

Chapter 2: Internationalisation and Multiculturalism in Schools

The Experience of Multiculturalism in Schools in Malta: a Qualitative Exploration

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the experience of multiculturalism in schools in Malta, an increasing social phenomenon in the past few years. The study is carried out from a sociological perspective and starts with discussing the various connotations of the term 'multiculturalism', also within the Maltese context. Drawing on a number of scholarly works such as those of Kymlicka (2010) and Parekh (2006), multiculturalism is seen as a political endeavour engaged first and foremost in developing new models of democratic citizenship beyond the legal aspect, citizenship as an evolutionary process cultivating a sense of belonging to a particular place at a particular time. The research methodology included a case study of a State Secondary school in Malta, which included interviews with Maltese and non-Maltese pupils, teachers, an Assistant Head of School, the Head of School and also two expert interviews. The question 'How, if at all, does multiculturalism impact the experience of pupils and teachers at school?' was explored. The relevant statistics from MIPEX and the NESSE Report were consulted, putting the case study in a wider national and international context. The data collected and its analysis show that the situation is one of a mixture of assimilation and indifference towards the increasing ethnic and national diversity in the school. The study concludes that a sense of belonging is not being cultivated among the non-Maltese pupils and that meaningful contact between pupils of different ethnicities and nationalities must be stimulated and not left to chance.

Keywords:

multiculturalism, diversity, identity, integration, citizenship, qualitative research, case study, interviews

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The Motivations

The increasing social phenomenon of multicultural schools in Malta influenced me directly as a teacher. For the last few years, my colleagues and I have had to face challenges related to: communication due to language barriers; ambiguities regarding the language to be used in the delivery of lessons and the material used in class; dilemmas emerging from differing religious beliefs and values; and conflicts between pupils of different ethnicities and nationalities. Things seemed to be moving by trial and error and on a day-to-day basis. I learnt from colleagues in other schools in Malta that they were experiencing a similar situation. My involvement in the field of sociology intrigued me to discover more about this social phenomenon of increasing 'multiculturalism' in schools in Malta from a sociological perspective.

As an educator and a social scientist, I was inspired by Banks' words: 'social science research has supported historically and still supports educational policies that affect the life chances and educational opportunities of pupils' (1998: 5). Hence the start of this research at a time when the number of pupils with different ethnicities and nationalities is increasing in schools in Malta at an unprecedented rate.

I set out to research the pupils' and teachers' multicultural schooling experience in a State secondary school against a backdrop of the policies adopted by the Migrant Learners' Unit within the Ministry of Education and Employment in Malta, the view of the Department of Inclusion and Access to Learning at the University of Malta, and reference to the National Curriculum Framework and to related statistics, namely the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) and the Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and training (NESSE) report.

The Context

The term 'multiculturalism' is a complex term. As Vertovec and Wessendorf explain, multiculturalism has come to refer to "a broad set of mutually reinforcing approaches or methodologies concerning the incorporation and participation of immigrants and ethnic minorities and their modes of cultural/religious difference" (2010: 4). According to Kymlicka, multiculturalism is a political endeavour "engaged first and foremost [in] developing new models of democratic citizenship, grounded in human rights ideals" (2010: 101). The meaning of citizenship here is built on Dahrendorf's (1974) idea of the term which goes beyond the legal aspect, focusing more on its evolutionary character combining human beings' aspirations for equality, liberty and life chances. The definition also tries to capture Parekh's (2006) idea of 'belonging' as a citizen, that is being accepted and feeling welcome. Hence, citizenship here implies "the continuous evolution of rights and duties aimed at developing a sense of belonging among residents of a particular place in a particular time".

The multiculturalist project can be seen in opposition to the assimilation model. This contrast can be clearly seen in Rodriguez-Garcia's (2010) analysis of assimilation and multiculturalism. He refers to what might be called a spectrum of models ranging from "high assimilation" to "high multiculturalism". The assimilationist model is based on monoculturality, where cultural diversity is recognised only in the private sphere (home), while in the institutional/public sphere, assimilation is promoted. On the other hand, the multicultural model promotes cultural diversity in both the private and public spheres. Both models "are practiced to differing degrees according to the particular countries" (Rodriguez-Garcia 2010: 253).

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A 'multicultural society' is a society that includes two or more cultural communities, while 'multiculturalism' or 'multiculturalist society' implies a response to the cultural diversity found in a multicultural society (Parekh 2006). The term 'multiculturalism' in Malta is commonly used to refer to the increase in the number of people relocating to Malta from other countries, the so-called *żieda fil-multikulturaliżmu* (increase in multiculturalism). The terms 'multicultural' and 'multiculturalism' are sometimes used interchangeably, giving rise to confusion, hence the term 'experience' in the title of this study to reflect the various ways in which the term 'multiculturalism' can be understood and lived.

In recent years, multiculturalist policies have suffered a backlash in various countries. This can be seen in the attacks politicians, such as the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel (Weaver 2010) and ex-British Prime Minister, David Cameron (Kuenssberg 2011) made on multiculturalism recently, both declaring that multiculturalism has failed. The overarching criticism of multiculturalism is its failure to bring social cohesion (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010). Rather than fostering unity between different cultures, it has been claimed that it promoted the segregation of ethnic minorities and immigrants and failed to bring unity between diverse cultures. According to Meer et al. (2015) the point of departure should be that multiculturalism has been adopted in different ways in different countries (such as the Netherlands, the UK, Denmark and Germany). Consequently the success or failure of multiculturalism takes different turns in different countries.

The same can be said of multiculturalism in schools. While generally speaking multiculturalism in schools is increasing in many countries all over the world, the process does not manifest itself in the same way across countries. Thus, different scenarios can be identified. Some scenarios are composed of 'ethnically diverse schools and classrooms', defined by Graham as a situation "when multiple ethnic groups are present and represented evenly" (2006: 318). Others consist of a native majority and a number of other nationalities and ethnic groups constituting smaller numbers, whose numerical weight may also vary between them. Many schools in Malta are a case in point. According to statistics provided by the Ministry

of Education and Employment, in October 2016 there were ninety-seven nationalities, as shown on passport, represented in State schools in Malta across the Kindergarten, Primary and Secondary levels (including Middle and Secondary levels) of schooling.

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) is a tool which measures migrant integration policies in all EU Member States, Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and the USA. In 2015, Malta ranked 33rd out of 38 countries with a MIPEX score of 40 out of 100, falling into the “slightly unfavourable” towards the integration of migrants category, bordering the “halfway favourable” category by just one point, the score for the latter being 41–49 (MIPEX 2015). In the area of education, Malta scored 19 out of 100 falling into the “unfavourable category” (MIPEX 2015). While MIPEX points out that Malta’s National Curriculum Framework “places diversity as one of the core principles across the curriculum for all pupils to learn about minority groups, different languages and cultures” (Education section), it argues that Malta still lacks a lot when it comes to: policies regarding teacher training, *vis-à-vis* multiculturalism; support to schools in the face of the increasing phenomenon of multiculturalism; support to migrant pupils, such as no support for social integration, immigrant languages, cultures or parental outreach (MIPEX 2015).

The fieldwork for my study was carried out in 2017, at a time when the so-called increase in multiculturalism was frequently making news in Malta. I set out to research how the increase in multiculturalism in schools in Malta was being experienced by pupils and teachers. This required a qualitative approach. Schofield (2001) points out that in recent years there has been an increase in qualitative research and studies into long-term effects of racially and ethnically heterogeneous schools. Schofield (2001) and others, amongst whom Graham (2006), Agirdag et al. (2011), and Santagati (2015), believe that non-cognitive outcomes, such as friendships, conflict and peer victimisation are as important as cognitive outcomes in understanding the schooling experience and its impact on the individual and society.

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The Research Questions

The main research question of this study was, "How, if at all, does multiculturalism impact the experience of pupils and teachers at school?", which was divided in the following sub-questions:

To what extent do Maltese identity markers affect the multicultural schooling experience of pupils and teachers?

How, if at all, does multiculturalism affect the school climate?

To what extent is the multicultural schooling experience a product of teachers' perceptions and behaviours?

In what ways is the making of citizenship in the school affected by increasing multiculturalism?

Ethical Issues, Research Methods and Methods of Analysis

A qualitative approach was used to collect data. A case study of a State Secondary school in Malta was carried out. A qualitative study is a social scientific endeavour which, "although it is rarely used to identify broad patterns or trends, it can provide detailed, contextual and multi-layered interpretation" (Mason 2002: 175). The participants chosen from the school were given a voice, an opportunity to talk about their experience at school.

The school caters for pupils aged thirteen to sixteen years in their Years Nine, Ten, and Eleven of compulsory schooling. Each year has an average of ten classes. Being a State school, there is no selectivity process and pupils are enrolled from within a specific catchment area. At the time of the research, Years Ten and Eleven were girls-only classes, while Year Nine was co-educational. Year Nine pupils (aged thirteen) were my relevant population. There were two main reasons for this. First of all, Year Nine had the largest number of different nationalities, hence, it lent itself better to the study of the multicultural

experience; secondly, both girls and boys could be included in the study since, unlike the other years, it was co-educational. The following table shows the pupil sample.

Table – Pupil Interviewees’ Profiles

Pseudonym	Nationality	Parents' Nationality	Religious Affiliation	Native Language/s	Maltese and English Languages	Time in Malta	Time in School
Cody	Australian	both Australian	none	English	only English	2 years	from beginning of year
Khaled	Libyan	both Libyan	Muslim	Arabic	Maltese and English	3 years	from beginning of year
David	Maltese	both Maltese	Catholic	Maltese	Maltese and English	since birth	from beginning of year
Julian	Maltese	both Maltese	Catholic	Maltese	Maltese and English	since birth	from beginning of year
Anna	Maltese	both Maltese	Catholic	Maltese	Maltese and English	since birth	from beginning of year
Maria	Maltese	both Maltese	Catholic	Maltese	Maltese and English	since birth	from beginning of year
Malak	Maltese	father Lebanese, mother Maltese	Muslim	Maltese and Arabic	Maltese and English	since birth	4 months
Farah	Maltese	father Palestinian, mother Maltese	Muslim	Maltese and Arabic	Maltese and English	since birth	4 months
Niya	Pakistani	both Pakistani	Catholic	Urdu	only English	3 years	from beginning of year
Alek	Serbian	both Serbian	Christian Orthodox	Serbian	very little English	7 months	6 months
Novak	Serbian	both Serbian	Christian Orthodox	Serbian	Maltese and English	5 years	from beginning of year
Sami	Syrian	both Syrian	Muslim	Kurdish	none	4 months	3 weeks

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Strategic non-random purposive sampling was used to select both the pupil and the teacher sample. I chose teachers from the Year Nine teaching staff who taught different subjects so as to have a wide spectrum not only of different subjects, but also of different classroom settings. The teachers' sample consisted of one P.E. teacher, one P.S.C.D teacher, one Religion teacher, one Social Studies teacher, one I.C.T. teacher, one teacher of 'Maltese as a Foreign Language' and two guidance teachers. Since Year Nine pupils were allocated two guidance teachers who meet pupils on a one-to-one basis, I decided to interview them both. All ethical requirements by the Research and Development Directorate (RDD) within the Ministry of Education, and the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) at the University of Malta were met before starting the research.

The main research tool used to generate data for this study was the qualitative interview. Seven interview guides were developed: one for the pupils, one for the subject teachers, one for the guidance teachers, one for the Assistant Head of school, one for the Head of School, one for the Head of the Migrant Learners' Unit, and another for the Head of the Department of Inclusion. Thematic analysis, known also as interpretive content analysis, was used to analyse the data collected from the interviews with pupils and teachers and from the expert interviews. This type of analysis is frequently used in qualitative research. Themes were identified from the data leading to the identification of patterns.

The process started by familiarising myself with the data by listening to the recorded interviews. With increasing familiarisation I started to take note of key issues. The next step involved the identification of themes that were important in relation to the research questions. The themes identified from the expert interviews were: Background, Challenges, and Training. These are presented as descriptive narrative. The key themes identified from the field data were: Barriers, Bridges, Relations and Belonging. These provided the basis of the analytical narrative. An analysis and discussion of these themes provided the answers to the research question and sub-questions, and also the recommendations and conclusions of this research.

Key Themes and Findings

Expert Interviews Themes

The data collected by the expert interviews with the Head of the Migrant Learners' Unit within the Ministry for Education and the Head of the Department of Inclusion within the University of Malta was divided into three themes.

The Background

The Head of the Migrant Learners' Unit started by giving me a background of the situation that led to the establishment of the Migrant Learners' Unit in 2013. He explained how unease started to be felt by teachers who, in the months preceding the establishment of the Unit, were directly struck with a sudden influx of migrant pupils in their classrooms. The Head of the Migrant Learners' Unit explained how some teachers who were feeling unprepared for and frustrated with the increase of international pupils referred to the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) for support and guidance. In turn, the MUT voiced the concerns of these teachers to the respective authorities. From then on, work started on developing a Unit to specifically deal with this rapidly emerging social phenomenon, hence, the establishment of the Migrant Learners' Unit. The Head of the Migrant Learners' Unit pointed out that one of the biggest challenges that schools in Malta face with respect to multiculturalism is the large number of different nationalities.

The Head of the Department of Inclusion at the University of Malta pointed out that today, compared to seven/eight years ago, there are more statistics and data on international pupils in schools in Malta. These statistics are provided by the schools themselves and by the Education Division within the Ministry of Education and Employment, yet, he says 'we still don't know what to do with these statistics'. In his view, we need different ways for how to deal with different issues and different nationalities. He argued that we should identify the challenges and what is causing these challenges 'so that we unpack [the issue], then the next question will be, how can I address these specifics?'

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The Challenges

One of the major problems the Ministry of Education faces is that of planning for the influx of pupils from countries outside Malta, especially since migrant pupils tend to turn up to apply for schooling at random times throughout the year. This 'pattern', according to the Head of the Migrant Learners' Unit, has a negative impact on schools and classrooms. Including new pupils in the educational system during the scholastic year when classrooms are settled and the scholastic year is 'up and running' is not an easy task.

According to the Head of Inclusion, while language and also religion are seen to be the main challenges when speaking about multiculturalism in Malta, when 'unpacking' the challenges we may realise that there are other cultural barriers which are playing an important part in the situation. The interviewee explained how for instance, the long-term conflict between Serbia and Kosovo may be influencing the relations between pupils originating from these two countries. This is not a language or a religious barrier, the interviewee added; it is more political and probably the pupils are being influenced by the discourses at home. Likewise, the interviewee continued, certain cultural barriers may be filtering in where we do not expect them, such as a pupil's religious background influencing their experience with science through morality and ethics.

Training

In the Head of the Migrant Learners' Unit's words, '[n]o teachers have been trained so far to teach migrant learners. We work with what we have.' He emphasised the importance of training not only teachers but also administrators, including Heads and Assistant Heads of Schools and Education Officers. In the interviewee's words, 'I can't train teachers and the Heads of School don't know what's going on. I can't train teachers and the Education Officers don't know what's going on, because they have to guide teachers'. The Head of the Department of Inclusion is on the same wavelength, with his view that we should not speak about 'teacher training' but about 'leader training' because training all leaders in schools, that is teachers, Heads, Assistant Heads and Education Officers,

and not only teachers, is crucial in the educational process. He reiterated that training on multiculturalism and diversity is lacking in Malta. In his words, '[t]here is some work being done with children but very little if any being done with teachers and leaders. We have to support the teacher to support the child'.

Field Data Themes

The data collected by the interviews carried out with pupils, teachers, the Assistant Head and Head of school was classified into four main themes:

Barriers

The main *barriers* to fostering meaningful contact, integration and a sense of belonging were: language, religious affiliation, and lack of teacher training. The language and religion issues present themselves both in the classrooms and outside, such as in morning assemblies, breaks and extra-curricular activities. For those pupils who are not knowledgeable of the Maltese language and those who are not Catholics, integration in the school is very hard to come by, and hence the sense of belonging is scarce.

Bridges

Faced with these challenges in their everyday experience at school, the school's administration, teachers and pupils react in various ways. Keeping in mind the lack of national policies related to the increase in multiculturalism in Middle and Secondary State Schools in Malta, these challenges are dealt with by improvising coping methods that help in building *bridges* to overcome the *barriers*. These coping methods include incorporating 'Maltese as a Foreign Language' in the timetable, translating exam papers and lesson resources such as handouts from Maltese into English, code switching by teachers while delivering lessons, asking pupils to support each other when the language barrier presents itself, communicating notices in the morning assembly in English besides Maltese, a 'buddy system' and support by guidance teachers offered to newcomers, and the school system explained to parents of non-Maltese pupils on a one-to-one basis.

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Relations

The third theme focused on *relations* between pupils, especially in terms of friendships and informal support practices, and conflicts and peer victimisation. The majority of my teacher sample pointed out that Maltese and non-Maltese pupils do not mix a lot in the school's playgrounds. The P.S.C.D. and guidance teachers, and the Assistant Head believe that non-Maltese pupils 'stick' together mainly for support. In one of the guidance teacher's words, 'it's like they have clicked together, the foreigners, it's like they have united. You see them in breaks and in corridors'. According to the Head of School, the language is the main reason why non-Maltese pupils stay together during breaks. The Head of School is of the opinion that pupils should be free to choose their friends. In their view, pupils choose friends not only according to nationality, language or religion but also based on factors like gender, hobbies such as sports, and others. In their words, '[t]hese foreigners like sports more than the Maltese, I think. You start seeing these cultural differences'. The Assistant Head reiterated this point by stating, '[i]t could be that they [non-Maltese] have a sporty culture more than us. During breaks the majority of those playing basketball are foreigners'. Even though non-Maltese pupils tend to group together especially during breaks, all teachers in my sample noted that there is some interaction between Maltese and non-Maltese pupils in the classrooms during lessons, though the P.S.C.D. teacher still pointed towards a strong Maltese and non-Maltese grouping in their lessons. In their view this is because in these lessons discussions on personal issues in small groups are held and the non-Maltese seem to find support in each other.

When the pupils were asked about their friendship patterns, the data revealed that the closest friends of the Maltese pupils in my sample were Maltese schoolmates whom they met in Primary or Middle School, while the closest friends of non-Maltese pupils were a mixture of Maltese and non-Maltese pupils. Various factors, including nationality, language, religion, length of stay in Malta, were influencing the formation of friendship networks. Since, like other State schools in Malta, the school receives newcomers throughout the entire scholastic year, the pupils were asked if they approach

newcomers in the school. The general answer was positive. The data revealed multiple instances of this help that was provided to newcomers by the majority of the pupil sample. Newcomers are approached, shown around, and provided with school materials, like handouts. A deviation from this pattern was discovered when one of the pupils in my sample who wears a hijab claimed that she would like to approach newcomers but she hesitates from doing so because of fear of rejection due to the hijab. Another reason for pupils to interact is to catch up with homework and other tasks that are carried out at school when they are absent. All the pupils in my sample use various means of communication to give or receive this support. Support is given mostly by best friends or in a group on social media, which in this case is cutting across ethnic, national and other differences.

Despite this support, both pupils and teachers in my sample and the Head of School pointed out that sometimes pupils differentiate between nationalities and this often leads to conflicts, revealing a pattern of *'ahna l-Maltin u huma l-barranin'* ('us' the Maltese and 'them' the foreigners) both in attitudes and behaviours and in language. Cases of peer victimisation were reported at all interview levels: pupil, teacher, administration. This data pointed towards a low level of integration between Maltese and non-Maltese pupils in everyday life at the school.

Belonging

The fourth theme identified was termed *belonging*, and it investigated the pupils' sense of belonging to a country and addressed the issue of transnationalism. The Maltese pupils in my sample felt a sense of belonging to Malta; however, the non-Maltese pupils felt a stronger sense of belonging to their native country irrespective of the amount of time they have been residing in Malta. Only one non-Maltese pupil prefers Malta to the other countries. However, unlike the other non-Maltese pupils, he has been moving from one country to another with his family from a very young age.

The data collected and their analysis are further elaborated below in the answers to the research questions.

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Answers to the Research Questions

The following are the research questions answered by means of analytical narrative.

1. To what extent do Maltese identity markers affect the multicultural schooling experience of pupils and teachers?

The extent of the influence of the Maltese language and the Catholic religion, as identity markers, on the multicultural schooling experience of pupils and teachers is large. My findings show that Maltese is the main language, used not only in the delivery of lessons but also in extra-curricular activities and in the school environment in general, such as morning assemblies and meetings with parents. This hinders the full integration of non-Maltese pupils who have no knowledge of the Maltese language into the educational experience, implying a lack of acceptance of difference by the system, a lack of active participation in the educational experience, and a lack of a sense of belonging to the system.

Multilingualism is making the multicultural project even more challenging. The multicultural schooling experience is influenced not only by the interplay of the Maltese and English languages, but also by other languages, considering that in the non-Maltese pupils' families other native languages (in this study Arabic, Kurdish, Serbian and Urdu) are still practiced, and hence form part of the pupils' identity and of their daily experience. As part of a multicultural project the challenge lies in recognising and balancing all the languages.

Another characteristic of multiculturalism in schools in Malta is an increase in religious pluralism. The Catholic religion is the only religion taught as part of the curriculum in State schools in Malta, and hence in the school studied in this research. Moreover, Catholic religious rituals and activities are ongoing throughout the scholastic year. The increase in the number of different religious affiliations represented in the school (two Christian Orthodox pupils, four Muslims and one with no religious affiliation in my sample) is making the

religious boundary between Catholics and non-Catholics more apparent. Having pupils staring and not participating in the morning assembly prayers, and the increase in the number of pupils exempt from participating in religion lessons and sitting on one side of the room stranded or doing another task which has nothing to do with that lesson, such as homework of another subject, or drawing or reading, and having pupils stranded in the school foyer until a Catholic religious activity is over, all point towards the large extent of the immersion of the school in Catholic religious rituals, activities and lessons which is pushing the non-Catholic pupils to the margins of the schooling experience.

The fear of Farah (a Maltese pupil in my sample) of being labelled 'Arab' because of being Muslim and wearing a hijab, indicate the strength of the Catholic religion as a national identity marker in Malta. At school Farah felt the need to assert that she is Maltese, that she was born in Malta and lives in Malta because her schoolmates could not believe she is Maltese but Muslim and also wearing the hijab. Being shy to take part in extra-curricular activities because of the hijab, and being afraid of being rejected by schoolmates because of being Muslim limits her relations and her participation and integration in the schooling experience.

The prevalence of the Maltese language and the Catholic religion in the school is no longer a comfortable zone. Rather, this prevalence is giving rise to a sense of unease and exclusion in an increasingly multicultural environment.

2. How, if at all, does multiculturalism affect the school climate?

Multiculturalism affects relations, referred to as the school climate, both positively and negatively. The findings of this study pointed towards a mixture of separateness and interaction, of positive and negative relations, in different situations during school hours. Despite the fact that the pupils in my sample have positive perceptions of national and ethnic diversity and are willing to learn more about diversity, positive relations and interaction do not result automatically from mere contact. At times mere contact may not even lead to interaction in

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the first place. My research revealed there is very limited interaction going on between Maltese and non-Maltese pupils even though all pupils for instance are physically present in the same playground at the same time. Hence, there is contact but no interaction. The language is the main identifying marker influencing interaction between Maltese and non-Maltese pupils, with the non-Maltese pupils interacting mainly between themselves using the English language or other non-Maltese languages such as Serbian.

Instances of conflict and peer victimisation were also found. The findings indicate that when a conflict between a Maltese pupil and a non-Maltese pupil takes place, even though it may start on an issue unrelated to nationality, the Maltese pupils witnessing the conflict tend to side with the Maltese schoolmate, while the non-Maltese with the non-Maltese protagonist in the conflict. My fieldwork revealed that some Maltese pupils feel their identity is threatened by non-Maltese ones. This manifests itself in instances such as the opposition to the use of the English language instead of the Maltese language in class. Some teachers in my sample witnessed peer victimisation by Maltese pupils of non-Maltese ones, especially over the use of English in class, while some pupils in my sample also recalled instances were conflicts between pupils of different nationalities arose out of class.

The findings show that all pupils have a mixture of Maltese and non-Maltese friends, thus, the school climate includes a mixture of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic friendships. Instances of support and meaningful contact between all pupils in the school, irrespective of nationality and ethnicity, could also be identified. These include willingness to provide support to newcomers especially those who start attending school after the commencement of the scholastic year which are mainly, but not only, non-Maltese pupils. This support is given both in an organised way by the school as in the case of the 'buddy system', and spontaneously between classmates regardless of nationality. Pupils also support each other irrespective of nationality and ethnicity when they are absent from school to catch up with the work done.

3. To what extent is the multicultural schooling experience a product of teachers' perceptions and behaviours?

Teachers' perceptions and behaviours are crucial in the multicultural schooling experience as they are leaders in the classroom and school. From my findings it is clear that almost instinctively teachers develop coping methods (such as code switching and translating teaching resources and exam papers) in their attempt to be as inclusive as possible; however, these coping methods are not enough and at times may not even work out. The role and behaviour of teachers is directly influenced by educational policies, including teacher training. The establishment of the Migrant Learners' Unit, not so early in the day, is proof that teachers struggle in the multicultural endeavour entrusted upon them. Till now, teacher training vis-à-vis multiculturalism in Malta is extremely lacking. This was acknowledged by the Head of the Migrant Learners' Unit, by the Head of the Department of Inclusion, by the Head and Assistant Head of the school and by my whole teacher sample. Even the MIPEX report mentioned the lack of teacher training in this area in Malta.

The perceptions of the teachers in my sample regarding multiculturalism are positive in the sense that the teachers are willing to learn more about cultural diversity. However, the data reveals that these perceptions do not automatically translate into inclusive behaviour. These positive perceptions need to be supported by training. The Head of the Department of Inclusion emphasised the need of leader training as one of the ways to deal with increasing individual diversity towards a higher level of inclusion. Both the Head of the Department of Inclusion and the Head of the Migrant Learners' Unit pointed out that as teachers are leaders in classrooms, so are Assistant Heads and Heads in schools. In their view, while teacher training is imperative, it cannot be complete without training the Senior Management Team (SMT), that is, the Heads and Assistant Heads of schools. The teachers in my sample indicated that they felt that even the SMT were at a loss and were behaving by trial and error in the face of increasing multiculturalism in the school.

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4. In what ways is the making of citizenship in the school affected by increasing multiculturalism?

Insensitivity towards multiculturalism, despite the increase in pupils with different national and ethnic backgrounds, is felt. This does not induce a sense of belonging and active participation in the daily schooling experience by the non-Maltese pupils. Therefore, the notion of citizenship upheld in this study is not being cultivated. Situations such as a comprehension exercise on Islamic terrorists mentioned by Farah (Maltese Muslim) undertaken in class without the pupils having a background on Islamic terrorism to avoid stereotyping and prejudice; nothing directly related to multiculturalism organised; and no stimuli provided to improve the inter-ethnic school climate to make it more meaningful, all show this insensitivity. As Farah pointed out, difference, such as Maltese teenagers wearing the hijab like her, is not incorporated in mainstream activities in the school. For example, Farah said she would willingly take part in a stage production at school which in one way or another involves the wearing of the hijab. That will help her feel more included and thus comfortable to participate, she said.

Non-Maltese pupils in my sample still keep strong ties with their country of origin, especially due to relatives and friends there, indicating transnationalism as discussed by scholars such as Vertovec (2010), who points out that transnationalism is increasingly an important factor in international migration. Some of them practise their native language at home, others would like to practise it more and continue learning it because they fear they will lose it, others would like to go back to their country of origin because they miss their family and friends, while others visit often. Pupils carry with them to school identities originating from family background and other experiences and situations, such as religious background, outside the school. However, nothing is being done to acknowledge and incorporate these ties with countries of origin and different backgrounds in the schooling experience of pupils and teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Bauman warns that balancing ethnic variety is not an easy process, rather he sees it as a “long and perhaps tortuous [...] political process” (2001: 136). Like Bauman, Parekh warns about the uncertainties and challenges faced by multicultural societies. In his words, “[w]ith all the good will in the world a multi-cultural society is bound from time to time to throw up issues that divide it deeply and appear irresolvable” (2006: 13). This study has shown that ethnic and national variety are truly not easily balanced. The sense of belonging to the school by non-Maltese pupils is lacking and an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ ambience, though not always visible, looms over the everyday schooling experience of pupils and is manifested in a lack of integration and inclusiveness, and instances of conflicts and peer victimisation.

To help overcome such challenges this study recommends first of all **more research**, especially at the secondary level of schooling. Secondly, providing **multicultural training** to teachers is imperative. Teachers feel lost in this school. Support needs to start with teachers, they can then in turn support the pupils. Moreover, ‘teacher training’ has to be converted into ‘leader training’. This will include also the Senior Management Team, including Heads, Assistant Heads of Schools and Education Officers. Leaders support teachers, teachers support pupils. Thirdly, **multicultural syllabi** have to be developed, giving more space to knowledge about different nationalities and ethnicities and ways how these cultural diversities can be expressed in the classroom. Another recommendation regards **religion**. If religion lessons are to continue (in State schools) they should be given to pupils according to their religious affiliation. This can be done by employing peripatetic teachers. Religious activities, if they are to continue, should be as comprehensive as possible, so as to not focus only on the Catholic religion. The final recommendation of this study points towards **extra-curricular activities**. Studies such as those of Vervoort et al. (2011) and Thijs et al. (2014) indicate that extra-curricular activities help

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to improve inter-ethnic relations. My data confirm this. Extra-curricular activities in the school tend to dismantle the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy, leading to more interaction and meaningful contact between Maltese and non-Maltese pupils. Hence, the organisation of these type of activities is to be promoted and supported.

Despite the challenges multicultural societies pose, however, Bauman and Parekh are both optimistic, pointing out that the mixing of cultures is not only inevitable but also beneficial. In Parekh's words: "no culture embodies all that is valuable in human life...[d]ifferent cultures correct and complement each other, expand each other's horizons of thought and alert each other to new forms of fulfilment" (p. 167), while Bauman (2001) argues that despite being a long and very challenging process, balancing ethnic variety is a process that yields valuable results, and is thus worth striving for. However, mere contact between different ethnicities and nationalities does not lead to meaningful contact, as we have seen. Merely including non-Maltese pupils in this mainstream State school in Malta where the study was conducted did not translate automatically into integration and a sense of welcome, acceptance and belonging. Positive interethnic relations have to be stimulated and not left to chance, otherwise, as this study shows, negative relations will arise and uncertainties prevail. As this study unveiled, this gives a sour taste to the everyday schooling experience of both pupils and teachers, which is not a good starting point in the cultivation of citizenship that goes beyond the legal aspect.

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