

Recommendations for potential research areas

The following recommendations for potential research areas course participants may wish to consider for their dissertation proposal have emerged from the dissertations submitted by course participants in May 2022 and 2023 as well as in consultation with the Ministry for Education.

Curriculum

General Curricular Matters

- Qualitative studies on teachers' awareness of national policies and guidelines
- The teaching of foreign languages in secondary schools
- Nature-based learning in Maltese schools
- The use of the thematic approach in the light of examinations at year 5 and year 6
- The effect of subject teaching on learners in primary schools
- The psychological, social and emotional needs of pupils and related factors for academic achievement in primary school.
- Studies related to online teaching, teachers' pedagogies and students' learning
- Differentiated teaching in the classroom
- The Maths Mastery programme in Malta
- The use of the Mathematics Toolbox in students' homes
- When students are grouped according to their linguistic ability, how are attainment and improvement affected?
- Different approaches related to or evaluation of the options exercise in Year 8
- Parental involvement and/or engagement as part of a child's learning programme in class
- The application of various research strategies related to teaching dance within the PE curriculum.
- Studies on Maltese literacy acquisition.
- Studies to evaluate the primary learners' views on Maths Trail.
- Studies related to the Maths Trail.
- The implementation of Emotional Literacy within childcare centres.
- The implementation of Emotional Literacy within Church and Independent schools.
- Studies on the Emotional Literacy of students in mainstream classes and coping mechanisms used.
- Studies on how educators implement critical thinking in their classrooms.
- Studies on the experiences of learners who are exposed to critical thinking.
- Studies on the experiences of teachers who integrate critical thinking in different subjects.
- The experiences of educators relating Learning Outcomes to critical thinking.
- Shifting the role of an educator to a facilitator of learning.
- The effect of long-term use of context-based approach on study performance.

- Studies on the use of civics and social studies to assert a national identity.
- The relationship between the metacognitive awareness amongst students and their reduced levels of mathematics anxiety.
- Studies on the various benefits of dance during lessons.
- Studies on the effect of dance on academic achievement.
- Expressive arts in the mainstream classroom.
- The role of Religious Education as a teaching subject in promoting CST (write in full – not sure what it stands for) amongst students.
- Studies on the pedagogical strategies and development and personal change in students.
- The role of teachers and LSEs with regards to neglect in Secondary schools.
- Studies on how schools handle cases of neglect.
- Male and female students' attitudes towards poetry.

Emergent Curriculum

- Studies on the different types of training that would benefit early years educators related to the integration of the emergent curriculum approach / a flexible learning approach.
- Studies focusing on the implementation of the emergent curriculum within different schools
- A longitudinal study in Kindergarten 1 and kindergarten 2 on the benefits of an emergent curriculum from the learners' point of view.

Assessment for Learning

- Teaching, learning and assessment.
- Students' and parents' perspectives of the Learning outcome framework
- Students' and parents' perspectives of the Continuous Assessment reform
- The iLearning Outcomes Framework in relation to student's learning and their well-being
- Studies which evaluate the implementation of Continuous Assessment in relation to students' learning progress and achievement

Cross-curricular Approach

- The implementation of a cross-curricular approach in the Maltese educational system
- An evaluation of existing guidelines and policies for the implementation of a cross-curricular approach in Malta
- An evaluation of the implementation of curricular changes in the Maltese education system.
- The views of educators in state schools on using Maths Trails as a cross-curricular learning tool.

- Studies on STEM and Maths Trails when planning cross-curricular activities.
- Studies on cross-curricular teaching in schools

Education for Sustainable Development (ES)

- The analysis of the integration of Education for Sustainable Development in Systems of Knowledge or Environmental Science syllabi and the creation of recommendations to integrate Education for Sustainable Development more holistically within these subjects.
- The integration of Education for Sustainable Development in other syllabi
- Teaching strategies for Geography for implementing the Education for Sustainable Development
- Education for Sustainable Development as part of a cross-curricular approach in primary, secondary and/or post-secondary education
- The views of post-secondary geography students on the integration of Education for Sustainable Development in their learning

Play-Based Learning

- The implementation of the emergent curriculum and play-based learning in KG2 and Year 1 classrooms
- The implementation of play-based learning by educators in Maltese schools.
- Teachers' and parents' perceptions of play-based learning in the Early Years of schooling in Malta
- The perception of parents, students and Senior Leadership Teams on play-based learning
- The role of the teacher and the students during play-based learning lessons
- Play-based learning and students with learning difficulties.
- Studies on play-based learning for primary years focusing on Year 3 to Year 6
- The perspectives of students and Senior Leadership Teams on play-based learning

VET Subjects

- Effective strategies to increase awareness of Hospitality as an option subject
- The curricular and pedagogical adaptations of Applied Hospitality to provide a more hands-on experience to students
- Students' perception of Applied Hospitality.
- The long-term outcomes of vocational education on students' academic and career trajectories.
- VET agribusiness and motivation towards learning.

Science Education

- The creation of digital resources for fieldwork to cater for students with mixed-abilities and different learning styles

- Studies on students conducting cross-curricular fieldwork with field scientists
- Inquiry-based learning strategies used during Science lessons

Storytelling Method in Maltese Schools

- Story telling as vehicle for developing 21st Century Skills
- Project based dissertations focused on publishing a teacher's handbook involving Maltese stories in Maltese

Portfolios as an assessment tool

- How do factors such as time or the number of students in a classroom impact the effective use and implementation of portfolio assessments.
- How can the design and application of portfolios enhance critical thinking in learners.
- A visibility study on the longitudinal approach of the use of portfolios from secondary education (Vocational) up to degree level: The effects of portfolios on teaching and learning.

Group Work Perceptions and Practices

- A longitudinal study of students to investigate the changes in practices and perceptions of group work.
- Perceptions and practices related to Group work in secondary and post-secondary education.

21st-Century Skills

- The teaching of 21st century skills through the use of technology
- Importance of 21st century skills in School Development Plans
- Teaching of 21st century skills in Church and Independent Schools
- How does the implementation of 21st Century Skills affect the future of students and their careers?

School Community

Parental Involvement

- Parental engagement in classrooms.
- The development of parent-teacher relationships.
- The perception of students and educators who identify as LGBTIQ+.
- Investigating parents' perspectives on becoming active contributors to their child's education process.
- Studies on how parents with different social and cultural capital influence parental involvement.

Inclusion

- The effectiveness of the Maths Mastery programme on inclusion.
- The LSE in the classroom supporting students with SpLD.
- The need for proper assessment procedures to diagnose SpLD.
- The effectiveness of caregivers and family participation on the socioemotional and academic outcomes of students with SEBD.
- The benefits of 'free play' in the secondary school setting for students with special educational needs

LGBTIQ+

- The perception of students and educators who identify as LGBTIQ+ within their school communities.
- The awareness and knowledge students, educators, and parents have regarding an inclusive LGBTIQ+ culture.
- Studies on LGBTIQ+ training development and implementation for educators and SLT members.
- Studies on the infrastructure or practices needed in Secondary schools to support an inclusive LGBTIQ+ culture.
- Studies on the curriculum and those who identify as LGBTIQ+.
- Studies on how students and educators who identify as LGBTIQ+ perceive themselves.
- Studies on how students and educators who identify as LGBTIQ+ feel perceived within their school communities.
- Studies on the level of awareness and knowledge that students, educators, and parents have on an inclusive LGBTIQ+ culture.
- Studies on the development and implementation of training for educators and SLT members on LGBTIQ+ issues.

Learners Exhibiting with Social, Emotional, and Behavioural Difficulties

- Vocational subjects and students with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
- Studies that focus on the students' point of view in relation to SEBD and their educational journey
- Studies seeking to identify best practices in educating learning exhibiting with SEBD.
- Developing a curriculum that is interesting for students with SEBD.
- Studies on the importance of the relationship between students exhibiting SEBD and their educators in the classroom.

The inclusion of children within the Autism Spectrum Disorder

- The support given to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their parents.

- Studies conducted with Secondary teachers, Learning Support Educators, and the Senior Leadership Team on inclusive education strategies to support children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Studies which focus on the perception of teachers, Learning Support Educators, or the Senior Leadership Team of the use of (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) AAC strategies or the use of ICT with children with autism.
- Studies on the effectiveness of training programmes that combine expertise in autism and religious education for teachers and Learning Support Educators,.
- Studies on the effectiveness of specific instructional techniques and materials in promoting learning and engagement for students with ASD in religious education lessons.

The Role of Inclusive Education Coordinators and Heads of Department (Inclusion)

- The implementation of inclusive education as whole-school approach. Evaluating the effectiveness and impact of Inclusive Education Coordinators and Heads of Department. Moving away from this role being focused only on special educational needs.
- Research on a national level to evaluate the role of Inclusive Education Coordinators and Heads of Department (Inclusion) and its impact, from various perspectives and angles, including all stakeholders, namely the practitioners themselves, educators and parents.

Multiculturalism

- The implementation of intercultural education in State schools.
- The pedagogical praxes implemented within multicultural classrooms.
- Studies on curriculum and teaching material within multicultural classrooms.
- The views of local students and local teachers on having international students in their class and international educators in the same staff room.
- Cultural identity development between educational stakeholders ,the students and parents.
- The ongoing professional training offered to teaching staff in relation to multicultural education.
- Studies on the inequalities in education in relation to closing the achievement gaps present in our educational system.
- Studies on analysing institutional support for educators through policies, curricular adaptations, and available resources that facilitate inclusive environments for migrant students.
- The evaluation of the efficacy of cultural competency training for educators.
- Understanding the educators' perspectives and experiences in multicultural classrooms.
- The language hurdles of the NAMS (in full).
- Compare and contrast the experiences of newly arrived migrant students in primary schools with those of NAMS (in full) in secondary schools.
- The integration of introductory and mainstream classes.

- The induction framework and the Maltese as a foreign language syllabus.
- Studies on the effect of summative assessment in induction hubs.
- Studies on the change in the curriculum of the induction programme.
- The pupils' perspective of their teachers' competences with regards to multicultural education.
- Studies on the challenges teachers' face with regards to multicultural education

Parental Engagement in multicultural schools

- Action research related to the implementation of strategies implemented to promote parental engagement.
- Understanding the level of parental engagement on a national level.
- The parents' perspectives of newly arrived migrant students or migrant parents.

The actual drafting of such policies related to parental engagement Language preparation

- Studies that focus on how to improve the systems being provided and how they function.
- Case studies by which the researcher can delve deeper into the struggles and challenges students face.
- A study that provides the perception of Senior Leadership Teams, parents or students
- Research on good practices adopted at schools in Malta supporting the integration of newly arrived migrant learners.
- Research on induction processes of migrant learners in Independent and Church schools.
- Research on the benefits and disadvantages of different types of preparatory language classes in Malta

Inclusive practices in multicultural schools

- Inclusive practices in migrant education in post-secondary education including the perspective of institutions and teachers.
- The role of migrants' social network and personal relationships in shaping their educational experiences in Malta.
- The differences between the experiences of students attending induction classes in a mainstream school and those in migrant learnerhubs.

Technology Enhanced Learning

Use of digital resources/Information Communication Technology (ICT)

- Tools to help students in an online environment.

- The difference between students who follow a blended learning programme and those who follow traditional learning or virtual learning exclusively.
- Studies on the use of visuals in relation to the three skills: speaking, listening and writing.
- Studies on the use of visuals in relation to literature teaching and learning.
- Studies on digital technology in Geography education
- Research on cyberbullying between different stakeholders
- Studies that investigate if the introduction of the One Tablet Per Child (OTPC) initiative has enhanced students' academic achievement
- Studies that research pedagogic evolution due to the introduction of the One Tablet Per Child (OTPC) initiatives
- The effectiveness of technology-based therapies for children with SEBD.
- The impact of online resources on the development of the Maltese language.
- The importance of digital competences amongst school children, educators and parents/guardians.
- Understanding the school leaders' perspectives on digital competences.

Teachers'/SLT's perception or use of digital resources/ Information Communication Technology (ICT)

- Ethnographic research of how teachers use digital resources in their classroom Perception towards the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) among all Head of Schools in Malta's State Secondary Schools.
- Perception towards the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) among all Head of Schools of Secondary Church Schools or Independent Schools

Students' perception or use of digital resources/ Information Communication Technology (ICT)

- Ethnographic research on how students are using digital resources in their classroom
- Students' perspectives on Bring Your Own Device initiatives (BYOD) in secondary schools

Parents' perceptions or use of digital resources/ Information Communication Technology (ICT)

- Parents' perceptions of the use of tablets in the education of their children.
- Parents' perspectives on Bring Your Own Device initiatives (BYOD) in secondary schools

Leadership

- Studies on Collaborative Inquiry on the quality of teaching and learning
- Studies on Collaborative Inquiry and Formative Assessment on student learning.
- The role of the Head of School as the Literacy Link person in Maltese State primary schools.

- A comparative study between the role of the Head of School and Assistant Head of Schools as the Literacy Link person in Maltese State primary schools.
- Literacy leadership styles in Church and Independent schools.
- The impact of the COVID pandemic on teacher migration.
- The initiatives that keep educators happy in their schools.
- Delegation processes used by Heads of Primary schools on Assistant heads.
- Teacher retention and the contributing factors.
- A comparison of teacher retention and attrition in primary and secondary state sectors.
- The involvement of Head of Departments beyond their department and the subsequent impact on subject teachers and the whole school community.
- Studies on Head of Departments and their responsibility to observe subject teachers.
- The relationship between the Head of Departments' gender and leadership style
- Evaluating the work of the complementary teacher.
- Comparing the Head of School as a Curriculum Leader in a State and non-State school.
- The impact of external reviews carried out by the Quality Assurance Department in schools on:
 - Classroom practice
 - and/or Internal review and school development planning
 - and/or Educational Leaders' professional development
 - and/or Classroom educators; professional development
- Studies on occupational stress and coping strategies in Heads of Department, Educational Officers, and the Heads of College Network.
- A triangulation of the teacher retention strategies proposed by Heads of Schools with the perception of the teachers that experience those same strategies.
- A quantitative study on Senior Leadership Team members from different schools focusing on the training required to implement the emergent curriculum in the classroom.
- Work-related stressors faced by school leaders.
- Studies on how school leaders of various gender deal with and manage stress.
- Studies on how educational leadership needs to be revisited to best meet the needs of the most vulnerable populations.
- Studies on the innovative leadership methods and the teaching and learning of 21st century skills through the LOF approach.
- The correlation between, and the influence of, school leaders' financial management and the students' academic performance in schools.
- The financial role and duties of the school councils.
- Studies on the Catholic identity and Heads of Schools.
- The views of Heads of primary schools in Malta on the management of educational change.
- The key leadership competences that facilitate educational change.
- Heads of School experiences on challenges in their role.
- The emotional literacy of educational leaders.
- Studies on Maltese educational leaders' emotional Literacy and self-control.
- Studies on the school environment and emotional-related leadership skills.

- The role of the Senior Leadership Team in the promotion of students' wellbeing.
- Studies on distributed leadership.
- The perceptions of parents on the School Leadership Team.
- The school leaders' cultural and multifaith background and how these influence their interpretation of a successful multifaith school.

Pathways to Positive Leadership

- Positive Leadership in Church and Independent schools
- Positive leadership as understood by students, teachers and parents
- The importance of the school context for positive leadership – Analysis of the differences between primary and secondary schools; state and non-state schools
- Analysis of leaders' relationship with different team members
- The impact of positive leadership on the professional growth and career development of the stakeholders.
- Analysis of positive leadership over time – a longitudinal study exploring the development of positive leadership of HoSs along their years in headship position, for example during their first year in the post of HoS, during their third year and during their fifth year.
- Secondary school teachers' and Heads of Schools' perspectives of positive leadership.

Female educational leadership

- Multifaceted discussions about women in educational leadership roles
- Comparative analyses of female educational leadership in Malta and abroad
- Research on the social and psychological factors which determine female educational leaders' motivational behaviour to enable the design of professional development opportunities which inspire self-determined behaviour for effective performance in their leadership role.
- Comparative analyses of female and male educational leadership to identify the factors which foster or hinder their motivational climate.
- Feminist leadership and the effect on organisations during leadership training.

Novice Heads of Schools

- Qualitative studies of the experiences of novice heads of schools
- The experiences of novice heads of schools in state secondary schools
- Comparative analyses of the experiences of novice heads of schools in state, church and independent schools
- The perceptions of Heads of Schools regarding the CoH meetings and the support heads of schools receive from their colleagues, the HCN and the Directorate, shedding light on the perceived causes of isolation and the support structures required to minimise feelings of loneliness.
- The preparation and induction processes of new Heads of Schools.

Teacher Leadership

- The view of SLT and/or students on teacher leadership
- Entrepreneurship in Early years educators

Leadership support to VET teachers

- Leadership support to VET teachers in non-state secondary schools
- Leadership support to VET teachers through Head of Departments
- EU funding interventions and the upgrade of Vocational and Educational training.
- The link between EU funding and the uptake of VET subjects.

Well-being

- The importance of communication and collaboration among all stakeholders.
- Studies on how teachers think mindfulness should be included within the curriculum.
- Mindfulness as a stand-alone subject or cross-curricular subject.
- The benefits of mindfulness in children.
- School leaders' wellbeing.
- The wellbeing of Kindergarten Educators and Learning Support Educators.
- The wellbeing of Heads of Schools.
- Perceptions of mental health and wellbeing from the perspective of primary school students' parents.
- Perceptions and concerns of Church primary school teachers on mental health and wellbeing.
- Perceptions and concerns of primary independent school teachers on mental health and wellbeing.
- Mental health, wellbeing programmes and support services in primary schools
- The stigma surrounding mental health and wellbeing in primary schools.
- A whole-school approach to wellbeing in Maltese primary schools
- Supporting students with Social, Emotional, Mental Health in primary schools.
- The use of journals and mood meters within mainstream classrooms.
- Studies on the communication and collaboration between educators and parents in relation to students' emotional achievements.
- Studies on the barriers that prevent teachers from seeking emotional support from school leaders.
- Studies on the mechanisms of stress and coping strategies in primary and middle schools.
- Stress in the teaching profession.
- Studies on how the teacher can manage the different feelings of the students in the classroom.
- Studies on emotional intelligence and ADHD in young persons.

Professional Development

- Primary state schools' approach towards Erasmus+ mobilities programmes.
- The role of Educators, students, parents and the community, with regards to school development planning.
- The relationship between school autonomy and school responsiveness through the lens of different stakeholders.
- The perspectives of present and former directors general, directors, Heads of College Network, SfCE (in full) officers, and officials from educators' unions on school autonomy.
- A study to measure school autonomy and school responsiveness in theory and in practice.
- Union militancy on school autonomy and responsiveness.
- A pilot study introducing the Individual Professional Development Plan in primary and secondary school settings to evaluate its effectiveness.
- A longitudinal study on the use of the Individual Professional Development Plan as a mentoring tool evaluating its impact on the efficacy of teachers in the classroom and consequently students' achievements.
- Researching the feasibility of developing professional teacher standards in Malta.
- The long-term effectiveness on student achievement through Professional Learning Communities in the local context.
- The development of Professional Learning Communities across the State School College networks.
- Professional development in schools in a post-covid context.
- The effect of professional learning communities on educational policies.
- The collaboration between educators and Learning Support Educators within the same class with the aim of involving each other in the process of helping children reach their full potential.
- The impact of a higher financial budget on the well-being of teachers.
- The salaries of teachers and their well-being.
- The impact of COVID-19 on educators.
- Studies as to what areas of Professional Development are needed within the Maltese education context in our schools
- Continuous Professional Development in the early years' workforce.
- The promotion of entrepreneurship skill development.
- The career aspirations of STEM teachers in Malta.

COVID-19 Pandemic

- Studies on educational innovations implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Studies on the foundations and technological advancements necessary to address any major disturbances in education.
- Parents' views on the COVID-19 protocols which were implemented in school contexts