musical proficiency. Many 'musical illiterate' students reach adulthood lacking the capacity as listener or performer to appreciate or appraise music. Music is a live or recorded performance art. Thus, it sets it apart from most other forms of school learning. The music curriculum is based on three basic factors: performing, listening and composing. In the classroom a student's accomplishment is

most clearly shown in 'doing' in the present and prescribed time; and not in problem solutions, written assignments or passed examinations.

As music is a performance art this also means that the social environment and context is an especially powerful factor underlying the learning process and the defining of student goals. Opposite or different approaches present in most other areas of learning, cooperative efforts among students, the student-teacher relationship, and very often the parent-child collaboration, take on a special significance in the subject of music. Taking part in a choir or an instrumental ensemble, common especially in secondary schools, serves to enhance interest among students and requires a kind of student teamwork which is uncharacteristic of most other classroom learning. In this circumstance the music teacher must be the mentor who enculturates the students to a world of artistic meaning, a historical background and a multicultural tradition. Obviously there are self-taught musicians but this is rather the exception. An accomplished performer and literate listener do not learn the essence of music from a book or a computer programme. It is almost a rule that a student's initiation into the musical world and musical appreciation are best fostered in the presence of a knowledgeable and responsive teacher or adult who provides individual attention even in a classroom situation.

One may note that what constitutes success in other academic subjects may be different in music learning. Students who wish to attain even a modest competence in music must be ready to take risks, be able to appreciate small signs of growth, and accept disappointment. In other academic subjects the value of success is an important motivational factor. However success in music is defined differently. One may dare to argue that the subject of music can be given a special status in the school curriculum. Music has a distinct role in human activity. Societies past, present and future may arguably carry on with life without the full knowledge of formal subjects, but one may ask, could this happen without music? Unity in a society and communal music making go hand in hand. For as Langer, (1960, p.243) has opined, "The real power of music lies in the fact that it can be true to the life of feeling in a way that words cannot: its significant forms have an ambivalence of content which words cannot".

However, the student's motivation to learn music may be governed by more than perceived self-worth or ability. Demonstrating a relationship between a general or academic self-concept and music motivation or achievement may prove difficult. There is a hierarchy conception that relates different aspects of the person's sense of self to specific activities. This hierarchical model incorporates a broader conception of the place of music in school life. One may note that music is in part academic, but it is also non-academic, and incorporates social, physical and affective elements with music self-concept crossing the theoretical boundaries. One may relate different aspects of the person's sense of self to specific

activities or fields of study which may be called a 'hierarchical' conception. If this hierarchical model (Fig. 2) is expanded, then a broader conception of music's place in school life is incorporated.

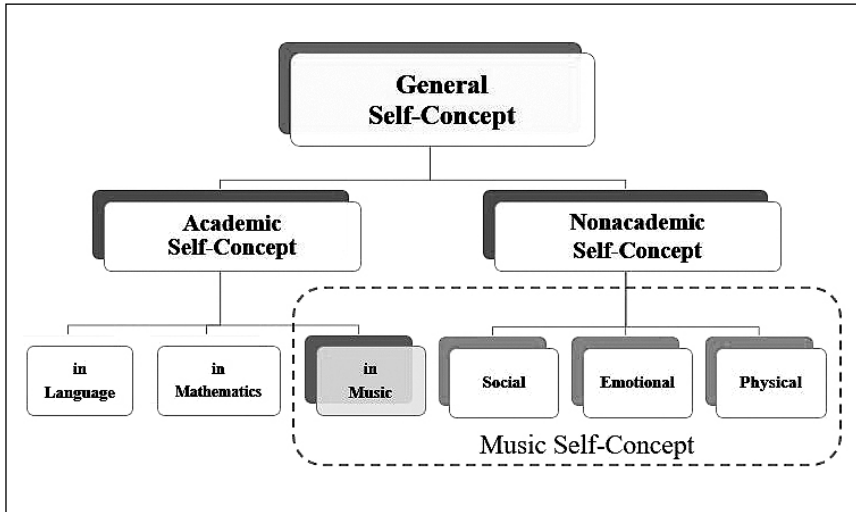


Fig. 2 A hierarchical model of a person's sense of self

Research by Hedden (1982) has suggested five predictors to test the comparative effects on achievement in general music. These are:

- a. Academic achievement
- b. Attitudes toward music
- c. Self-concept in music
- d. Music background (outside school)
- e. Gender

A research, for the present study was conducted in two school in two towns. This revealed that in one school academic achievement and self-concept in music were significant predictors of achievement in general music classes, jointly accounting for 34 per cent. In the second school, the combined effect of academic achievement and attitudes toward music accounted for 61 per cent. However, the best single predictor of achievement in general music was academic achievement.

Undoubtedly there are many students who are unmotivated. A number of these do not have goals, sit passively in class, do not keep up with their notebooks and simply resist learning. Their behaviour is unsatisfactory. Other unmotivated students, however, behave well, attend classes and complete their work; yet they show little pride in their work or commitment to learning. This lack of motivation is not always a student

problem; it is sometimes a family problem, a cultural problem or even a teacher problem. In view of the challenges facing teachers, there should be possibilities for fostering positive motivation. Teachers should be aware of the need for motivation strategies and determine the effectiveness of the same strategies.

Sometimes the teacher creates a negative motivational pattern within an effort and ability framework. This may be fostered by the school and the teacher's practice in the classroom. One of the most frequent practices is the 'competitive learning game' (Covington, 1992 p.130). This game refers to classroom practices that force students to compete against each other for grades and recognition. Such practices include grouping students by ability, limiting the range of accomplishments that receive rewards, and recognizing ability over effort.

According to the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (1992, p.20), "The teacher recognizes factors and situations that are likely to promote or diminish intrinsic motivation and knows how to help students become self-motivated". The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1989) holds that teachers recognise how they can motivate students to learn and how to maintain their interest (confidence) when confronted with temporary failure. The teacher's duty is to plan well for motivation and not just react to problems of motivation as these occur.

If teachers are not motivated then one should not wonder that students are unmotivated. Teachers' motivation comes from within. Music educators should reflect on their personal motivation. As a result the students in the classroom would want to also acquire that abundance of motivation seen and felt in their teachers. The motivated music teacher should thus have this form of positive approach and a constant effort to succeed. Sometimes, the way to success is blocked by obstacles, which may cause the teacher to give up and slip into unmotivated attitudes that cannot guarantee success.

Having a strong conviction about the values of music education enhances dedication and security in the music teaching profession. Music education serves also as a means for justification that music in itself is fundamental to human culture and therefore a necessity to education as a whole. Music education is valuable because the art of music is valuable (Reimer, 1989). Every student can be taught music, a subject which is providential as it helps them in their sensual, emotional, social, moral and intellectual development. Effective learning in the classroom occurs when the music teacher knows exactly what the aims of the lesson are, and believes in the values that make music education special.

Activities prepared for the students are indeed no shortcuts to success. It is the duty of the teacher, when planning beforehand the music lesson, to have a clear picture in their mind of the musical concepts to be passed on to the students. Otherwise, the student would feel lost and unmotivated. Indeed, students are expected to respond to music with pleasure.

The music teacher knows that inspiring motivation is one of teaching's great secrets. To address this challenge, educators must realize that they must first motivate themselves. The music teacher should give careful attention to two motivational conditions – enthusiasm and expectations. Enthusiastic teachers are more likely to spur their students to emulate them. Holding high expectations that are communicated clearly to students, then, helps to raise their level of motivation. Such enthusiasm and expectations are firstly reflected in the lesson plans. Enthusiasm and expectations cannot normally be spontaneously shown during a music lesson without being planned beforehand. Planning a good lesson is, therefore, of central importance.

Conclusion

It is undeniable that in the Maltese school curriculum, music may not be given the required importance. We often hear that music is a universal language, though several people have criticized this concept. However, if one had to take a moment to consider that all societies in the world have their own music, and that in one form or another music exists everywhere, then one can argue that if music is amalgamated with all the other studies in our schools, then effective learning will take place. Studies have also shown that often music educators are viewed as second class teachers, in the sense that other teachers, and sometimes students too, regard music education as a non-essential discipline (Larson, 1992). In some cases, administrators in schools trim down music teaching to address the necessities of school performances – such as prize days, celebration days, Christmas concerts, and Holy Masses – in an effort to boost and enhance the school's ethos.

It is true that music teachers must have their own philosophical approach to the subject. Yet, this philosophical approach must adhere to the changes brought about by the passing of time. This is vital for music in the school curriculum. A proper philosophy justifies the fact that music is not a weak subject in the curriculum because it contributes towards the holistic development of the child and therefore it is a necessity to education as a whole. A strong conviction in this concept will lead to music teachers being self-motivated and full of enthusiasm.

The inclusion of music in the curriculum is not an end in itself. Music has a trifold effect on us. First, it affects us sensuously, and this reaches all humans with very few exceptions. While listening to a piece of music

one can say 'I like it' or 'I don't like it' without giving any reason why. Secondly, music affects us emotionally, as listening to music may arouse different feelings – happy, sad, gloomy, jubilant.... This effect is shared by the majority of human beings. Thirdly, music affects us intellectually, though few people are thus affected. While listening to music mentally is only shared by the trained musician, this does not, however, mean that the music syllabus should not be geared towards the achievement of this effect by all the students in a school. All the three effects enhance the development of a holistic education as music education brings together the intellect and the feeling and thus enables personal expression and creativity.

May all music teachers contribute positively towards making music as a subject a definite presence of importance and value in the school curriculum.

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Perceptions of school professionals on bullying in early childhood

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Bullying is a social problem which can occur both out of schools and within schools (Rigby, 2007). Public, private as well as church schools provide an education to children coming from different backgrounds and with diverse behaviours. Within the school, behavioural difficulties such as violence, disobedience and antisocial behaviour, may arise. These difficulties can lead to bullying; a factor which seems to be on the increase in many countries, including Malta (Cefai, Cooper, & Camilleri, 2008). Bullying can be viewed as a form of aggressive behaviour which usually hurts an individual both physically and mentally. This form of aggressive behaviour is persistent on the victim who, when placed in such a situation, becomes vulnerable and cannot defend themselves (Dillon, 2015). Bullying may also be seen as a misuse of power. Power may vary according to the type of person involved in a social group depending on their ability, strength, size and personality (Saracho, 2016). Additionally, Witteriede and Paulus cite Dorothea Ross (2003) and Sue Askew (1989) who argue that bullying should be viewed as "a continuum of behaviour which involved the attempt to gain power and dominance over another" (Witteriede & Paulus, 2008). Similarly, Dan Olweus (1987), who is considered a pioneer of research on bullying problems, defined bullying as repeated negative actions on an individual. Furthermore, Olweus argues that long lasting bullying will leave negative and painful effects on the victim. Bullying may be referred to as an implied action that causes distress and fear through, for instance, violence and threats (Rigby, 2007).

This aggressive behaviour may occur in different locations, such as the workplace, the home environment and at school (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & O'Brennan, 2013). In the school environment bullying can take place around and within the school premises. According to Rigby (2007) and Bradshaw, Waasdorp and O'Brennan (2013), the playground is the most common location for bullying. The majority of pupils attending primary schools are generally bullied during lunch time and break time; while in secondary schools bullying is equally spread across the school premises, in corridors, classrooms and school yards. In addition to this, the bullied children consistently report that they are also harassed both on their way home and on their way to school (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Rigby, 2007; U'Mofe Gordon, 2018).

The Maltese context

Regarding Malta, according to Cefai, Cooper and Camilleri (2008) there is a lack of local information related to the nature of Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). As a result, a barrier was established to having effective interventions preventing the issue of behavioural difficulties from worsening while also tackling the situation from an early stage. This lack of data hinders the educational authorities from creating an effective strategy that adequately focuses on the requirements of the local situation (Cefai et al., 2008). As the United Nations Convention on

the Rights of the Child (1989) holds, children have the right to voice their opinion. They should be given the opportunity to participate actively in educational discussions while adults listen to their perspectives. In doing so children will have the time and space to share their learning experiences. However, according to Cefai (2009), children still have limited opportunities where they can be heard, and additionally, most decisions related to school are made by adults, excluding children's active participation (Cefai, 2007; Cefai et al., 2008).

Several Maltese studies conducted by Cefai and Cooper (2009) within the secondary school environment, indicate themes which students with SEBD faced while attending school. The major themes common to the students were, "poor relationships with teachers, victimisation by teachers and peers, oppression and powerlessness, unconnected learning experiences, and exclusion and stigmatisation" (Cefai & Cooper, 2009, p.19). Although these themes were identified by children dealing with SEBD, these can also be seen as forms of bullying since they involve victimisation – where one is treated unfairly and teased – helplessness and exclusion, ultimately leading to psychological and physical bullying. Cefai and Cooper (2009) have argued that peer support is a technique that can be used with students at both primary and secondary level where the children are trained to work in collaboration to support victimised students. The objective of peer support is to develop alternative ways to deal with a negative situation in a conciliatory manner. Additionally, one more child-friendly approach is circle time, which allows children to develop listening and speaking skills, empathy, turn-taking, thankfulness for each other's company and the enhancement of problem-solving skills (Cefai & Cooper, 2009). When such skills are promoted in a classroom setting there is less probability that children develop negative behaviour, leading to a decrease in the possibility that bullying takes place.

The emergence of bullying in schools

In its many ways, bullying has a tendency of decreasing with age. For some children bullying can either occur at a certain stage at school or else it can be persistent, which may go on for weeks, months or years, not necessarily within the school environment (Rigby, 2007). While bullying as an aggressive type of behaviour may commence at an early age, children would not have yet reached the level of understanding and awareness to identify such behaviours as bullying. Bullying emerges according to how children learn to show empathy towards others and express themselves as part of their community. Furthermore, they believe that when children team up, they automatically assign roles depending on whether they are dominant or submissive (Eriksen, Nielsen, & Simonsen, 2012). Moreover, according to Rigby (2007), rough and tumble play, is a positive interactive technique to show dominance between humans. This kind of play is common with young children and it is not necessarily seen as 'bullying'.

This behaviour is considered as bullying when the actions are deliberate, to harm and distress others while recognising the consequences and effects which could be caused (Rigby, 2007). Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano (2009) believe that myths about bullying need to be challenged; one such myth is that bullying is regarded as a process which is part of growing up, thus, believing that when children fight back in a bullying situation they will be prepared for life.

The class teacher is seen as a role model for the children, hence, they will observe their teacher's actions and attitudes towards bullying; ultimately the children will be influenced and thus, respond to bullying through the teacher's perspective. Noddings (1992, in Yoon and Bauman, 2014) holds that, within the classroom setting teachers should establish positive social behaviours for the children to develop social skills which will help them to deal appropriately when a bullying situation arises. Wentzel (2003, in Yoon & Bauman, 2014) also argues that through the relationship between the teacher and the children, social behaviours are influenced both directly and indirectly. Direct and indirect behaviours can take different forms, such as physical, verbal and psychological (Downes & Cefai, 2016; Rigby, 2007).

Direct bullying is easier to identify since it involves physical action – hitting, punching, use of physical threats and destructive behaviour – and verbal behaviour – taunting and name calling. However, studies have shown that teachers still consider physical bullying to be more severe than verbal bullying (Cowie & Jennifer, 2008). On the other hand, indirect bullying is harder to observe since it includes exclusion, gossip and spreading of rumours, which makes it less obvious, and thus more challenging to tackle (Downes & Cefai, 2016; Rigby, 2007). When bullying occurs, there is a possibility that every individual is involved on either side: being the victim or the bully (Rigby, 2007). While Parsons (2005) believes that anyone can be bullied at any time in one's life, Rigby (2007) holds that more boys than girls are involved in bullying behaviour. Bullying can be identified according to gender, where, according to Olweus (1978), boys tend to use more direct physical behaviour while girls tend to select indirect modes of bullying. Rigby (2007) found that about 30% of boys stated that they got bullied by girls, while about 70% of girls stated that they got bullied by boys. Another research by Cowie and Jennifer (2008) revealed that boys are more likely to be bullied by boys and girls are more likely to be bullied by girls. Within schools children interact with both other children and adults. As a result of these interactions, social groups are formed; each group having its own social status with certain groups having one or more individual who has control over the others. This type of individual can develop into a perpetrator of bullying behaviour where, when involving boys, the oppressor can either bully alongside his group or even individually (one to one). On the other hand, girls are more likely to bully in groups (Parsons, 2005). According to Thompson, Arora and Sharp (2002), becoming part of a bully's group is a particular strategy

where one can avoid being chosen as a victim to bullying. This strategy involves the child using their social skills to build a relationship with the bully and thus become part of the group that is admired by others while, reducing the chance of being bullied. However, one could still be targeted and thus become subject to aggressive encounters, where the potential victim cannot readily escape or stop being part of the group, hence, victimisation occurs (Goodstein, 2013). When bullying occurs, it is usual that the bully and the victim are in the same level of schooling and if there is an age difference between them, then it is more likely that the bully is older than the victim (Rigby, 2007). When referring to the incidence of bullying one should consider the difference between bullying behaviour and disruptive behaviour, since not all aggressive behaviour is bullying. Additionally, bullying is a covert activity which makes it harder to gain accurate figures about its occurrence. Furthermore, many victims, including children, choose not to talk about the issue with adults due to fear and being concerned that it might get worse (U’Mofe Gordon, 2018).

Characteristics of the bully and the victim

Tables 1a and 1b show the different characteristics and factors that the bully (1a) and the victim (1b) may have.

Table 1a: Characteristics and factors of bullies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impulsive and aggressive temperament • Lack of social skills • Unsuccessful in school • Above average strength and physical size • Low or high self-esteem • Copes badly with anxiety • Intimidating and dominant • Fearless • Popular and outgoing • Symptoms of depression • Suffer from mental problems • Eating disorders • Misconduct: vandalism, stealing, skipping school and cheating • Difficult home environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents who are unaware of the problem • Behaviour encouraged by peers and parents • Frequently sees bullying • History of being bullied • Have friends who are large in size and/or are bullies • Have parents that are authoritarian and use punitive forms of discipline • Have unsupportive parents • Poor parent-child communication • Lacks adult role model • Have lower academic achievements • Suffered from child abuse

Table 1b: Characteristics and factors of victims

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shy or weak temperament • Lack of assertive skills • Are vulnerable • Children with additional needs: physical and learning difficulties • Low self-esteem, introvert and insecure • Anxious • Sad and lonely • Poor social skills and unpopular • Sensitive • Easily impressed and a follower • Physically less attractive • Lacks co-ordination: provokes bullying, name-calling and teasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptoms of depression • Suffers from mental problems • Eating disorders • Intrusive parents • Have a close relationship with parents • Have parents involved in school activities • Have unsupportive parents • Difficult home environment • Suffered from child abuse • Experiences physical health problems: sleep problems, headaches and fatigue • Absenteeism |
|---|---|

(Sources: Brookman, Maguire, Pierpoint, & Bennett, 2010; Dake, Price, & Telljohann, 2003; Rigby, 2007)

The majority of these characteristics are similar to teachers' perceptions of children's attitudes in relation to bullying behaviour (Antonopoulos, 2015). With regard to bullying behaviour, there are some related issues which include interpersonal relationships, family/home environment and academic and school difficulties. Interpersonal relationships refer to popular students or children who have higher scores in relation to social acceptance and, thus, are less likely to be bullied. Furthermore, the family/home environment is a place where children become exposed to socialisation at an early age. According to Persson and Svensson (2010) the socioeconomic status and the composition of the family do not influence whether children develop bullying behaviours or undergo victimisation. Nevertheless, U'Mofe Gordon (2018) found that children from low socioeconomic status are more likely to become involved in bullying behaviour or victimisation. Backing up U'Mofe Gordon's (2018) research, and contradicting Persson and Svensson's (2010) analyses, Eriksen, Nielsen and Simonsen (2012) found that children are more likely to become victims of bullying if they come from divorced or separated families. Additionally, with regard to early socialisation, parental styles can also affect bullying behaviour. For instance, bullies are more likely to have parents who are authoritarian and use punitive forms of discipline. When parents are excessively involved in their children's life, a problem can arise. Dake, Price and Telljohann (2003) noted that this intense involvement caused a higher rate of victimised boys. Harsh home environments can cause children to be involved in bullying behaviours both as a bully and as a victim, as opposed to children coming from nurturing home environments (U'Mofe Gordon, 2018). However, if the children who come from harsh

home environments join a group of friends, they would be less likely to suffer from victimisation. The last issue connected to bullying behaviour relates to academic and school problems. The school characteristic, such as, class or school size, do not relate to bullying behaviour; however, the child's personality does (Dake et al., 2003; Eriksen et al., 2012).

Causes of bullying

Bullying is a behaviour which may be caused as a result of early aggressive behaviour, which may take the shape of a certain type of activity, such as rough and tumble play. When engaging in this type of play, there will always be children who are dominant; this does not necessarily mean that bullying is taking place. However, once the action is repeated and is done with intention, it can develop into bullying (Click & Parker, 2009; Rigby, 2007). Furthermore, this aggressive behaviour can be displayed in different situations – children who are surrounded by peers and adults who are permissive to aggressive behaviour are more likely to increase their level of aggression or model such behaviour (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009). Another pathway that influences and promotes bullying is that society might be the cause for children's aggressive behaviour; therefore, due to such culture, schools fail to foster adequate procedure to tackle bullying and begin to tolerate certain types of behaviour (Rigby, 2007).

Another factor that can influence bullying is the home environment. Family factors have an impact on the development of bullying behaviour regarding the victim as well as the bully. The family background can influence the relations that children have at school. Children who have difficult family background are more likely to bully other children. Additionally, Olweus (1978), another researcher who supports this theory, believes that certain family factors are substantial in bullying behaviour (Bauman & Yoon, 2014; Downes & Cefai, 2016; Eriksen et al., 2012; Yoon & Bauman, 2014). This impact depends on the bond and the attitude that the primary caregiver has with their children. Involvement and lack of warmth are some of the behaviours where the children are not only at risk of portraying aggressive behaviour, but would also be encouraged or controlled to engage in this type of behaviour (U'Mofe Gordon, 2018). However, there might be some families that discipline their children differently, for instance, through the use of physical aggression. This type of behaviour occurs when there is violence and physical punishment (Downes & Cefai, 2016). As a result it is likely that children who are bullied at home might also be bullied at school (Rigby, 2007). The disruptive behaviour can be linked with children not doing well in school (Bauman & Yoon, 2014), thus, these will turn to bullying as a means to attract attention (U'Mofe Gordon, 2018). Additionally, the flexibility of school rules may also be an issue as children who show signs of aggressive behaviour will find it easier to take the rules for granted, earning the title of 'rule breakers', which will seem superior in the eyes of their peers (Hallam & Rogers, 2008; U'Mofe Gordon, 2018).

In addition, a child who has an aggressive and impulsive temperament would probably develop threatening behaviour as opposed to children who have a shy or weak temperament (Rigby, 2007; Swearer et al., 2009). Furthermore, children with behavioural issues, irrespective of whether they are high or low achievers, might have a negative reputation with the school staff, being seen as troublemakers, mischievous, rebels and active. Hence, these children might act according to their 'stigma' and thus engage in bullying behaviour (Rigby, 2007), while their personality might also adapt by getting worse, leading to aggressive behaviour. Moreover, there are children who join social groups where, if a bully is part of this group, the latter will feel untouchable since they are surrounded by their peers. Thus, the children who join the group will be engaging in indirect bullying since although not doing the actual action, they would be supporting the aggressive behaviour done by the perpetrator within their group. Additionally, the children in the bully's social group may also start implementing bullying behaviour on other children as a result of peer pressure from the bully (Bauman & Yoon, 2014). The majority of disruptive children who exhibit aggression towards children and staff, are antisocial, refuse to cooperate, tend to steal, lie, disobey and throw tantrums; these are similar to the characteristics and factors of a bully. Consequently, if this disruption grows, it is expected that the bullying behaviour will grow concurrently (Rigby, 2007; Swearer et al., 2009).

Children with additional needs are at greater risk of becoming victims of bullying. These children might be picked upon due to their learning difficulties and odd manners, for example, for being dyslexic and being less attractive (Bradshaw et al., 2013). Although this is common in a number of researches, such as those of Drake, Price and Telljohann (2003) and Bradshaw, Waasdrop and O'Brennan (2013), on the other hand Olweus (1987) believed that obesity, facial expression, personal hygiene, physical disabilities, attire and posture were not related to children being victims of bullying.

The effects of bullying on children

Bullying can have different effects on children, mentally and physically. It is a proven fact that bullying can cause stress which can take the form of three types of stressors: chronic, acute and neutral. When children experience childhood depression, proneness to accidents, low self-esteem, health deterioration and anxiety (Eriksen et al., 2012), they end up struggling with chronic stressors (U'Mofe Gordon, 2018). When children experience acute stressors, effects include sleep disturbances, detachment, irritability and sensitivity to the environment, such as detecting threats (Goldman, 2012; Harris, 2009). Issues relating to physical health, on the other hand, include stomach aches and headaches (mentioned by Drake, Price & Telljohann, 2003 in Click & Parker, 2009). Neutral stressors involve such happenings as transitions –

the birth of a new sibling, moving house and change of teacher (Schott & Søndergaard, 2014), as also misery, loneliness and dehumanisation (Harris, 2009; Schott & Søndergaard, 2014; Swearer et al., 2009; U'Mofe Gordon, 2018).

When children are emotionally affected by bullying they may be sad about attending school, which may result in lack of concentration and motivation to learn, leading to a reduced academic performance (Bauman & Yoon, 2014; Schott & Søndergaard, 2014; Yoon & Bauman, 2014). Additionally, these children might avoid going to school as they become afraid of leaving their home and facing their bully (Rigby, 2007; Yoon & Bauman, 2014). However, if they do leave their home, they would want their parent / guardian to take them to school even if it is just a short distance away so as to feel a sense of security. Furthermore, children who experience lashing may eventually lose confidence in themselves, lessen their self-esteem and worse than that, blame themselves for the aggressive behaviour directed at them (Yoon & Bauman, 2014). Moreover, bullying leaves long-term effects on victims such as the development of mental health problems including anxiety disorders, which may lead them to lose their sense of self-worth and consequently end up with failing to create trustworthy relationships in the future (Downes & Cefai, 2016; Eriksen et al., 2012). On the other hand, children who bully learn that they can achieve something by taking advantage of their relationships with others (Cowie & Jennifer, 2008).

Bullying is a process which harms the victims (Downes & Cefai, 2016) and also inhibits the development and social possibilities attained by the social status in a group of students that rely on each other. Bullying might develop into social stress where bullied children are constrained to create psychological mechanisms to help them cope with the apprehensive situations which they come to face. Unfortunately, these coping mechanisms disturb the pattern of development in children, reducing them to act in a certain way; for instance, refraining from interacting with people they do not know (Yoon & Bauman, 2014). Moreover, according to Goldman (2012), when children return home they might indicate that they are suffering from emotional distress, or that they are being bullied at school, since they would be upset, but are not willing to open up about the situations they face, or they might have random bruises and cuts. The effects of bullying may not only be seen in the children themselves but can also be detected from their personal things, such as having damaged items. Furthermore, a change in the temperament of children without explanation is another indication of bullying. This occurs especially before returning to school after a period away such as the weekend or holidays. Additionally, children might make up excuses like saying that they are feeling sick, having a tummy ache or a headache, so as not to go to school (Goldman, 2012; Kohut, 2007).

Awareness and prevention of bullying

There are many perspectives related to bullying behaviour; however, it is essential that an open mind is kept as to what constitutes bullying. To prevent bullying it is important to maintain constant monitoring and keeping up to date with bullying behaviours in schools. All school staff need to be alerted to the responsibility of reporting and recording bullying incidents and be aware of any possible, past and present bullying occurrences. Following this system in schools, will allow the staff to become more knowledgeable about bullying behaviour and helps to develop their skills to respond to and tackle bullying-related situations professionally and directly. Being aware of the approaches and strategies that may be implemented to prevent bullying behaviour can help shift the way one thinks about bullying and improve anti-bullying strategies (U'Mofe Gordon, 2018). As an individual one can take the initiative to prevent bullying from happening, but, being aware of and making use of anti-bullying approaches and policies, leads to prevention being tackled in a more professional way. In schools, the Senior Management Team (SMT) is responsible for tackling bullying behaviour. They need to allocate time, resources and be directly involved in the development process. Additionally, they use their management and leadership skills by providing support to the school staff during the development process and making sure that the school bullying policy is put into practice (Cortis, Baldachino, Borg, Buhagiar & Gauci, 2014).

Teaching and non-teaching staff should both be involved. Bullying may occur anywhere in the school and thus all staff members should be familiar with the anti-bullying approach so as to know how to identify bullying and react adequately; this should lead to better results when addressing cases involving bullying. Different professionals have varied perspectives towards bullying due to past experiences. Depending on these experiences teachers might behave in a certain way towards children. For instance, if they themselves were involved in victimisation circumstances when they were younger, these could result in a particular perspective towards bullies which influences the way they act when faced with a case where children in their classroom are involved in bullying behaviour. Furthermore teachers' response may also be affected depending on the cognitive and emotional factors that might be influenced by interaction which they had either with the victim or the bully, as also their perception of the severity of the situation. Additionally, some teachers believe that bullying behaviour is normal amongst children, thus, they respond to a bullying situation in a passive way.

Yoon and Bauman (2014) developed the theory of coping; this provides a framework to understand better how teachers respond to bullying. The experience of bullying can be stressful both to children and to teachers, thus, since this theory portrays the different ways of how teachers cope,

it may help professionals to better handle an occurrence of bullying. In relation to this, Hektner and Swenson (2012) found that the attitude and actions of teachers mould the development of the bullying behaviour. Therefore, teachers require adequate training to handle bullying in an efficient way and decrease victimization (Yoon & Bauman, 2014). Moving on, teachers outline two approaches to tackle bullying. Teachers think that first they should approach the involved bully and victim separately to listen to each side of the story. Other teachers prefer to address and discuss bullying in class with all the children in the hope that the bully would realise that their behaviour is not acceptable, and at the same time provide support to the victim by indicating that they are aware of the situation. However, if this bullying behaviour persists, then it is the teachers' responsibility to report it to the SMT, who will then notify the parents according to the severity of the situation (Swearer et al., 2009).

The role of teachers and the way they act is very important in relation to bullying in schools (Yoon & Bauman, 2014). Thus, training is the foundation of preventing school bullying, decreasing victimisation (Bauman & Yoon, 2014) and improving children's behaviour (U'Mofe Gordon, 2018). For such preparation to be efficient and effective an amount of time needs to be allocated for intensive training, which predisposed teachers to have a sense of classroom management where they would intervene effectively as a bullying situation arises (Bauman & Yoon, 2014; U'Mofe Gordon, 2018; Yoon & Bauman, 2014). Unfortunately, most of the training sessions focus on what bullying is, rather than on strategies and techniques which should be used when dealing with bullying. Substantially, teachers do not feel confident since they would be concerned that if they intervene in a bullying situation they might make it worse. To this end they require more training and guidelines on how to tackle bullying with both the children and their parents, thus gaining a wide range of strategies to adapt according to the situations they encounter (U'Mofe Gordon, 2018; Yoon & Bauman, 2014).

An organisation that provides several courses for educators is the School Education Gateway. One of such courses was 'Bullying - NOT in my class! Creating safe learning environments for students', which was aimed at helping educators to understand different types of bullying and how to deal with bullying situations, thus, enhancing their professional knowledge regarding bullying (School Education Gateway, <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/about.htm>). It is essential that all staff, not just teaching staff, should be given the opportunity to learn about the behaviour of bullying in schools, express their own knowledge about bullying behaviour and play their part at the school to prevent bullying from happening or else take action when bullying occurs (Barbero, Hernández, Esteban & García, 2012). All staff should be familiar with the anti-bullying policy for professional interventions. To create an anti-bullying policy, one needs a group of educational professionals each with their own abilities to

develop this project. To be effective the whole school must make an effort to abide by this policy (Downes & Cefai, 2016; U'Mofe Gordon, 2018) and there should be different initiatives – such as, the involvement of the whole school, the classroom environment including the importance of supervision during lunchtime and in the playground (U'Mofe Gordon, 2018), since the latter, due to poor supervision, is a central space for bullying to occur. The effectiveness of supervision is based on who is supervising, the kind of training the personnel have received, how they could improve their actions, their involvement in the children's play and how to tackle behaviour management skills in the playground. This would be possible provided that the supervisors have behaviour management skills themselves to be able to maintain the children's behaviour in the playground (Swearer et al., 2009). Additionally, if the policy is implemented appropriately, the professionals would apply this intervention plan to prevent bullying, while the current knowledge of bullying would be enhanced (U'Mofe Gordon, 2018). Furthermore, through interventions, children would be gaining professional support and learn different coping strategies which prepare them for when bullying situations arise. In addition, the children will enhance their social skills since they would be knowledgeable on how to act with different people (Barbero et al., 2012).

Malta has an anti-bullying service which works in collaboration with anti-bullying policies within the schools. It helps schools to take initiatives, provide support and create a safe, secure and stimulating environment in which students can succeed, grow and develop. This programme raises awareness about bullying amongst children in schools, offers meetings with parents, implement and formulate strategies to tackle bullying behaviour, address cases on an individual basis and help in the development of the school, staff and pupils (Government of Malta, 2016). In addition to the services provided by this unit, each school should follow a whole-school approach which focuses on identifying aggressive and violent behaviour leading to bullying amongst pupils. This approach is aimed at recognising the different characteristics of each school through which awareness about bullying is raised (Downes & Cefai, 2016). Awareness is raised by increasing the importance of supervision in the playground, organise classroom meetings, create classroom rules and scheduling parent-teacher meetings. The purpose of the whole school anti-bullying approach is to include all stakeholders – SMT, teachers, other school staff, students and parents (U'Mofe Gordon, 2018).

Apart from observation, another way of identifying bullying behaviour is through communication with school staff and parents. The family context is one of the most significant influences in bullying (Bauman & Yoon, 2014). Schools that include families in their operations are viewed in a more positive way by parents and other members of society. Furthermore, accepting suggestions from people outside of school allows them to work together with educators and other professionals to further combat the problem

of bullying. Bullying can be an embarrassment to certain children and if their parents were to find out, the children would beg their parents not to approach the school since they would be afraid that the level of victimisation would worsen (Ragoo, 2014). A consequence of this barrier of silence is the furtherance of bullying behaviour (Eriksen et al., 2012). Hence, it is vital that there is strong communication between the students and their parents as this facilitates the children's confiding with the family when they are faced with a bullying situation (Losey, 2011). For some parents, bullying is what causes them the most stress (Losey, 2011) and as a result they might find it difficult to regulate their apprehension regarding the negative behaviour against their children while they consider the bully as an 'aggressive misbehaved child' from the very first moment they hear about the incident. Due to their pain, which may cause resentment, they will not only spread this perspective among other parents, but they may end up negatively influencing their children, thus, making it even harder for the child to overcome the bullying situation in which they were involved (Goldman, 2012). On the other hand, if parents are given the opportunity to attend courses and programmes which help them develop their knowledge on bullying, they may be better able to handle a bullying situation. Thus, they will help in contributing to the course of action, which would need to take place in order to prevent the bullying from proceeding further (Rigby, 2012).

When a bullying situation occurs, the bully's parents should be notified immediately to take an active part in supporting their child to improve / control their behaviour (Swearer et al., 2009). These parents should work in collaboration with the school to scaffold what is done at school, thus realising that what is inappropriate at home is also inappropriate at school. Furthermore, parents need to educate their children on how to react in certain situations, so as not to engage in bullying behaviour; for instance, controlling their anger management (Kohut, 2007). Moreover, a strategy that could be applied both by the parents and the teachers is the introduction of social stories, to which children will be able to relate in their everyday life. Some examples of the different categories involved in these social stories are diversity, kindness, emotional awareness and poverty (U'Mofe Gordon, 2018). Another strategy is to involve the children in prevention programmes so that they too would be part of the prevention of bullying (Yoon & Bauman, 2014). They need to be involved since peer pressure is a powerful tool. Children should be given the opportunity, during school hours, to talk about bullying by discussing what they think the meaning of bullying is, what it consists of and what they believe the school should do in cases of bullying.

There are a variety of approaches that can be used in schools, such as quality circles, which are made up of a number of persons who meet often to discuss ways and techniques in relation to a particular responsibility. Thus, quality circles can be used to tackle bullying. Children can participate in this process, where they will be given the opportunity to discuss bullying among those of their own age, educate themselves about the topic and

stimulate a sense of peer pressure against bullying (Paul, 2014). Another approach is to negotiate a win-win solution where the children will learn to listen to each other to resolve a conflict and agreeing on a fair solution (Chirnside, 2015; Gallagher & Kavanaugh, 2008). Circle time is thus a good alternative to resolve bullying issues as it gives children the opportunity to reflect on their own feelings and those of their peers while coming up with positive ways to solve the issues (Paul, 2014). A similar approach involves counselling sessions where the children will once again reflect on feelings, thoughts and experiences on an individual basis or in smaller groups (Downes & Cefai, 2016; U'Mofe Gordon, 2018).

Research in Maltese schools

This article will now outline and discuss research done by the present authors regarding bullying in early childhood in the Maltese school setting.

The questions posed in the interviews done with teachers and other professionals were based on research revealed in the specialised literature. Through these questions the present writers wanted to bring out the general perspectives of the participants about bullying, including characteristics of children involved in bullying, the effects of bullying, the support available, the involvement of parents and the prevention techniques. Interviews were done with twelve professionals: four teachers (two of a Year 1 class and two of a Year 2 class); two kindergarten assistants (one each of a Kinder 1 class and a Kinder 2 class); two educational psychologists; two school counsellors; and two child psychologists.

A discussion of the data

To respect anonymity each participant was given a pseudonym; all the interviews were then transcribed *ad verbatim*. Rather than analysing the responses according to the individual respondents, the responses were categorised under specific themes as follows:

- a. Perceptions of bullying
- b. Manifestation of bullying
- c. Causes of bullying
- d. Characteristics of bullies and victims
- e. Support for victims and bullies
- f. Professional training
- g. Supervision in the playground
- h. Impact of bullying on children
- i. Parental involvement

a. Perceptions of bullying

The fact that bullying has always been a present element and will probably continue to be so, is evident in the data gathered. Two psychologists and Teacher 4 believed that bullying could start from an early stage, for instance from a kindergarten class, and is also present in both primary and secondary schools. Olweus (1987) and U'Mofe Gordon (2018), hold that bullying is a repeated negative action; similarly, all the teachers interviewed stated that bullying was not something that happened once, it was something that was harmful and continual. Furthermore, Psychologists 1 and 2 and School Counsellor 2 agreed with the teachers and added that bullying could be seen as an intentional action inflicted on others which was harmful for both the victims and the perpetrators. Psychologist 1 believed that children displaying bullying behaviour had a good acumen to pick on sensitive children and chose them as their victims. According to Teacher 4, Kindergarten Assistant (KA) 1 and Psychologist 2, these victims would be targets, since psychological, verbal and physical pain was inflicted upon them. Indeed, similar arguments were brought by Rigby (2007) and Downes and Cefai (2016). From the data gathered, it was evident that bullying can happen everywhere; in relation to this, Rigby (2007) states that victims can be bullied both on their way home as much as on their way to school. This can be compared to the statement made by two psychologists who stated that bullying also happened on the bus or minivan, and also, according to School Counsellor 1 and Teacher 1, in the toilet, which was a common place for bullying to occur. Furthermore, Psychologist 2 suggested that rather than having supervision on the bus, people should be trained specifically on the subject to prevent bullying situations in such a place. This suggestion caught the present authors' attention who became even more aware that supervision alone was not enough; every individual who was responsible for children needed to be adequately trained to face a bullying situation, and not only on school premises but wherever children may be. Psychologist 1 defined bullying as: "an imbalance of power, that is, the person who bullies always wants to exert power over another person... bullying is also repetitive and intentional, so it is made to ridicule or to put the other person at a disadvantage socially."

According to two of the psychologists and School Counsellor 1, apart from behavioural problems, children displaying bullying behaviour may also be vulnerable due to emotional problems resulting from difficulties present at home, such as abuse including harassment and exposure to bullying, be this experiencing it themselves or done on others. This corroborates the views of several authors, including Bauman and Yoon (2014) and Downes and Cefai (2016), whose hold that the home environment has its significance in bullying behaviour. In this line of thought, two teachers and School Counsellor 2 state that children develop frustration due to certain situations in their life, which they express by hitting others, hence, it would

not necessarily be bullying but a way of expressing their anger. Concurring with this belief, while trainee teachers the present authors encountered a case during their teaching practice where a boy was known to be a bully; when his situation was investigated further, it emerged that the child came from a dysfunctional home environment. School Counsellor 2 argued that: "the word 'bullying' is being misused by people; for them any kind of action which is negative, they confuse it for bullying, however, for it to be bullying it has to be a repetitive aggressive behaviour." In actual fact it would be an argument. This is arguably a vital remark and it is essential to distinguish between bullying as a repetitive aggressive behaviour and an aggressive behaviour that happens occasionally. Psychologist 3 contradicted Rigby's research which states that more boys than girls are involved in bullying (Rigby, 2007), as this interviewee felt that this was a myth since: "girls can also be bullies and girls can also bully boys... there is no longer a gender difference in this matter". Three psychologists believed that the bullying scenario was changing since through the social media bullying did not stop once the child left school, but became cyber bullying, which was a new phenomenon of which the community needed to be more conscious.

b. Manifestation of bullying

In line with U'Mofe Gordon's (2018) perspective, two teachers and two KAs agree that identifying bullying in the classroom is possible by being vigilant and observing the children on a daily basis. However, children can still report that someone else is bothering them. We consider that the role and responsibility of the teacher is to be able to notice changes in the children's behaviour and attitudes especially towards other children. Additionally, according to three teachers, bullying can be manifested through name calling, pushing, hitting, teasing and intentionally taking things from others. Teacher 2 further explained that sometimes children engage in certain negative behaviour to attract attention or, conversely, they would pay less attention, or their participation in class changes between joining in activities or staying back from participating. Furthermore, Teacher 4 underlined that when children are in the playground, they should be observed as to how they are engaging in play. The way boys play might be considered as bullying since they tend to play rough, however, this might not be the case. In fact, according to Rigby (2007) and Click and Parker (2009) this kind of play is known as rough and tumble play, which is common with young children and it is not necessarily a form of bullying.

According to KA 2, School Counsellor 1 and Psychologist 1, observation is also essential since the probability that victims seek help depends on the children's personality. There are children who are resilient and would be able to report it quickly; however, there are those who are unable to bring themselves to report that they are being bullied. The present authors hold

that professionals who work directly with children should be aware of this because, notwithstanding the support that may be available, if a child does not speak up and if the bullying goes unnoticed, they will remain a victim. Additionally, Psychologist 1 stated that it might be difficult for the victims to seek help since they would need to go against the bully, hence, for the victims: "to stand up to the bully they need to risk their social standing" where other children or the child displaying bullying behaviour could turn against them even more. The victims will also risk losing their friends because their bully might be in their social circle and if they go against the child displaying bullying behaviour the other children may side with the latter. This, it may however be argued, might not always be the case since through the personal experience of the authors, it has been observed and noticed that if there are resilient bystanders within the social group of the child displaying bullying behaviour, they would be able to stop certain words or actions which harm the victim. Moreover, School Counsellor 2 and two psychologists added that through the increase in awareness about bullying, victims might feel more at ease, confident and disposed to seek help.

Within the classroom these behaviours need to be resolved so as not to leave a negative impact on the children; indeed, KA 1 stressed that a bullying issue needed to be tackled immediately. Additionally, three teachers and KA 2 agreed that both the victim and the perpetrator needed to be followed separately with both sides being heard and then the responses are put to both sides to observe their reaction during this interaction. Teachers 2 and 4 and KA 2 indicated that when a negative behaviour takes place in front of the whole class, they would address the class through the use of videos, social stories, role play, PowerPoint presentations and circle time so that the children would become aware that negative actions have consequences on other children while feeling more comfortable to express themselves without judgement. In relation to this, Paul (2014) holds that circle time is a positive alternative way to resolve bullying issues.

c. Causes of bullying

According to Psychologist 2, it is: "hard to predict or define a particular profile where there is definitely going to be bullying," since, according to Psychologists 2 and 4, there are a number of factors that contribute to bullying. A common factor seen by most interviewed professionals, some of the teachers and a KA, is the home environment. KA 2, Teachers 2 and 4, agreed that children might be passing through a difficult time at home since each child comes from a different background. Consequently, it is believed that there is something missing in the children's life and thus, they engage in bullying behaviour to address the emptiness. All the interviewed psychologists and School Counsellor 1 believed that if the parents have all the power at home, once their children enter school they

would want to take over and thus, they strove to assert their power, which could lead to these developing bullying tendencies. On the other hand, School Counsellor 1 felt that, if children were 'underdogs' at home they may remain underdogs at school because they believed that that was the way it should be and hence, which would thus predispose them to becoming victims of bullying. Additionally, certain children might exhibit bullying behaviour because they were once, or they still are, victims of bullying.

School Counsellor 2 added that at school, children will imitate the behaviour which they are exposed to at home. This reflects a reality of life as the home is the first place where children absorb different attitudes and internalise behaviours they see around them. Furthermore, Psychologists 1, 2 and 4 gave instances of such behaviours; for example, violence is thought to be the way to solve problems, while ridiculing others relates to neglect from parents and dealing with disagreements. This reflects the research presented by Elliot (2002) and Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano (2009), which states that children are more likely to model the aggressive behaviour done around them. Additionally, mental health issues, financial issues and socioeconomic status of the family also have an impact on bullying. Similarly, U'Mofe Gordon (2018) found that children from low socioeconomic status are at higher risk of being bullied. School Counsellor 1 further believed that "parents who spoil their children" was another factor contributing to bullying. These children get used to obtaining anything they want; hence, they pretend the same treatment at school and might get aggressive if they do not acquire what they fancy. Although not all spoiled children engage in bullying behaviour, the present authors consider children who are used to getting what they want to be more prone to engage in repetitive aggressive behaviour in an effort to achieve their expectations. On the other hand, Psychologist 4 pointed out that if the parents are dismissive they can lower the children's self-esteem making them more vulnerable to bullying. Furthermore, Teacher 4 held that: "a child might feel superior to other children so he or she pretends that everyone will obey them and do as they say". According to School Counsellor 1 and Psychologist 1, providing that this superior child has friends in their social circle, they can be peer pressured or influenced to engage in bullying behaviour. Some of these children might not even want to engage in bullying behaviour, however, out of fear of themselves being ostracised and victimised, they emulate the child they admire. As a result, the bully will have a gain and thus feels more important.

According to three psychologists who we interviewed, another common factor of bullying is the way children operate, that is, the children's personality and temperament, which relates to research by Rigby (2007) and Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano (2009), saying that certain children might solve problems through the use of violence and aggression. Furthermore, children might have neural developmental difficulties, thus failing to understand certain social and emotional issues, such as lacking empathy, and might not understand humour. This places them in a more

vulnerable position. Teacher 1 believed that bullying can occur when children are envious of each other or when a competition gets out of hand and leads to quarrelling. Psychologist 1 stated that when bullying is not addressed immediately or properly or goes unnoticed, it creates more factors for bullying to continue because it would seem that bullying is acceptable and that there are no consequences for this type of behaviour. Therefore, it is important for children who display bullying behaviour to be made aware that their action calls for a remedial consequence; they thus understand that their negative behaviour is not acceptable and needs to be addressed.

d. Characteristics of bullies and victims

According to Psychologists 1 and 2 it is not easy to come up with a profile because a child might not seem to be at risk, however, they may still be bullied or engaged in bullying behaviour. It was interesting to hear such an observation because it made one reflect on how vulnerable children are and how each child can be a target of bullying or can display bullying behaviour no matter the circumstances. Some of these characteristics are similar to the characteristics in Tables 1a and 1b above. However, Table 2 and Table 3 respectively show some common characteristics of children who display bullying behaviour and victims. Moreover, Table 4 lists characteristic associated with children who are considered different than others.

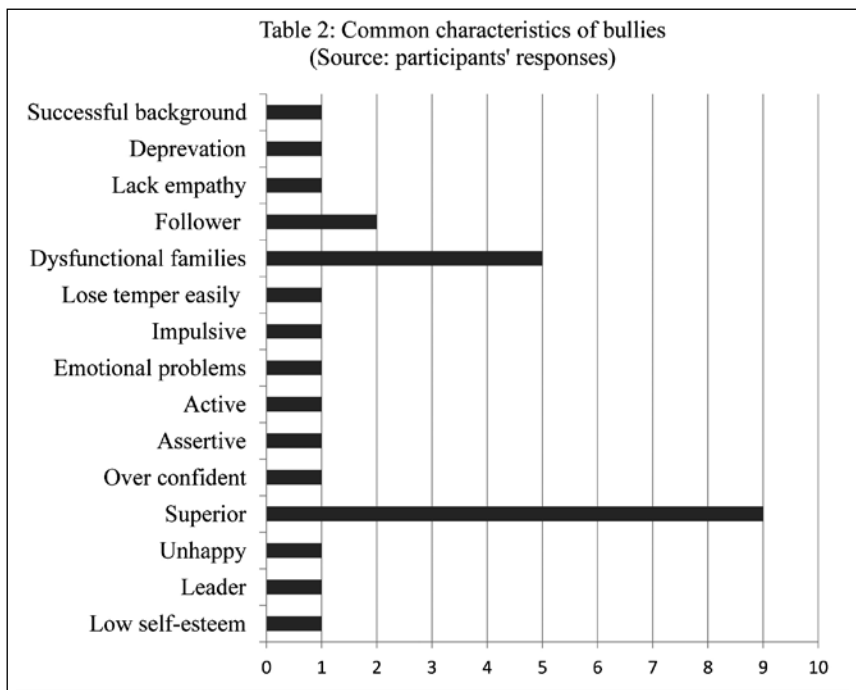


Table 3: Common characteristics of victims
(Source: participants' responses)

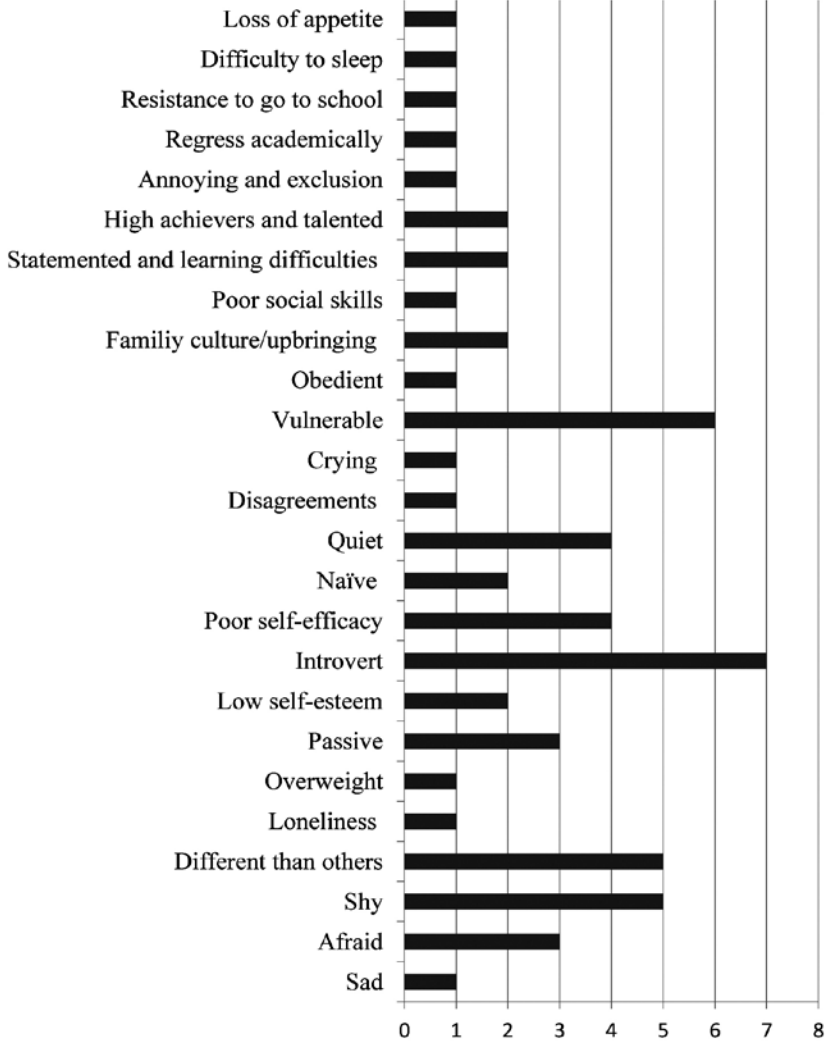
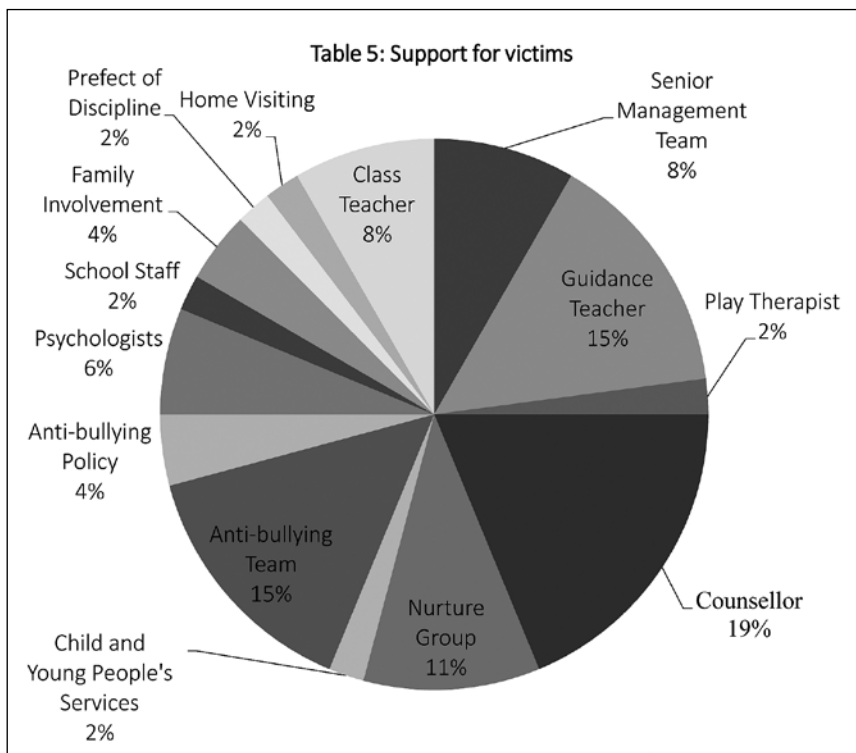


Table 4: What is meant by different than others

- Wearing glasses
- Different colour of skin
- From another country
- Migrants
- Parents no longer together
- Different culture
- Clothes they wear
- Different attitude
- Language
- Different sexual orientation (e.g. a boy with feminine disposition)

e. Support for victims and bullies

Table 5 shows the different types of support available for the victims. From this table one can understand that there is a variety of support. However, the most common is that offered by the counsellors, anti-bullying team and guidance teachers. This shows that although the interviewed participants mentioned a number of available support measures, there is certain support which is not taken into consideration since it is not familiar with the participants interviewed.



All the interviewees agreed that both the victims and the bullies require support. Psychologist 2 and Psychologist 4 held that support should be the same for the victims and for the perpetrators, thus, the chances of relapsing are decreased. Furthermore, Teacher 3, School Counsellor 1 and Psychologist 3 found it is essential to understand why the bully behaved in a certain way while helping the child displaying bullying behaviour to understand how hurt the victims were; this is also a strategy which could be used during therapy; however, the bully might not always accept the support. Furthermore, through mediation sessions provided by the school and the teachers, the bully would have

the opportunity to listen to what the victims have to say. Indeed, the child displaying bullying behaviour should also be given a voice since when tackling a bullying situation it is not enough to provide support to the victim; it is also vital to help the perpetrator to understand why they are displaying this behaviour, possibly leading to improvement. Three teachers and KA 1 agreed that the SMT should be aware of the bullying situation to provide the required support; however, in minor situations, class teachers should try to tackle the occurrence themselves. Moreover, according to Teachers 2 and 4, through the nurture group the children would be more willing to listen and they feel more confident to disclose their circumstances within the group since the adult present would not be their class teacher. Additionally, the nurture group supports the bully to develop skills and norms adequate to better interact with others. Psychologist 1 added that the guidance teacher allows the victim time to process what has happened to them and feel assured enough to share their experiences and thoughts. According to Teacher 3, the guidance teacher is also available to support the bully. The guidance teacher can and should support the child displaying bullying behaviour by giving them guidance on how to channel frustration and deal with troubling issues in a calmer and more positive way.

All the interviewed school counsellors and psychologists mention the Anti-Bullying Service as a support for victims. This service works directly with the children, both in the classroom and on an individual basis, with teachers, with counsellors and also with parents. In relation to this, the anti-bullying service works in collaboration with anti-bullying policies within the schools (Government of Malta, 2016). Psychologist 2 observed that the anti-bullying team forms part of the National School Support Services (NSSS), which is a centralised unit catering for both private and public schools in Malta. From the data gathered it can be revealed that all the interviewed participants were aware of the anti-bullying service in Malta which can offer them support when tackling a bullying situation. Furthermore, School Counsellor 2 mentioned the Professional Team Meeting where the counsellors, social workers and Appoġġ come together to look into the reported cases and, as professionals, provide adequate support for the child and their family.

School Counsellor 1 and Psychologist 1 stated that another support for children displaying bullying behaviour was the 'zero-tolerance approach'. However, through this approach the children would only be absent from school for a few days with the probability that the negative behaviour would be resumed on their return. There is, therefore, the anti-bullying policy which will restore justice through consequences aimed to teach children how to behave. Two of the interviewed teachers suggested that counsellors should help as a kind of support for children displaying bullying behaviour. According to School Counsellor 1, it is the responsibility of the

counsellors to strengthen the personality and character of the children. In the same vein, Psychologist 1 asserted that victims should be supported by creating opportunities both at home and in the classroom where, through role modelling, children learn how to stand up for themselves when facing a bullying situation and how to seek help. From published research (U'Mofe Gordon, 2018; Downes & Cefai, 2016) it emerges that the counselling sessions will support the children to reflect on feelings, thoughts and experiences on an individual basis or in small groups. Both school counsellors agreed that children should be monitored and provided with continuous support until the bullying situation is tackled. According to Psychologist 1, when supporting the victim, the people involved need to address the situation adequately and carefully so as not to put the children involved – the victims and the bystanders – at higher risk of bullying just because of speaking out. In relation to this, the present authors consider the buddy system to be of great support in encouraging the victim while seeking help. Through this system the victim can rely on a friend who will be there to offer support.

f. Professional training

Teachers need to be adequately trained to tackle a bullying situation. According to Psychologist 2 there are several national programmes for teachers and parents to gain knowledge about bullying. Similarly, U'Mofe Gordon (2018) and Yoon and Bauman (2015) affirm that teachers require more training on how to tackle bullying situations. All the interviewed teachers agreed that their place of work did offer courses to face situations involving bullying. Two of the teachers believed that due to lack of emphasis on the courses provided, it was up to them to take the initiative to look into such courses. Additionally, according to Psychologists 3 and 4, there were organised talks and meetings which primarily helped adults, including all stakeholders, to understand the present and past behaviour of children and to understand what bullying was while also intervene and prevent bullying incidents. Moreover, three teachers attend Professional Development (PD) sessions focussing on the skills of how to identify and deal with bullying situations. Psychologist 2 added that there were also awareness sessions or talks for parents to be more informed about bullying. Despite the courses available, Psychologist 2 believed that when something is related to bullying, it is viewed in a negative light and thus, the course would not be as effective as the psychologist wished it to be. Psychologist 2 confirmed this stating that when they did certain courses the attendance rate had been extremely low.

Table 6 shows the preventative measures that should be considered to avert bullying. These preventative measures can succeed if they are addressed by the school and the community to curb bullying situations that may arise.

Table 6: Preventative Measures

- Observe and monitor what the children are doing, especially during break time to detect any bullying situation.
- Children notify the teacher immediately if they are being excluded and the teacher should be sensitive.
- Special assemblies for the whole school.
- Raise awareness about bullying through:
 - Videos during a religion, ethics or social studies lesson.
 - Social stories during assembly.
 - Daily routines where the children can help each other.
 - Displayed posters and flyers for the children to observe.
 - Age appropriate discussions to understand how to behave with others, work together and understand the different perspectives.
 - Awareness campaign day.
- Role play with the teacher.
- Embrace diversity, thus creating a climate at home, school and within the community to accept each other.
- Build the children's self-esteem through PSD lessons, circle time and coaching (Paul, 2014).
- Creating a community where everyone feels valued and important.
- Establishing an anti-bullying policy within the school making sure it is updated regularly.
- Whole school approach for all the team to work in collaboration with the parents.
- Creating a win-win solution for the bully and the victim.
- Constant supervision everywhere around the school. In the playground cameras are necessary for the teachers to review the situation after it occurs.
- Parents should have a vision of the consequences to be assertive with the child.
- Children displaying bullying behaviour should be seated next to someone assertive.
- Using emotional literacy to create a culture of speaking up.
- Giving a message to children that actions have consequences.
- Child protection services going round the school to give information.
- Having a healthy diet and engage in physical exercise.

g. Supervision in the playground

All interviewed participants agreed that supervision is very important, however two kindergarten assistants, three teachers and three psychologists stated that it was even more important in the playground since this is the place where bullying occurs the most. This tallies with what Rigby (2007) and Bradshaw, Waasdorp and O'Brennan (2013) found thus inducing them to call the playground a high-risk area. On the other hand, both the school counsellors and Psychologist 3 held that sometimes supervision during break time was still taken for granted. They noticed that in the playground teachers tend to stay on one side and talk amongst themselves while the children are playing. Psychologist 3 came across instances where victims had reported that while they were being bullied during break time in the playground, the supervising teachers were talking. Additionally, School Counsellor 1 came across instances where bullied children were told that if they 'bother' the teacher again they would get a 'punishment'. Hence, according to Psychologist 2 it was essential to be conscious of what went on while children played because bullying is not always easy to recognise and children might be afraid to speak up. Both School Counsellors interviewed mentioned that the playground reserved many dangers and that supervision needed to be done by everyone because what one person missed could be detected by another person. Psychologist 2 added that sometimes, even with adequate supervision one may not notice that bullying was taking place if this were subtle, and a bullying situation without adequate supervision would rapidly escalate and become severe.

Since the playground might be quite large and children roam freely while playing with students from other classes, some children may feel less secure and are thus at greater risk of being attacked or harassed. It is thus the teachers' responsibility to supervise the children closely and be alert to their actions. Furthermore, KA 2 suggested that it would be ideal that if there were a small number of teachers present in a large playground, these should be distributed along the border walls of the playground so that all the children would be in their line of vision. Additionally, three teachers stated that since classrooms are smaller, children are easier to observe. Moreover, School Counsellor 1 has experiences where the assistant head joins the teachers in the playground, which is how supervision should be.

h. Impact of bullying on children

Teachers 3 and 4 argued that each child is different and the impact of bullying depends on the support that each finds as it also depends on the character of the child. Furthermore, two psychologists stated that bullying had "detrimental and damaging effects" on the perpetrator, the victim and the bystanders. In relation to this, Downes and Cefai (2016) hold that bullying is a process that harms the victim. Teacher 2 believed

that bullying could leave a positive impact on the victim since through the negative experiences children are prepared for what life brings and learn that there are people who are prone to harm them. Tables 7 and 8 list the impacts that bullying has on both the victim and the child displaying bullying behaviour. The most common element evident on the victim as well as on the bully is the long-term effects.

Table 7: Impact on victims (Source: participants' responses)

<i>Factors</i>	<i>No. of participants</i>
Upset	5
Unwilling to go to school	4
Insecure	4
Fearful	4
Difficult to trust others and to build new relationships	3
Feeling lonely and excluded from groups of friends	3
Long term effects	3
Depressed	2
Anxious	2
Regress academically	2
Feel ashamed	2
Depressed	2
Become more resilient	2
Mocked by other children	1
Introvert	1
Frustrated	1
Prone to suicide	1
Miss out on certain opportunities	1
Nightmares	1

Table 8: Impact on bullies (Source: participants' responses)	
<i>Factors</i>	<i>No. of participants</i>
Long Term Effects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drugs • Hurting themselves • Alcohol • Early sex • Abusive partners 	3
Sense of remorse	3
If behaviour continues the bully will feel more powerful	2
End up as criminals	2
Low self-esteem	1
Frustration, thus expressing themselves through hitting	1
Depressed	1
Anxious	1
School suspension	1
Labelled with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)	1
Negative self-image, thus other children will not play with them	1
Difficulty with building relationships	1

i. Parental Involvement

All the interviewed participants believed that parental involvement is essential when a bullying situation arises; however, KA 1 and all the interviewed teachers insisted that both parents should be notified depending on the case. If the parents are separated, School Counsellor 1 believed, both should be contacted because it might be that with the

mother, the child would be implementing a certain type of behaviour, while with the father, the child would be acting in a different way; thus it is essential to see the cause and source of the bullying. Furthermore, KA 1 and all the interviewed teachers suggested that if the bullying situation can be tackled by the teacher there and then, the parents do not need to be involved. On the other hand, if the bullying persists and the negative action escalates and children are getting emotionally or physically harmed along the way, then the teacher needs to report the situation to the SMT who will take it forward and contact the parents. Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano (2009) underline that parents should be notified when their children engage in bullying behaviour at school. In relation to this, School Counsellor 2 stated that when tackling certain bullying situations, the supervisors' support would be needed to certify that the school counsellor is on the right track and to give advice on how to deal with the parents in sensitive situations, for instance, when a child would require psychiatric help along with the family. Teacher 3 felt that when a teacher talks to the parents it is essential for an assistant head to be present to serve as a witness of what is said during the meeting. KA 2, Teacher 4, School Counsellor 2 and three psychologists believed that to promote positive behaviour and support children who are involved in bullying, the school and the parents need to work together. This ties to Kohut's (2007) research indicating that parents should collaborate with the school to promote an anti-bullying strategy at school. We perceive that talking to the parents about their children is a sensitive subject.

KA 2, Teacher 2, School Counsellor 2 and three psychologists agreed that if children who are engaging in bullying are shadowing behaviour to which they are exposed at home, be this intentional or unintentional, the children's behaviour will not improve unless the parents are made aware of how their children are treating others. This relates to Psychologist 2's idea gathered from learning theories of how children do not just learn during teaching time at school, but they also learn from how their parents deal with stress and how they deal with others outside of school. Similarly, School Counsellor 1 noted that parents can provide information about the child which would help the professionals to better understand the situation and the actions of the child. Research by U'Mofe Gordon (2018) has shown that bullying could be related to harsh home environments where both interviewed school counsellors and two psychologists believed that most problems come from the home, which could be connected to the process of a divorce or separation, also indicated by Nielsen and Simonsen (2012), parental alienation, domestic violence, disagreements between the parents or clashes with other parents. The children would carry these problems to school and eventually, feeling distressed and upset, would project these frustrations onto their peers by engaging in bullying behaviour. Hence, Psychologist 2 believed that it was essential to provide "parental strategies which do

not just focus on punitive aspects...but also talking about identifying aspects related to other social well-being". It becomes evident that parents should be guided and trained on how to communicate and are introduced to a 'behaviour management' plan where they will be shown how to set limits and boundaries and how to supervise their children. School Counsellor 2 and two psychologists pointed out that it is essential that consequences are congruent; thus, the behaviour management plans that are given at school should be continued at home to break the bullying behaviour from school because if parents do not cooperate, the concept of counselling sessions at school will be lost. According to School Counsellor 2, it is not only the children that need help and support; parents also require help since it might be even harder to convince them that their child is involved in bullying and harder still for them to change their view on how certain things function. School Counsellor 2 and three psychologists believed that intervention together with the parents, the child and a professional, should be done either through family therapy, or counselling, or social work, or else at LEAP – Anti-Poverty and Social Exclusion programme (Government of Malta, 2019). According to Psychologist 4 these strategies would be even more reliable when co-parenting is promoted.

All the interviewed participants, excluding two teachers and a psychologist, held that the healthiest way to tackle parents is by starting off discussing something positive and then move slowly to the children's situation where they are told the facts of what happened and what needs to be done to change the negative pattern. Psychologists 2 and 4 agreed that listening to and sensitising the parents might make them feel comfortable and more likely to open up. Rigby (2012) has argued that parents need to be trained to claim significant success in tackling bullying. Additionally, according to two interviewed psychologists, the victim's parents need to be shown how to handle the situation adequately since the child's emotional wellbeing might be impaired because of the bullying incident, They need to be helped to empathise and support their child rather than blame him/her. According to Psychologist 4, this kind of strategy could also be done by applying the coaching approach, which acknowledges children's actions based on their feelings while, however, indicating that not every kind of behaviour is acceptable. Approaching parents is not an easy task since, according to all the interviewed teachers and KA 2, there are parents who would not believe that their children are engaging in negative behaviour and instead they would defend their children and justify their negative behaviour, and this attitude makes it harder for them to accept the situation, thus continuing to insist that their child is innocent. Following on this stand, the children would believe that their behaviour is acceptable and their aggressive behaviour continues to escalate. Parents need to be made aware of the impact that bullying has on their children and what behaviours indicate that these children are engaged in bullying.

Conclusion

It is evident that the findings that came from the research carried out for this study are consistent with that emerging from the specialised literature on this subject. Bullying is a problem which needs to be addressed for the benefit of a smooth-running school environment and more so for the wellbeing of the student population and all the staff.

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**Together to succeed... supporting children
with challenging behaviour in a
primary school in the Cottonera area**

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Issues regarding children manifesting challenging behaviour are frequently discussed since their number seems to have increased. Swale (2006, p.1), argues that "there has been an alarming growth in the number of children displaying what is variously called "a problem behaviour", "challenging behaviour" or simply, "bad behaviour"." A number of questions arise, including:

- i. Who is likely to exhibit challenging behaviour?
- ii. Where, when and why does the problem occur?
- iii. How are professionals and parents responding to the needs of these children?
- iv. What support and services are being given to these children and the professionals working with them?

Research has shown that children often display withdrawn, phobic behaviour and are disruptive in class and/or any other units of the school premises. A number of biological and social factors are associated with the development of behaviour, however, as Cooper (1999) has argued, dysfunctional social factors usually are a primary problem.

Students come from different family backgrounds and have different abilities and personal needs. Therefore some may attend school burdened with personal problems and difficulties which prevent them from progressing both academically and socially in a school environment. Peer pressure and other school factors may also contribute to boost undesirable behaviour which will possibly prevent the teacher from delivering productive lessons and furthermore create a stressful atmosphere within the classroom.

Various attempts are being implemented to enhance the social and educational development of these children, which according to Fontana (1985, p.3) creates a classroom where "the abilities of individual children are given due opportunity for development, in which teachers can fulfil their proper function as facilitators of learning, and in which children can acquire sensibly and enjoyably the techniques for monitoring and guiding their own behaviours". Different approaches and strategies are being discussed to find ways to support and assist students "in promoting educational engagement and socio-economic competence in the classroom" (Cefai, 2008, p.15).

In order to carry out this research three Year 6 students, attending a Cottonera primary mainstream school who manifest challenging behaviour, were identified. They were directly observed for one scholastic term, on a daily basis, during school hours, to study existing relationships with teachers, Learning Support Assistants (LSA) and peers, as well as their behaviour within different contexts. The Boxall Profile Assessment was administered

with these three pupils to obtain a clearer picture of why they might act in a certain manner and what the cause of their difficult behaviour is.

Semi-structured interviews with the College Principal (CP), the Head of School (HoS), a Teacher and Kindergarten Assistant (KA), two Learning Support Assistants LSAs, the Inclusive Coordinator (INCO), an ACCESS Social Worker who communicates frequently with the school, a Family Therapist and the School Counsellor, were carried out to collect different points of views involved within a systemic, biopsychosocial framework to determine how support and assistance could be provided, both for professionals as well as for the students. The contribution of parents was also important for this study. A Parent whose child attended the same school and class of the three children under study was interviewed to discover her attitude towards these pupils. Reference to the current and future action plan provided in this school was also evaluated and later compared with those of other countries.

Childhood is a crucial time in life since identity starts to be moulded and intimate relationships that occur during this period usually affect a person's adulthood and future relationships. It is the challenge of each and every educationalist to show security, care, understanding and affection towards these children while supporting and addressing the needs triggered by challenging behaviour difficulties. As Cefai (2008, p.67) has pointed out, "caring relationships in the classroom are at the heart of teaching and learning; they not only foster the socio-emotional aspect of pupils' development but enhance their intellectual abilities as well".

The aim of this study was to analyse different factors which prompt children to exhibit challenging behaviour and prevent, or at least minimise, its occurrence. As Swale (2006, p.2) has put it, one needs to provide "positive behaviour strategies that can be successful with the widest variety of children, whatever the reason for their behaviour".

The case studies

For the purpose of this study, three Year 6 students who frequently exhibited oppositional behaviour were observed throughout the first term of their scholastic year. All three students formed part of my class during the study. The data from the direct observations, carried out daily, was gathered on a weekly basis to form three progressive journals. These served as a baseline to create a detailed case study for each of the students and a context for my reflections.

For anonymity purposes the students, all 10 years old at the time, are referred to as Student X, Student Y and Student Z. The school where the study took place is referred to as City A Primary School

i. Student X

Student X integrated fully with his classmates and had quite a large circle of friends. His intriguing smile, smart appearance and cheerful disposition encouraged his classmates to interact with him. The student readily helped others and although he exhibited oppositional behaviour at times, he ultimately respected authority. It is clear that Student X was strongly influenced by the way his peers perceive him and constantly sought to impress them, even if it meant that he had to act or speak inappropriately. He frequently bullied, teased and ridiculed others; however, after observing the child it became clear that these negative impulses were not in his nature but were exhibited to attract attention. Although he frequently walked around with an air of defiance, using a superior tone and facial expression, when it came down to facing an individual or situation he tended to lose his wit and was often teased by his peers for not standing up for himself.

The child's attendance had to be monitored closely, since he often skipped school for inexcusable reasons, such as not completing his homework, doing housework or babysitting his younger sibling. This issue was brought to the school's attention, after a number of students revealed that Student X had been seen roaming the streets during school hours. Unfortunately, Student X's parents failed to support their child's education since they never attended school meetings or activities related to their son's educational needs and progress. The child's absenteeism throughout the years had affected his academic progress and gave rise to a multitude of learning difficulties that impacted on his level of performance and achievement in class.

Student X did not show interest in class and often sat with a blank expression on his face during lessons, unaware of what was going on around him. He seldom produced acceptable work and his writing skills were very poor. However, he gave his utmost when provided with intense individual attention and enjoyed learning through hands-on approaches that enticed his motivation. For instance, during Crafts lessons his peers sought his advice and expertise as they valued his opinion and admired his creative skills. Additionally, Student X became easily distracted by his surroundings and struggled to focus during a lesson or task if it did not interest him directly, frequently disrupting his classmates. Although his impulsivity was effectively tackled through positive reinforcement strategies, he had to be prompted and reminded of the rewards in order to remain motivated.

ii. Student Y

Student Y, could be described as an outgoing ten year old boy who always had a great deal to say. Unfortunately, his family environment did not stimulate him positively since his relatives engaged in a lifestyle that was not at all exemplary for a young boy. His spoken vocabulary and

pronunciation of words was poor and he nudged and poked to speak to someone without acknowledging their space. Education hardly had any relevance to the child and he frequently skipped school to roam about in the nearby streets. The child had adopted an easy-going attitude towards life, enjoying everything his close-knit community had to offer, which had ultimately given rise to his restricted way of thinking. His indescribable passion for wild animals emerged during school hours and his peers enjoyed listening to the stories he related about his pet snakes and anacondas. His knowledge about the animals was vast since he could name different species and their habitats without difficulty and often created drawings that reflected his fascination for the animal kingdom.

At times a number of Student Y's classmates were unwilling to interact with him due to his scruffy appearance and unpleasant odours. Notwithstanding this, the child still did his utmost to be in the limelight as he constantly longed to have everyone's attention and was often a nuisance to his peers, especially the female ones. He teased, provoked arguments and verbally he could be very cruel, often attacking others where it hurt. In addition to this, Student Y lacked basic manners and disregarded the class rules as though he was oblivious to how a student should behave in class. He was attentive and participated when a class discussion was to his liking and voiced his opinion with certainty and self-determination. Unfortunately, his enthusiasm for academic material was limited and he often objected to doing class tasks. However, he took interest during social studies lessons and was always enthusiastic to play an active part in I.T., Art and P.E. lessons. His reading skills were satisfactory and he was always eager to practise his reading skills in class. Due to a lack of support at home, the homework he handed in was usually untidy and presented in a disorganized manner.

Student Y failed to evaluate the consequences of his actions and often got into trouble for opposing authority. His peers did not trust him since he was often caught telling mistruths and a number of male peers teased him for being cunningly selfish. The child could, however, be kind at times, and proved himself to be an efficient class leader for the Eko-Skola council.

iii. Student Z

Student Z had a kind nature which emerged when he was engaged in activities or discussions that interested him and he possessed positive conversation skills, although at times he failed to listen to others attentively. Due to his outspoken personality, Student X did not hesitate to voice his opinion even if that meant going against everyone else and at times he came across as inconsiderate. The child's passion for animals was constantly evident during school hours and his peers and teachers alike, never tired of hearing the various adventures the child experienced to save stray animals which he nurtured to keep as his own. The child's unruly character derived from an unstable family lifestyle that

lacked discipline in all areas. He had recently been identified as having an alcohol problem which his parents failed to take seriously and often expressed his views on life, stating how he chose to live it extensively, even if it meant taking risks that could jeopardize his wellbeing. This way of living had set no boundaries for the student and he was unable to distinguish between right and wrong, often acting impulsively according to his personal and acquired beliefs. His general behaviour and attitudes could be deemed socially unacceptable since he frequently used foul language, lacked basic manners and was unaware of how to react towards authority, interact in situations that required positive behaviour, as well as reciprocate respect. Student Z led an independent life that required him to make decisions on his own, which was often reflected in his peer relationships since he was one of the leaders in class. The role in itself was a positive one since it reflected self-assurance and high esteem of oneself, however there were times when the student used this power negatively to bully or provoke others.

Student Z enjoyed anything that was related to manual activities and immersed himself in creative tasks, especially when a variety of resources were involved. In spite of this, the child was very dominant when engaged in similar activities to the extent that he rejected additional assistance or opinions from his peers, which often resulted in arguments when the students were assigned to group work. Unfortunately, his academic achievement was quite low due to his constant lack of interest, motivation and participation during lessons and academic tasks. He joked, chatted and made inappropriate comments about everything, consequently disrupting the classroom atmosphere. In addition to this, Student Z experienced a number of learning difficulties, mainly in writing and reading.

His handwriting was messy and he constantly stammered whilst reading, pausing on each and every word. When executing academic tasks he skipped words and phrases in an attempt to finish as soon as possible. The child had gone through his primary school years with a negative attitude, without being given the necessary instructional and emotional support he required. Although the student was being provided with life skills lessons in that year, his embedded attitude was hard to shift and it was necessary for his needs to be addressed in the scholastic years that lay ahead.

Reflections

My immediate goal was to make sure that the three children under study felt welcome, secure and I offered my support at all times. As Lawrence (1996; in Papatheodorou, 2005, p.73) puts it, "warm relationship, acceptance and appreciation, genuineness, empathy and affection can establish positive and fulfilling interactions". I observed how frequent encouragement led

to slight improvements in the students' educational progress and most importantly allowed them to achieve a sense of wellbeing. I always aimed to deliver lessons that catered for all three learning styles; visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. Therefore, I introduced various resources during my time with the students, including flashcards, PowerPoint presentations, frequent use of ICT, and learning games, which all led to an increase in positive interaction in the classroom.

A Behaviour Modification Programme, comprising a set of targets appropriate for children, was put into practice. This approach allowed me to observe and record the students' behaviour during work and play, which proved important towards outlining their existing strengths and weaknesses. Patterson et al. (1992; in Olsen and Cooper, 2008, p.13) suggest that, "learning can be undone and replaced by new learning if interventions are targeted on changing the way in which the child goes about achieving their goals". The result of the review was considered to be more positive than negative since an improvement was noted in the students' behaviour, especially in that of Student X. This child showed increased self-discipline and controlled his emotions better at times, which led to a slight improvement in his attitude towards his peers and he managed to cooperate better during group work.

The class was divided into groups, each identified by a different colour. This system promoted collaboration and co-operation among the students and gave them a sense of responsibility. Supportive to this reasoning, Johnson et al. (1984; in Olsen and Cooper, 2008, p.36) argue that "cooperative learning in the classroom – organizing students to work in cooperative groups – enhanced learning and reduced discipline problems". Consequently, the three students were guided on how to interact purposefully and constructively with their peers. A series of rewards were implemented to encourage teamwork and compliance. I observed how at times, Students X, Y and Z found difficulty to function and conform in their group, often struggling to accept group constraints. However, Student X engaged in positive interaction during Crafts activities as his peers valued his opinion and he felt privileged when they asked for his assistance.

Rather than using a verbal approach to settle the students down, I used a sand timer, which gained their attention due to its game-like nature. Despite the enjoyable notion of the sand timer approach, Student Z was unresponsive and failed to settle down with the rest of his peers. Taking a lead from Bolton (1986; in Olsen and Cooper, 2008, p.65), who argues that "reflective statements can diffuse student anger", instead of addressing the child's negative behaviour directly, I made use of 'I' statements; for instance, instead of telling Student Z, "You did not settle down appropriately like your classmates", I would say, "I feel that you could have settled down like everyone else." Similarly, I found that praising students while they were performing a task increased their motivation to remain

focused, however, I had to control the amount of attention I dedicated to Student Y since he tended to use my positive input to his advantage at times, attempting to put some of his peers down in the process.

Another non-verbal approach I implemented was writing down those students who caused disruptions, on the board, without disturbing the lesson and commenting on the issue. I informed the students of this strategy beforehand to make them aware that if their name was listed on the board, it immediately meant they had exhibited some form of misbehaviour and had to face the consequences. Students X, Y and Z responded to this strategy and I noticed that they took it seriously to avoid having to face the consequences that would follow.

I used frequent eye contact to maintain the students' attention, darting disapproving looks at those students who interrupted lessons. All three students under study responded to this, frequently picking up my warning glances and shifting their behaviour even if only for a short period. The class structure allowed me to monitor the children more easily and I found it immensely effective to stand silently behind them while they were on task, since this reduced the chances of them being disruptive (referred to as Proximity Control). Supportive to this argument, Rogers (2002; in Papatheodorou, 2005, p.74) maintains that "non-verbal cues such as eye contact, staring, making certain gestures and moving physically towards or standing near the child are particularly effective with young children". However Student Y seemed to become dependent in my presence and instead of allowing me to observe his performance, he tended to ask for constant support to have my full attention.

When students were in one of their restless moods, they had the option of using a 'time-out' card, which, I found, provided them with an opportunity to cool down and increase their concentration once back in class. As Rogers (2002) states, this 'Time Out' approach, "can help and support disruptive students by giving them a chance to calm themselves and give them a chance to think about their behaviour" (p.101). Unfortunately, this strategy was not entirely successful with Student Z, since during his time away from class he ended up disturbing other teachers, failing to use this privileged time to his benefit.

To diminish the students' impulsive outbursts and encourage them to be more considerate of others, I introduced the 'traffic lights' system which encouraged a cooperative environment. When negative behaviour was exhibited, the traffic lights (made out of various materials, such as a shoe box, a large cardboard role, paints and fluorescent cardboard) were set to red, when behaviour was neither good nor bad, the lights were set to orange. Finally, if the students managed to display positive behaviour, the traffic lights were set to green which led to 'golden time' that included an extra ten minutes during a recreational lesson or any reward deemed

suitable at the time. Students X, Y and Z responded to this approach, internalizing the fact that their behaviour could affect others. I therefore, concluded that the students increased their tolerance towards others, which is a positive quality they can benefit from.

To monitor the children's work, a 'Class/Homework Stamp sheet' was created at the beginning of the scholastic year to encourage them to be productive in their tasks. I displayed the students' sheets in class as this allowed them to monitor the amount of stamps they acquired and would hopefully increase their motivation to be successful in producing regular, neat work that showed a steady progress of improvement. Additionally, through implementing this approach, students were given positive feedback and praise, which according to Porter (2003; in Papatheodorou, 2005, p.73) "can be seen as a subtle way of manipulating children's behaviour," as well as an earned reward, which will keep them motivated. In my case, this approach worked with the majority of students; however, the three students under study failed to internalize the importance of completing their homework and were unconcerned about receiving stamps as well as indifferent to their peers' success in this area.

I also designed a 'Motivation Card', where interest and participation were monitored and rewarded. As Thomas and Watkins (1990) suggest, it is important for the teacher to monitor a student's performance since it also serves in measuring attainment. This technique was at times effective with Student X since it boosted his self-confidence and increased his determination to succeed, while he enjoyed monitoring his progress.

Similarly, Students X, Y and Z's behaviour was monitored through a 'Behaviour Card'. Each child received a star at the end of the school day if his behaviour was acceptable in both the classroom and the playground. They responded well to receiving a reward when they collected a maximum amount of stars; however, I had to prompt them not to tease each other as they grew competitive at times.

A daily schedule (timetable), showing the lessons and other activities planned for the day, was also created and displayed on a noticeboard in the classroom. Students benefited from this visual plan, which, according to Swale (2006, p.22), provides "a useful way of helping children to understand the routine of the setting day and to know what is going to happen next". I observed how effective it was to guide the students throughout the day in this manner, and continued to use the approach all throughout the year.

All three students regularly attended school burdened with problems and it was realised early in the scholastic year that I had to tackle this issue considerably if I wanted their time in class to be successful. I gathered all the students on the class carpet for a 'circle time session'

on a regular basis, which according to Swale (2006, p.17), "helps to make both the practitioners and the child feel positive about the day to come". I found that this integrating approach relieved the students from their worries before they started the school day and successfully helped them concentrate better on their academic work and activities. Towards the end of the first term Student Z started to voice his concerns more regularly and built trust in me through sharing personal experiences that tormented him. I can also state that a slight improvement in the behaviour of X, Y and Z did occur as they were immediately engrossed in the sessions, embracing its novelty and the fun activities. As Olsen and Cooper (2008, p.38) emphasize, "caring leads to cooperation, and this leads to success in changing problem behaviours".

As Kauffman et al. (2006, p.151) maintain, "home-school plans can be very effective in helping students to control their behaviour". I introduced a communication book, with the aim of recording positive and negative behaviour as well as creating a two-way communication between the parents and myself. Swale (2006, p.17) indeed suggests that "parents should feel welcome to come into the setting and should not be made to feel that they need to leave as soon as possible". Unfortunately, I found little response from the parents of the students in this study since the children often returned with empty communication books, with only my comments in them. This proved frustrating as I felt that the students would have progressed much more, both academically and socially, had their guardians maintained a relationship with the teacher.

Perceptions, attitudes and knowledge of significant adults operating within the school communities

Interviews were held with a number of professionals working with these children with the aim of obtaining a more comprehensive picture of what challenging behaviour entails.

i. Knowledge on challenging behaviour

Reeve and Kauffman (1978; in Papatheodorou, 2006, p.32) establish that, "behaviour disordered children are seen as being unhappy with themselves, unpopular with their peers and unsuccessful in their school work". Comments collected from the interviews revealed that the majority of participants seemed aware of what challenging behaviour entails and successfully mentioned a number of related characteristics. The most common qualities mentioned were rebellion, aggression towards others and lack of self-control; however some participants elaborated further. The CP defined challenging behaviour as "a behaviour which has reached a significant level of disruption such that this behaviour is becoming a significant obstacle to learning, both to the child and to the rest of the

school." The HoS, Teacher M and the Family Therapist explained that challenging behaviour results in a lack of respect towards authority as well as disruptions during lessons. Teacher M also mentioned that challenging behaviour increases as a student grows older, making the situation more difficult to handle. The INCO, LSA X and Social Worker shared the same views but added that children with challenging behaviour can be self-injurious, disobedient and lack social skills. LSA Y defined challenging behaviour as:

Reżistenza lejn l-awtorità, rifjut li jobdu ċerti regolamenti, kemm sempliċi kif ukoll aktar diffiċli u diffikultà biex jibnu relazzjoni tajba ma' ħbiebhom u mal-istaff tal-iskola. [Resistance to authority, refusal to obey simple and complex commands and a difficulty in building a healthy relationship with peers and school staff.]

The Parent and Counsellor were not specific in their definitions, offering a rather vague response. I understood that the parent's awareness of challenging behaviour might have been restricted due to limited exposure and information on the subject; however I felt that the counsellor, being a professional who works closely with these children, could have elaborated more in her response.

ii. Causes of challenging behaviour

Papatheodorou (2006, p.51) stated that "research findings have shown that there is not one factor alone, but a dynamic interrelationship of many factors that account for the presence of behaviour problems in children". Feedback received from the participants suggested that a multitude of factors can determine a child's behaviour. The CP mentioned that teratogens ingested by the mother during gestation may have irreversible physiological causes, which can lead to challenging behaviour. Unfortunately, the majority of parents in City A have received minimal education and may therefore be oblivious of how to avoid certain prenatal risks. Likewise, the INCO and KA also mentioned the option that students could behave negatively because of congenital biological conditions that impede them from communicating in ways that are deemed socially acceptable.

The INCO also claimed that:

Hemm każijiet meta tfal jimmanifestaw challenging behaviour meta jħossuhom esklużi jew meta jiġu labelled. Dan ħafna drabi jista' jkun mezz ta' komunikazzjoni mill-istudenti għall-adulti. [There are times when children manifest challenging behaviour because they feel excluded or labelled. Very often they use their negative attitudes to communicate with adults.]

Corresponding to LSA X and the Counsellor's argument regarding challenging behaviour and that this might be a result of anger, frustration and attention, Teacher M and LSA X also mentioned the fact that some children show signs of negative behaviour to conceal their literacy difficulties or a lack of self-confidence. The Social Worker, Teacher and LSA Y highlighted the fact that certain students manifest oppositional behaviour to be accepted by their peers. Their craving for attention is so intense that they are ready to behave negatively and get into trouble, just to be noticed. Just as Teacher M pointed out:

Jekk l-gurnata ta' qabel kellhom ħafna problemi; ma kellhomx ma' min jittkellmu; min jismagħhom; ma' min iħossuhom importanti ... ovvja meta jiġu l-iskola ħa jippruvaw jaraw kif ħa jidhru importanti. [If the day before they experienced a number of problems; they had nobody to talk to; to listen to them; someone to make them feel important ... obviously when they come to school they will do their best to appear important.]

All interviewees suggested that the environment in which one lives can cause a child to exhibit challenging behaviour. Belsky (1984; in Kay, 2007) affirmed that the parents' psychological resources (stability, own parenting, attachment), social support (friends, family) and their children's characteristics (temperament, health, intelligence) can affect the way they communicate with their children and respond to their children's needs. The CP strongly suggested that students are highly affected by their cultural environment and socioeconomic status. He also acknowledged that a number of residents living in the area are close-minded and the school is the only standard and alternate culture that their children can engage in. The teaching staff of the school under study had to work twice as hard to instil basic values in the students, which should already have been present. However, the level of success in this regard is difficult to attain if parents fail to lead an exemplary life and continue to build on what the school teaches their children. If students are influenced negatively at home, there is an increased probability that they too will generate similar qualities. As the parent stated:

Storbju, dagħa... it-tfal meta jitiqgħulhom jidgħu ta' kbar, anke fl-iskola. Li jisimgħu d-dar jgħiduh. [Noise, swearing... when children get angry, they utter the inappropriate language of the adults, also at school. They repeat what they hear at home.]

In a survey report, Croll and Moses (1985; in Mongon et al., 1989, p.74) have argued that "the majority of teachers consider 'home background' to be the most significant factor in problem behaviour". This was mentioned by both LSAs, Teacher M and the KA who pointed out that lack of care, attention and love from family members can cause a child to seek attention through misbehaviour. With reference to the attachment theory of Bowlby

(1975; in Olson and Cooper, 2008, p.30), a “major source of such problems can reside in the child’s early life experience and difficulties encountered in forming secure emotional attachment with their primary carer”. On a similar note the HoS and Social Worker contemplated that children who lacked structure, respect, and were frequently exposed to violence, were prone to being challenging within the school environment and rebelled against authority. She also underpinned the fact that these children will eventually find difficulties in their future workplace if no intervention were received. I strongly agree with the above mentioned criteria after witnessing similar situations during my career as a teacher and having noticed how family factors affect a child’s educational performance and achievement as well as emotional stability and social success throughout their life.

Other opinions were brought up regarding this issue. The Counsellor pointed out that a number of children are deprived of their basic needs, live in disturbed environments and are not cared for, which may eventually contribute to defiant behaviour.

L-affarijiet li jsemmu t-tfal lanqas biss timmagina li għadhom jeżistu f’dawn l-ambjenti, imma jeżistu ... tfal li jgħixu kważi taħt l-art, bla basic needs – bla ndafa, bla ikel, bla parents. For sure jaffettwa f’challenging behaviour. [The things children mention are not even imaginable in these environments, but they are true ... children living in basements, without basic needs – lacking hygiene, deprived of food, without parents. These surely lead to challenging behaviour.]

The Parent and Social Worker correctly pointed out that children can develop negative behaviour if they experience a trauma related to the separation of their parents, or if they are neglected because their parents are always at work. Correspondingly, the Social Worker highlighted the fact that death, and an unhealthy amount of people frequently entering into and exiting a child’s life can also cause disturbance, leading to oppositional behaviour.

- iii. Other limitations when working with children manifesting oppositional behaviour

A consensus was reached among the HoS, INCO, Social Worker and Counsellor regarding questions on the restrictions they encounter when dealing with these children. Not having sufficient time to work with the students was one of the major concerns – the HoS maintained that due to the vast amount of daily duties she has to attend to, not enough time remains to dedicate to these children:

Kieku jkollok aktar ħin magħhom dawn it-tfal żgur li jista’ jsir ħafna aktar ġid. [If one could spend more time with these children they would derive much more benefit.]

This notwithstanding, I could note that the HoS provided verbal support and encouragement to the teaching staff and interested herself in the children's difficulties by interacting with them whenever she got the chance. The INCO, Counsellor and Social Worker also argued that they found limited time for these children due to their heavy caseload.

The Counsellor added that since she was a trainee and therefore only attended the school under study once a fortnight, it was more difficult for her to interact with these children. Similarly, the Family Therapist worked on a part-time basis and although she succeeded in offering efficient services to the students and their families, she found difficulty in supervising them when her workload increases. I can note that a school cannot function effectively if it employs part-time professionals since the requirements are too demanding, wide-ranging and constant. The students need frequent support throughout the scholastic year and professionals should be able to give their full attention and expertise at all times, as only in this way will children with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties progress.

iv. Parental involvement

Recchia (1998) maintains that families played a crucial role in children's development. Although all interviewees confirmed that parental involvement is a fundamental key in a child's educational experience, the HoS emphasized that a number of parents with whom she comes into contact, create additional obstacles by refusing to support the school when behavioural measures are taken.

Jekk l-iskola tirraporta mgieba vjolenti u l-iskola tgħid x'mizuri qegħdin jittieħdu, il-ġenituri jridu jissaportjaw dik il-ħaġa mhux jekk forsi l-iskola ħadet ċerti mizuri, irid ikollok oppożizzjoni... mill-familja se ssib mill-ewwel oppożizzjoni. Għandek problema mat-tifel, imbagħad għandek waħda daqsha jew akbar minnha mal-ġenituri u mal-familja. [Parents should understand and support the school's disciplinary actions rather than be contrary to measures that are taken to mould their child's behaviour. Instead of having to deal solely with the child's negative behaviour, one may also have an even bigger problem facing the parents and the family.]

Teacher M, who was an active element in the school, also mentioned the lack of enthusiasm that a substantial number of parents had. I argue that a number of them fail to contribute positively to the school and give little importance to educational measures and activities that are essential to their children's development. They set a bad example when they disrespect teachers by arguing with them, as children automatically model themselves on their parents' behaviour, failing to understand the social dynamics of a school. This relates to what Olsen and Cooper (2008, p.181) state that "techniques can be undermined or rendered ineffective

by parents who form coalitions with their children against a school, the head teacher or the child's teacher". The HoS and Teacher also stressed on the importance of parental co-operation within the school and how professionals should work closely with parents to be able to assist their children in a better way. However, Teacher M affirmed:

Meta tibghat għall-ġenituri, mhux kull ġenitur jikkopera; jekk jiġu jaqilgħu aktar inkwiet. [When parents are sent for, not all of them cooperate; if they come they cause further trouble.]

The INCO, KA and both LSAs strengthened the HoS's argument when insisting that it was useless to implement certain strategies at school when no continuity and support is given at home. It is indeed a concerning fact that a number of children living in this deprived area of Cottonera often return to an empty home after school and are therefore deprived of the deserved nurture and care necessary for them to progress both academically and emotionally. It is common to see children roaming the streets in the early afternoon and evenings, even during examination periods. Hence, all efforts done at school are lost.

LSA Y added that parents should be an active part of the transdisciplinary team since, as Bell et al. (2004, p.42) affirmed, "when parents are given a chance to make a real difference in their child's education and care, they are more likely to consistently participate in the educational setting". As LSA Y suggested it is important that both professionals and parents use the concept of 'reframing' to 'externalise the problem'. Likewise, the Counsellor acknowledged that if professionals wished to have a positive effect on the children they work with, it was essential to involve parents as they can learn ways of making their child's life better. As Teacher M argued,

Għandna ninkludhom aktar fl-iskola, inħoss li jekk tifthilhom il-bibien u tinkludihom, inħoss li huma jħossuha l-importanza li għandhom. [We have to include them more in school. I feel that if they are included they will discover how important their role is.]

Mongon et al. (1989, p.88) see the above happening "if we adopt a participatory, rather than a compensatory, model of parental involvement, founded upon the assumption that most parents will want to help their children, given the right opportunities, information and encouragement". The CP, however, pointed out that at times parents are too engulfed in their own social and emotional problems to be concerned with their children's wellbeing and lack the energy necessary to deal with school-related difficulties being experienced by their children. It is, in fact, understandable that it becomes difficult for parents to support their children's education when they themselves are burdened with financial and family problems that are beyond their control. In addition, as the Social Worker pointed out,

Xi kultant il-ġenitur jitfa' l-problemi fuqek u jippretendi li int se ssolviha ... mhux hu b'hala parti fil-proċess, mentri hu jrid ikun il-persuna li trid issolviha. [Sometimes the parent expects you to solve all the problems yourself ... forgetting that he is an active part of the process, when in reality he has to be the person that has to solve the problem.]

The Family Therapist revealed that the majority of parents she meets with make her feel welcome by accepting her expertise and cooperation. They also show appreciation when she listens to their problems and is able to identify with them. On the other hand, she comes across parents who see her as an interfering factor in their lives and reject her.

Issib min jilqghek u ssib min irid idahhlek ... Jistgħu jarawni wkoll b'hala dik il-persuna li se tinterferixxilhom f'hajjithom, però l-fatt li tipprova tismagħhom u tifhimhom imbagħad they open up. [Some welcome me whilst others consider me as an interference in their life. However, they tend to open up when one listens to them and shows them understanding.]

v. The community

As Rutter and Garnezy (1983; in Papatheodorou, 2006, p.62) observe, "the social status of the area may be as (or more) important than the social status of the individual". The town or village a person resides in can have an effect on how he is perceived. This was pointed out by the Parent who formed part of the community under study, as well as by the Family Therapist and the Teacher, who strongly felt that residents from this town were often discriminated and labelled to such an extent that their chances of employment were also affected. In the words of the Parent,

Għandna stigma hawn; wieħed għandu ħafna skola u għax għandu ħafna skola imma minn (Belt A) jieħdu wieħed minn raħal ieħor li ma jkun jaf xejn u jdaħħlu lilu; għax aħna l-aġġar nies. Issa dawn kullimkien issibhom... imma taf kemm taffetwahom lit-tfal... mela mmur noqgħod x'imkien ieħor. [We carry a stigma; a person who is well-educated but from (City A) is less likely to get a job than someone who resides somewhere else even though having a lower education level. We are considered the worst people ... however, such people are found everywhere ... this affects our children you know... so I'll go to live elsewhere.]

Similarly, Teacher M suggested that people from City A had a label that was hard to shift. The Social Worker also clarified that although a stigma was present in City A, this reality did not exist only in Cottonera since services provided in this area were also active in other towns and villages across the Maltese Islands. My observations have revealed that this city does indeed carry a stigma since people often generalize and assume that

all its residents lead an unstable lifestyle where poverty and low social skills reign. As residents of other towns and villages hold discriminatory perspectives of the residents of City A, they fail to appreciate their good qualities and merits. One must keep in mind that these individuals are living in a community that might possibly be inhibited by the limitations being provided by our society. As Bell (2004, p.35) argues, "tension in the community because of inequalities or racial differences can strain the family system and affect how a child functions in the classroom". LSA X highlighted the fact that these people are often considered as delinquent, spoilt failures. On the other hand, LSA Y commented on how residents living in this area have adopted a certain label that reflects negatively on them and this, in turn, has caused them to become defensive in their everyday lives. This protective shield may be passed on to the children who exhibit challenging behaviour as a protest. As Papatheodorou (2006, p.60) argues, "Labels that carry negative connotations tend to be particularly influential since a negative piece of information... typically carries more weight than a positive piece. Negative cues can easily generalize into negative types and therefore maintain or even enhance behaviours which are assumed by these cues."

Moreover, as the Family Therapist claimed, most children inherit their parents' attitudes and values. For instance students frequently told me that they had no intention of working when they grew older since, like their parents, they could live on state aid and avoid the hardship that work brings with it. This decreases their motivation to engage in successful learning at school as they have no ambitions in this regard having already been conditioned to believe that to live one does not have to work. Therefore, they continue to live within the same vicious circle. According to the the Family Therapist parents of such children reason that,

L-edukazzjoni mhix prijorità fil-ħajja tagħhom. Jistgħu jgħaddu mingħajrha għax hekk trabbejt jien u la jien trabbejt u għext, tajjeb jew ħazin, għadni ħajja u għaddejja u allura jgħixu bħali. [Education is not a priority in their lives. They reason that if they have been accustomed to living without it, so can their children.]

As the HoS added, residents are not helping themselves to overcome this stigma. She further explained that a number of individuals from other residential areas are constantly coming to live in the town under study, and therefore the community is constantly changing, bringing about new ideas and norms. The Counsellor, on the other hand, stated that professionals working with these children and parents must respect and tolerate their community within context; otherwise an unhealthy rapport can emerge. Just as Olsen and Cooper (2008) hold, one important philosophy to improve the relationship between the parents and stakeholders and increase collaboration is "to use as much as possible the parents' beliefs, ideas and language" (p. 186).

On a different scale, the INCO stressed that the community would benefit from recreational areas where these children could spend their time in a structured environment. In fact the HoS argued that free educational and recreational activities were organized frequently to instil structure and positive discipline in the children's lives, both within and outside the school premises. This matches the argument made by Nikolopoulou and Oakland (1990; in Papatheodorou, 2006, p.62) that "the socio-economic status of the area may affect the availability of support services, both statutory (social services, health services, school psychological services) and voluntary, and non-governmental services (advice and support groups) and the quality of schools". However, the CP argued that although they had all these facilities and services, they rarely made use of these benefits. In my view it seems as though they did not appreciate and value what was being made available to them.

vi. Support from the Educational Department

With regard to the support provided to professionals, especially to Teacher M and LSA, the INCO believed that sufficient support was being provided to the LSAs; however, more information about inclusion needed to be given to teachers.

Naħseb li lil-LSA qed jingħatalhom sapport biżżejjed u l-fatt li l-għalliema qed jingħatalhom is-sapport tal-LSA hi ħaġa pożittiva wkoll. Però l-għalliema għandhom bżonn aktar taġħrif u taġħlim dwar l-inkluzjoni. [I think that LSAs are given sufficient support, and it is positive that teachers are supported by LSAs. However, teachers still need more information about inclusion.]

This goes against comments by the Family Therapist and teachers when they emphasized the lack of supervision being received by professionals. The Family Therapist declared that the CP together with the INCO and HoS, did assist and support her when problems or other queries arose. From my observations in the school under study, teachers and LSAs there did not receive supportive assistance from anyone, except the Senior Management Staff. One needs to admit that teachers and LSAs experience stressful situations that take a toll on their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing and therefore require to be joined by additional personnel, such as a counsellor, to relieve their concerns. If this were to occur I am confident that teachers and LSAs would be more successful in their work with students who exhibit defiant behaviour.

The INCO also stated that children exhibiting challenging behaviour were monitored very closely and given excellent support. She stated that professional development sessions and in-service courses were organized in ways that helped professionals increase their knowledge about different conditions, hence providing effective assistance to those students. As

Bell et al. (2004, p.31) stress, "it is imperative that teachers learn best practices and routines that will ensure safety and sound programming for all teachers and staff". However, the Social Worker maintained that the Education Department was not efficient when assigning LSAs to schools since the process was often lengthy.

LSA X added that the educational system was aware of the challenges this school dealt with to include children with challenging behaviour, but believed that not enough support was given. Likewise, Teacher M maintained,

Ħafna drabi jirrikonoxxu li għandna l-problemi; li għandna bżonn is-sapport; isir ħafna diskors u konferenzi ta' sapport lill-għalliema ... ħafna paroli u ma jsir xejn. Is-soluzzjoni dejjem trid issibha l-għalliema, il-LSA u l-madame. [Usually they recognize that we have problems; that we need support; a lot of words are said and support conferences are organized for teachers ... however, many words but no action. The teachers, LSA and HoS are left to find solutions by themselves.]

Both respondents also argued that a number of teachers and LSAs who were assigned to work in this school lacked the appropriate skills needed to handle children's negative behaviour. They affirmed that it would be beneficial if professional mentors were more practical and consistent within the school setting; this is in line with Bruner (1996; in Bell et al., 2004, p.31) who had asserted, "a theory of instruction must guide pedagogy to achieve positive educational outcomes". One should uphold the importance of providing specialized professionals in the school, who can guide teachers by directly observing students in the classroom and determining strategies that can help them overcome or minimize challenging behaviour.

In addition, I feel that staff meetings are too theoretical and the teaching staff would benefit more if practical experiences were included. At the time of this research, feedback from the CP revealed that it was imminent that support would definitely be provided to this school since a new plan designed for teachers, LSAs, children and their parents was in the pipeline:

Se jkollna trasformazzjoni minn Kindergarten għal Early Childhood Education Centre, jaħdem b'rizorsi mal-ġenituri u familji qabel it-tfal jidhlu Kinder 1, jaħdem ma' familji speċjalment li għandhom bżonn l-għajnuna u li jagħti training lis-single parents, LSAs u teachers. [We are going to have a transformation from Kindergarten to an Early Childhood Education Centre, which will work by means of resources with parents and families before their children start Kinder 1; it will especially focus on those families in need and provide training for single parents, LSAs and teachers.]

vii. LSA support

The HoS maintained that support provided by an LSA is crucial for children with challenging behaviour since they benefit from individual attention and have an increased chance of building trustworthy relationships with others. Similarly, the INCO noted that it would be ideal if an LSA were present in each class to assist and monitor all students. LSA X emphasized that the teacher and LSA should work collaboratively to celebrate inclusion, motivate students and provide constant support. Supportive of this, Teacher M added,

Il-LSA tista' sservi bħala bridge bejn l-għalliem u t-tfal; l-involvement tal-LSA huwa importanti. [The LSA can serve as a bridge between the teacher and the students; the LSA's involvement is important.]

The CP maintained that while the presence of an LSA was important, sometimes it was the teacher who needed to change their teaching styles and introduce fun learning through creative approaches to motivate and control children with difficult behaviour. Cefai (2008, p.20) stresses this point stating that often we ignore "those characteristics of the school context which may fail to promote children's cognitive and social development" and tended to label the community, children and their families.

viii. Discipline

Kounin (1970) affirms that successful teachers apply management techniques that minimize undesirable behaviour in class by moving smoothly from one lesson to the next, maintaining a steady pace and displaying class awareness.

The HoS claimed that initially a teacher talked to a child manifesting challenging behaviour with the intention of calming him down. If this approach failed, disciplinary action was introduced such as banning the child from joining an outing. However, Yell et al. (1999; in Olsen and Cooper, 2008) indicate that modern behavioural approaches concentrate more on positive reinforcement and cognitive training in self-management, rather than punishment. Nevertheless a large number of teachers still opting for punishment as a disciplinary measure, possibly not recognizing its negative effects. They might not be realizing that their students is being pushed away rather than encouraged to engage in positive learning, and that students manifesting oppositional behaviour often need extra patience and love, which they lack at home.

Positive reinforcement strengthens teacher-student relationships and succeeds in teaching students what behaviour is expected of them. To

the contrary, punishment usually makes children despise authority and hinders them from becoming aware of how they should act correctly.

Both LSAs supported this argument by confirming that positive reinforcement approaches were successful in their everyday practice since students were encouraged to improve their general behaviour and master self-control. This corresponds to what Walker et al. (1995; in Olsen and Cooper, 2008) maintained, that is, "social praise, tokens and cost contingency" helped reduce negative behaviour and brought about improvement in students with challenging behaviour. LSA X added that she found it more effective to praise students when they were being good rather than concentrating on when they were being negative. She stressed the importance of assigning duties to children to boost their self-esteem and make them feel responsible. In her words, "the class teacher and I as a team, will work out strategies in control like ignoring bad behaviour, praise good behaviour, involve him in all activities, give him specific important roles."

ix. Meetings and discussions

It is crucial for individuals working with students exhibiting challenging behaviour to meet up regularly to share ideas, discuss and plan. As Kauffman et al. (2006, p.120) believe, "collaborative arrangements between and among special and general educators is now considered to be an intervention that can be used to create more successful and inclusive classrooms, schools, and school districts". The INCO stated that regular review meetings among stakeholders took place; however she only referred to the Making Action Plans (MAP) and Individualised Educational Programmes (IEP) sessions, which took place for students who had a statement of needs and are supported by an LSA. In fact LSA X and Y felt frustrated that no meetings, involving all stakeholders were held – teachers and LSAs worked individually with the HoS, who pointed out that the school followed a pattern to save time. It may be that regular meetings should be held more frequently among members of staff to address issues that directly concern the school's current difficulties. Educators must share their ideas, experiences and knowledge to strengthen teamwork and create a system that primarily benefited students.

The Counsellor confirmed that formal meetings, such as case conferences with the pertinent professionals, were held to discuss the multitude of issues that arose when dealing with students having challenging behaviour as well as supporting their social, emotional and academic needs. Informal meetings were also held with the school staff, however I see these as less effective, since usually they are too short or else done during lessons or after assembly – all instances which do not provide adequate opportunity to discuss the situation in enough depth. On the other hand, the Family Therapist actually revealed that no meetings were in fact held.

x. Attitudes among students, teachers and LSAs

LSA X stated that students who manifesting oppositional behaviour usually lacked social skills, were disruptive during lessons, struggled to work collaboratively with their peers and acted aggressively. LSA Y and the HoS added that as a consequence their classmates felt intimidated by them, which led to their isolation. This observation notwithstanding, I did observe that a number of students with challenging behaviour were indeed popular, regardless of their negative behaviour; it is as though others looked up to them. LSA Y and the HoS emphasized that students who were disruptive were a source of difficulty during lessons and outings, often annoying those students who were willing to learn and engage in a positive, productive environment. At times teachers tended to label students who exhibited challenging behaviour, failing to provide those opportunities where they could express their positive aspects. Rather than dealing with the students themselves, they threw them out of class and seemed to believe that these actions were justified just because the student was known for being difficult. As Nelson et al. (2003; in Turnbull et al. 2007, p.161) have point out, "students with externalizing behaviour, especially aggression toward peers, tend to be frequently referred for office discipline, suspensions (in and out of school), detentions, and expulsions". On the other hand the KA thought that pre-school students clashed less and arguments were soon forgotten, therefore challenging behaviour at this age was not as severe. As she continued,

Jista' jkun li minhabba l-età ta' dawn it-tfal ma tantx jagħtu daqshekk kas. [It may be that, due to their age these children may not feel too bothered.]

The Maltese Education Act (1988) states that pupils, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses, must be part of the school community. However, the CP, teachers and INCO felt that some educators in the school under study did not embrace and accept diversity. A number of teachers did not tolerate children displaying challenging behaviour because of the disorder and disruption they created. Teacher M mentioned that usually these children were excluded from sports, drama and other prominent school activities. The HoS's opinion differed as she held that although it was very difficult to establish positive relationships with children who exhibited challenging behaviour, they were accepted and supported by the teaching team. Just as Cefai (2008, p.67) affirmed, "pupils need to be loved and cared for, to feel connected with their teachers and peers, and to have a sense of belonging to their group". The HoS added that these children undertook therapy sessions with the counsellor and guidance teacher;

Huma tfal li joffru challenging behaviour, sfidi lill-professjonisti, imma huma aċċettati għax jiena nħoss li anke meta jiġu l-professjonisti fl-iskola, huma jieħdu l-prijorità. [Although they are children who create

challenging situations to the professionals, they are accepted, as I feel that they are given preference by professionals when therapeutic sessions are offered to the school.]

xi. Teamwork in school / class

As Cefai (2008, p.116) has argued, "Staff teamwork does not only lead to more effective teaching, with teachers more satisfied in their work and more committed to the school's objectives, but it contributes directly to classroom collaboration as well, settle role models in collaboration for all classroom members."

The importance of teamwork between a teacher and an LSA was stressed repetitively throughout the interviews and was deemed critical to create positive interaction with children. As the KA suggested, when educators work collaboratively together and share values among each other, they serve as role models for the students who will in turn benefit socially and academically. If an optimistic aura existed within the school, because of the good rapport between the staff, this would reflect positively on the students. Such was underlined by LSA X, Teacher M and the INCO, all of whom held that professionals must work collaboratively to support each other and search for effective ways to cater for the students' needs. This supports what was pointed out by Olsen and Cooper (2008), that most issues were manageable if professionals used each other's viewpoints to reach common goals.

On a similar note LSA Y and the HoS believed that working in isolation led to confusion and students would not receive the necessary guidance to develop socially, emotionally and academically. The HoS was particularly optimistic about the teacher-LSA relationship that existed in her school, despite the challenging circumstances these educators encountered. On the other hand, the CP expressed his views about the lack of unity he assumed existed among the staff. Indeed, I could partially confirm the CP's preoccupation since I was aware that certain teachers were reluctant to share their resources and expertise with their colleagues, and that sometimes team-teaching was unsuccessful because the teacher and LSA were not compatible, failing to work successfully in class. Students sense this unfriendliness and a strained class environment that impedes them from progressing holistically may develop. However, the CP also added that this problem alone did not cause a student to manifest challenging behaviour, though it could contribute to it.

Hemm nuqqas ta' għaqda bejn l-istaff... il-mentalità ta' certu teachers hija 'The Siege Mentality'; allura ttellef. A professional is all the time in training... Certu teachers ma jaccettawix la darba saru professionals. Hemm teachers li ma jammettux li jistgħu jitrangaw; għalihom kollox qed jagħmlu tajjeb. [There is a lack of unity among staff; some teachers

adopt a siege mentality, which serves as an obstacle. A professional is all the time in training... Some teachers resist this once they become professionals. Some teachers resist the fact that they can improve; they believe that all they do is correct.]

xii. Resources / services and lessons

The HoS and Social Worker stressed on the importance of human resources in the school setting, primarily the administration team, teachers and LSAs, as they consider them an essential asset for children with behaviour difficulties. The CP affirmed that recently a number of additional human resources and services, such as a Family Support Worker, a Literacy Support Teacher and a Behaviour Support Teacher, had been introduced to support students attending the school. However, on our part, my colleagues and I could affirm that no such services had been implemented in the school under study up to the time I was doing my study, which was unfortunate considering it had a concentrated amount of difficulties. The HoS also confirmed that other services offered in the school, such as that of the educational psychologist, counsellor and play therapist should have been more frequent due to this reason. Consequently, the needs of students with challenging behaviour were not being addressed as required:

Li jiddispijaci ni hu li ma jkunux daqshekk regolari s-servizzi ... allura s-servizz ma jkunux ħaġa kontinwa. Din inħossha li xejn mhi tajba għal dawn it-tfal għax imbagħad meta huma jibnu ċerta relazzjoni jkunu jistennewha. [It is disappointing that services are not so regular ... thus these are not continuous. I feel this is detrimental to these children as when they build a certain level of relationship they would come to expect it.]

The Social Worker supported the HoS's argument indicating that certain beneficial services, such as play and drama therapy, were very limited. She added that the school, teachers and HoS are not enough to support these children; additional support from an educational psychologist, family therapist and the introduction of a nurture group were essential for the students' successful holistic development. The Social Worker continued:

A Big Brother System; a mentoring system; *xi ħadd li huwa stabbli; xi ħadd li jista' jkun ta' role model; xi ħadd li jista' jiltaqa' miegħu b'mod regolari.* [A Big Brother System; a mentoring system; someone who is stable; someone who can be a role model; someone who can meet him regularly.]

The CP also pointed out that when the school referred children to external institutions, the process usually dragged over a long period and children had to wait quite some time to be supported.

The Family Therapist promoted the importance of organizing activities such as culture tours, group work, discussions and role-plays to enhance social skills and provide situations where the children could engage in positive interaction, in line with Bell et al. (2004, p.82) who maintain that, "children can play an active role in their learning, constructing knowledge based on interactions with materials, other children and teachers".

The Counsellor added that parents also needed to be offered professional services that catered for the student's basic needs and guaranteed a successful holistic development for their children. One can see the reasoning behind this proposal as it is pointless to educate students at school if their parents continued to lack essential knowledge to follow their children's progress. As the Counsellor argued:

Haġa li tkun vera importanti hija li taħdem mal-parents; li jkun hawn xi haġa concurrent mat-tfal. Isiru laqgħat fuq kif jilagħbu mat-tfal, budgeting skills... xej xej anke l-idea li l-iskola mhux qiegħda hemm biex tiddixxplina biss imma biex tgħin lilek ukoll. [It is quite important to work with parents; having something that works concurrent with the children. Meetings about how they should play with their children, budgeting skills... in this way the school is not seen only as a disciplining institution but is also there to support you.]

LSA Y pointed out that a number of teachers should increase auditory and visual approaches during lessons to motivate students and ultimately reduce challenging behaviour. Nowadays there are a multitude of creative teaching strategies and resources that educators can implement in their everyday practice; yet a number of them continue to follow traditional methods when teaching. McManus (1994; in Olsen and Cooper, 2008, p.27) points out that an educator should possess a variety of qualities such as "firmness, fairness, care for students and the ability to be interesting".

Teachers and LSAs should make use of technology more frequently in the classroom since today's generation has advanced in this respect. It has been noted that students engage more positively in learning when lessons and activities are tailored to their preferences and likes; they become especially motivated when a teacher uses ICT or DVDs to deliver a lesson.

As Kay (2007, p.108) has established, "curriculum planning needs to be innovative, varied, based on children's progress to date and involving a balanced range of self-chosen and directed activities". Having an appropriate curriculum and good teaching skills are crucial to keep children focused; therefore by using the right attitude and giving constant encouragement, the child's educational development may improve, allowing them to grow, achieve a sense of well-being and become more engaged in the learning process. Following Cefai (2008, p.91),

"the classroom teacher needs to adopt a flexible method of teaching, adapting his or her approach according to the needs, interests, styles and experiences of the learners".

During the present study LSA Y observed that resources were lacking in the school when working with students displaying challenging behaviour. The Counsellor, Social Worker, as well as LSA Y, retained that professionals needed specific resources such as multi-sensory tools and a resource room to assist these students effectively. From my experience I can confirm that students who required time-out sessions to 'cool-off' had nowhere to go, except the corridor or a bare empty classroom. The HoS, Counsellor and Teacher agreed that a resource room, offering a serene environment and a variety of resources, would prove beneficial for professionals and students alike. As Teacher M affirmed,

Għandu jkun hemm kamra apposta għal dawn it-tfal, differenti mill-klassi, li tkun attrezzata tajjeb biex ikunu jistgħu jagħmlu lezzjonijiet differenti, jingħataw attenzjoni individwali u attivitajiet hands-on, b'ħafna riżorsi. [There should be a specific room for these children, different from the classroom, fully equipped so that they could participate in lessons with a difference, are given individual attention and do hands-on activities with many resources.]

Similarly, LSA X highlighted the importance of introducing quality resources together with a specialized professional who supported children with challenging behaviour through assessments and resources, whilst working in collaboration with other specialists and parents regarding the child's overall needs. As she maintained, "a professional who is trained with children with challenging behaviour should make a needs assessment both at school and in class before school begins. He together with the INCO, HoS and teaching team, and preferably parents, discuss the child's needs and then list the appropriate individual resources to support him at school and class."

xiii. Classroom layout

I believe that a teacher's principal aim should be to help children feel at ease and motivated during their time in the classroom; therefore, it is their duty to provide an attractive, warm learning environment and seek teaching methods that are best suited for the students' needs. The HoS and LSA X shared the same opinion. The classroom layout must be planned and organized in a way that allows ample space for the teacher to move around and reach each student quickly, as well as provide opportunities to observe students discreetly whilst on task; this corresponds to what Jones (2001; in Hardin, 2004) affirms about the classroom layout being the centrepiece of classroom control. This strengthened the INCO's argument that,

Naħseb li jekk il-klassijiet ikunu organizzati fi gruppi, ikollhom differentiated teaching fejn kulhadd ikun komdu skont il-livell tiegħu, ikun hemm visual schedule tal-programm tal-gurnata, reading corner bil-cushions u jkun hemm teaching assistant f'kull klassi, it-tfal imorru aħjar. [I think that if classes were organized into groups, receive differentiated teaching where everyone is comfortable in line with their abilities, where there is a visual schedule of the day's programme, a reading corner with cushions and the availability of a teaching assistant in each class, then children will perform better.]

Furthermore, I find that it is important for the classroom structure to provide for an informal approach between professionals and students, where all levels can be catered for. This corresponds to what Swale (2006, p.24) has argued, that is, "although little can be done to change size and shape of the building itself, the way in which the rooms are laid out and resourced can easily be changed, and such changes may bring about positive changes in children's behaviour". However, the HoS and Teacher M claimed that classes were restricted in this regard due to a lack of space which impeded the teacher from carrying out certain activities. Teacher M suggested that educators should, however, still aim to provide ideal seating arrangements to promote group interaction and display students' work.

Concluding remarks

The teaching staff should work collaboratively along the scholastic year to create a common structure for all students and decide what key strategies to focus upon, depending on the general need of the school. Consequently, children should experience an ongoing positive educational process throughout their school years and find it less difficult to adjusting from year to year. For, as Kay (2007, p.96) has pointed out, "whole-setting approaches encompass the policies, practices, ethos and goals, management structures and leadership, communication systems and relationships of a setting in relation to a particular area of work". And as Olsen and Cooper (2008, p.43) have opined, "At every step of the way teachers and schools are likely to maximize their likelihood of success when they take account of the context in which they are working, and when they take particular attention to what their students are telling them".

For successful learning to take place, it is important for a healthy relationship to be established between teacher and students. If children do not feel welcome or experience situations that impede their active participation in the classroom, their holistic development is at risk; therefore, the teacher should always aim to create an interactive, encouraging environment where students have a voice, notwithstanding their difficulties. In line with Bell et al. (2004), when a child presents significant behaviour challenges in the classroom, it is the teacher's duty to view the challenging situation from various perspectives before attempting to solve the actual problem. It is important for the teacher

to consider a child's social and psychological state before focusing on the surface behaviour and labelling them. For as Glasser (n.d.; in Hardin, 2004, p.95) has underlined, "students will only be successful if they fulfil their need for belonging, power, freedom, and fun within the school environment".

To enhance a productive class environment the teacher must find the means by which to reduce the possibility of students becoming alienated or frustrated. Therefore, when the educator senses that a particular lesson or topic is failing to stimulate the students, one should spontaneously put the lesson on hold and do some relaxation activities, such as listening to soft music or carrying out brain gym sessions between lessons. This can prove effective in breaking the class routine, refresh the students' state of mind, and encouraging them to concentrate better. This corresponds to what the Ministry of Education (1999, p.30) has proposed in that "extra work time, rest breaks and flexibility may also help. Students should be allowed time and be given the necessary support for their personal development". A further suggestion would be for the teacher to maintain a cheerful disposition in class by having at hand light anecdotes and be prepared with ways to keep the students pleased.

A teacher must also work in collaboration with the other members of the transdisciplinary team through sharing skills, ideas, viewpoints and ultimately forming a set of common goals that provide better support for the child. When this cooperative approach is adopted, educators tend to become role models to the students through their positive attitude reflecting positively in terms of social, emotional and educational experience.

It would also be beneficial if transition meetings are held among the staff towards the end of the third term before the school breaks up for summer holidays as this provides an opportunity for teachers to discuss goals and prepare differentiated material for the following year.

Highly necessary is for the school to work hand in hand with the parents to improve their children's development. Their involvement and cooperation can be a useful further tool for the benefit of the students and they should, therefore, be given a voice as well as a part in the transdisciplinary team with a share in responsibilities. Frequent meetings to discuss the child's strengths, needs and weaknesses should be planned and held regularly to deal with issues that may arise, set up common goals and create behavioural strategies. As Papatheodorou (2005, p.133) has observed, "parents are the most significant and influential resource for young children and they have important information and insights to contribute to the process of planning".

Educators working in the school under study, experienced intense situations with a number of students that resulted in stress, feelings of helplessness and frustration. Indeed, the teaching staff needs constant

supervision and support from external professionals. In addition the school needs to engage human resources on a full time basis, such as a counsellor, a family therapist and a psychologist, who can help address the wide range of difficulties present.

Furthermore, regarding the students themselves as Schickendanz (1977) has argued, these can explore and increase their interest if resources compliment an activity or task. This makes it essential for the class teacher to utilise multimodal explanations through demonstrations, observations and learning games. Students should also be provided with visuals that are attractive to the senses and the education delivered in class should cater for a wide-ranging array of learning styles. In this way, all students will have a chance of becoming motivated to learn through the stimulating environment which allows them to enjoy their time in the classroom.

One way to bring about an attractiveness in the classroom is how this 'reaches out' to the student. As Hardin (2004, p.59) puts it, the ideal "classroom arrangement should allow for maximum teacher mobility, physical proximity to students, and the moment-to-moment accountability of students". To help students, especially those with challenging behaviour, feel at ease and motivated during their time in the classroom, a warm and friendly atmosphere should be provided for to welcome the children into a world of fun learning as well as make them feel accepted, secure and safe.

This does not omit the necessity of rules. To the contrary, as Fontana (1985, p.124) argues, "good management allows the children to get a clear picture of what is going on and what is expected of them, and allows them to see more clearly the consistent consequences of their own behaviour, both desirable and undesirable". For behaviour management to occur rules should be created and discussed by the class teacher with the students. It is important that students identify with the goals of classroom rules and consider them essential towards a successful environment. Furthermore, students are supplied with a sense of direction when they are involved in setting goals for their classroom as they are aware of the rewards they will receive and can monitor their progress. As Olsen and Cooper (2008, p. 124) have pointed out, "only when students have a means of access to the nature, purposes and processes of the discipline policy will they own it and become committed to it".

Rules should preferably be presented to students positively but at times may also be effective when used negatively as suggested by Olsen and Cooper (2008): "when working with young or particularly young students, a mixture of positive and negatively stated rules works best" (p.51). When students have a say in what class rules they want, they tend to feel a sense of ownership and it is therefore important for the teacher to use the children's language when listing the decided regulations, even if they frame some negatively. Furthermore, a teacher's verbal behaviour with the

student can remain positive by referring to the rules rather than elaborate on what behaviour is unacceptable. By displaying the chart in a prominent place in class the students will be reminded of what is expected of them.

The consequences of breaking these rules should be discussed with the students during the establishment phase when the class rules are being developed. According to Rogers (2002), the rules have to be applied within a framework that has degrees of seriousness; making students aware that consequences will intensify if they exhibit a certain behaviour and are therefore, given the option of deciding what they want the outcome to be. On the other hand, students should also be aware that rule acknowledgement can lead to rewards. In this way students may shift and redirect negative behaviour if they face a consequence at the early stage of the hierarchy and reflect on what behaviour is expected of them (RRC technique: Rules – Rewards – Consequences). In addition, when a less serious rule is broken, the teacher should not give much attention to the student, but rather praise the children who follow them (RIP technique: Rules – Ignore – Praise). This technique, as stated by Charles (1996; in Olsen & Cooper, 2008), serves as an effective tool when dealing with primary children since they enjoy receiving praise and approval from their teacher and tend to repeat the behaviour.

To sustain an orderly environment within the classroom, the teacher must control the unruly ways of students who intentionally disrupt those around them. Failing to tackle disruption accordingly may lead to creating a chaotic atmosphere; one should therefore be prepared to deal with challenging situations in an effective way. This could be managed by the teacher avoiding to raise one's voice to settle children down, and using non-verbal strategies instead. Jones (1989) points out that body language is an effective tool for classroom discipline that can be applied when tackling students without having to disrupt the ongoing lesson or activity. Consequently, such strategies may save a great amount of time and energy.

Bolton (1986; Olsen & Cooper, 2008) advises that the teacher should catch students being good while they are working individually or in groups. This approach helps them to realize that positive behaviour can attract attention and the teacher will acknowledge the new, positive behaviour immediately.

According to Kazdin (2001; in Bell et al., 2004, p.113), "the goal of differential positive reinforcement is to decrease the occurrence of challenging behaviours by selectively attending to or rewarding the child for displaying more acceptable behaviors". A number of rewarding systems can be included in class with the aim of encouraging students to improve their general behaviour and master self-control. A student can be rewarded individually or when engaged in group work. It is important

to always inform and remind the student what the reward will be, so that one can have a goal to achieve. To have an additional positive effect, the incentives must be chosen by the students themselves on an individual preference, or on a group basis; thus they will be encouraged to work even harder to obtain the deserved reward.

Through these qualitative techniques, all students, especially those with challenging behaviour, can establish a closer relationship and bond with both professionals and peers. This should help them to interact better in society, increase their independence, obtain a voice, as well as increase their self-esteem and begin to overcome the various obstacles they encounter. Quality education occurs when students, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses in any area, become part of the school community and are treated without discriminations or injustice. It is the professionals' duty to identify the children's needs so as to plan strategies and interventions that lead to successful learning and integration.

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