Reaching and Teaching Students from Ethnic Minorities in a Maltese State School

Marion Parnis, Heathcliff Schembri
mparnis331@gmail.com, heathcliff.schembri@mcast.edu.mt

Abstract

One of the objectives of educational institutions is to transmit positive values and skills to all students, irrespective of their background. As often outlined by research, students from ethnic minorities tend to experience marginalisation, an issue that can potentially be removed by schools and educators through multicultural education. This qualitative research sought to understand the perspectives of educators working in a particular Maltese secondary state school about the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities. It delved into the educators' positionality, knowledge and skills, and into the provisions available to them to holistically reach students from ethnic minorities in their classrooms. Following semi-structured interviews with seven educators (teachers, Learning Support Educators and members of the School Leadership Team), a thematic analysis was employed to identify the factors that affect the holistic inclusion of students from ethnic minorities. This research brought forward the educators' positive outlook toward the inclusion of these students. It also highlighted their will to become more culturally competent in addressing the students' holistic needs. Distinct barriers were also pointed out, such as language, behaviour and the provision of basic needs. Finally, the researchers sought to derive potential solutions that could advance and sustain the holistic inclusion of these students in this particular school, and which could be used as potential reflections for the holistic inclusion of students from migrant backgrounds in Maltese schools. Considering the evidence of the pivotal role of educators in kick-starting the process for a genuine education that includes all students, the right support and mechanisms need to be set up to complete the beautiful kaleidoscope of multicultural education.

Keywords: *educational barriers; ethnic minorities; inclusive education; Maltese schools; multicultural education*

Introduction

Being a small country in the Mediterranean, Malta's history has been mostly related to emigration for decades as Maltese nationals moved to Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom due to overpopulation and unemployment after the Second

World War (Baldacchino, Briffa 2020). During the last two decades, however, Malta has shifted into a country of immigration. Despite being the smallest member state, Malta is currently the most heavily populated country in the European Union (EU). Malta's immigrants are mainly third-country nationals (TCN) seeking asylum due to war and persecution and European citizens who practise their privilege of free movement due to Malta's membership in the EU (National Statistics Office 2021).

The Context of the Study

Malta's shift with immigration is highly represented in Maltese state schools by a vast heterogeneity in student population encompassing many learners considered TCN. These students are mainly from Africa and Asia (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2021). Since Maltese state college networks host their students according to their residential locality, an imbalanced distribution of TCN in Maltese state schools has been noted (Fenech, Seguna 2020).

The Migrant Learners' Unit (MLU) aims at bridging the initial gaps in the integration of new migrant learners in Maltese schools, with sociocultural and basic language skills that can facilitate their inclusion and academic attainment (Farrugia et al. 2020, Vassallo Gauci 2018). However, these students still end up as ethnic minorities in schools where the majority look different, do not speak their language, and do not understand their backgrounds or cater for their cultural needs (Gorski 2020). This qualitative research highlights the perspectives of seven educators on the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in a particular Maltese secondary state school.

The Relevance of the Study

The main goal of educational institutions is to teach and include all students irrespective of their diversity and shows that a good education helps students discover their worth. It gives students the required skills to become responsible and contributing citizens who function to their best possible potential (MEDE 2019). Being a form of socialisation agency, schools act as nuclei that transmit values and shape children (Premazzi 2020). Besides being safe spaces where all children learn together, schools should be the places where anxieties about the unknown are subdued and possibly abolished, with positive experiences that foster confidence, empathy and celebration of diversity (Gay 2018, Landsman, Lewis 2011).

Education that works successfully leaves no learner behind and it does not stop at placement or tolerance (Darmanin 2013). Inclusive education nurtures a sense of belonging. It values and gives equal opportunities to everyone in a learning community that collaborates, and shares experiences and knowledge (Premazzi 2020, Wright 2020). Such education aims at creating a peaceful world of equity and

social justice, where everyone can live together without prejudice and discrimination (UNESCO 2014, UNESCO 2019).

Multicultural education is equivalent to an inclusive education that promotes access and enjoyment of learning for everyone (Nieto 1999). Consequently, current policies and frameworks (MEDE 2019) advocate multiculturalism and any form of diversity as components that mirror inclusive education. Considering that imperilling the education of learners from a migrant background can have a severe global effect, safeguarding the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities should be considered a priority to counteract Malta's brain drain (UNESCO 2014, UNESCO 2019). Moreover, the integration and quality of life of TCN and refugees have also been highlighted as factors that facilitate sustainable development goals (Bezzina 2020).

Despite the above-mentioned benefits of diversity and multiculturalism in schools, local research suggests that students from ethnic minorities are still facing many hardships related to marginalisation (Caruana, Francalanza 2013, Cefai et al. 2019), invisibility, and assimilation (Caruana et al. 2013, Debono 2020, Scicluna 2013). Lack of educator preparedness and poor cultural responsiveness have also been pointed out as the main barriers preventing the holistic support and inclusion of many students, particularly those from ethnic minorities. Besides leading to a high degree of otherness, such issues are causing academic and other discrepancies between students from ethnic minorities and their same-aged peers (Ariza et al. 2019, Attard Tonna et al. 2017, Darmanin 2013, Debono 2020). Such findings go against the notion of inclusive practices mentioned in national and EU documents such as A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools (MEDE 2019) and Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (European Commission 2019).

The need to move beyond mere placement with educator training has often been highlighted (Calleja et al. 2010, Caruana, Francalanza 2013, Darmanin 2013). Culture, language, and religion can act as barriers that hinder students from ethnic minorities from fully achieving the benefits of schooling. However, it has long been suggested that schools that do not adequately respond to students' diversity are the main barriers, and educators have the utmost potential to remove them (Banks 2013, Nieto 2015). Despite educators' favourable position to catalyse the holistic inclusion of diverse students, it has often been noted that a positive shift can only be founded with the correct support mechanisms (Banks 2013, Caruana, Francalanza 2013, Gorski 2018).

The Aims and Objectives of the Study

This research aimed to determine whether a group of educators in a particular Maltese secondary state school has the required positionality, knowledge, skills and provisions to holistically support students from ethnic minorities. It hoped to raise awareness and stir reflections so that Maltese schools, based on the findings

from this particular school, become better equipped to respond to diversity, not merely as a means of interest convergence (Bell et al. 2005) but as an act of respect towards humanity. The following research questions served to facilitate the aims and objectives of this research:

- What are the lived experiences of educators working in a particular Maltese secondary state school about the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities?
- What are these educators' perspectives on the barriers that may hinder the holistic inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in this particular Maltese secondary school?
- What are these educators' perspectives about potential solutions to facilitate the full inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in this particular Maltese secondary school?

Literature review

Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education in Malta

Migration has long been considered as the only ray of hope by many. Such a notion has led it to continue over the years (De Haas et al. 2020). Although Malta hosted immigrant communities during various periods, an integration policy was only enacted in 2017. While multilingualism has always been a prominent feature of Europe countries, cultural diversity has not yet been fully acknowledged (Caruana et al. 2013, Chin 2019). Being the smallest member state in the EU, the current influx of irregular immigrants and asylum seekers and the idea of Malta becoming a permanent host for a diverse range of communities has raised many questions about diversity and inclusion (Calleja et al. 2010).

The aforementioned increase in diversity is being reproduced in Maltese state schools, with several students standing out as ethnic minorities from Africa and Asia (NSO 2021). Since educational institutions act as the first socialisation and intercultural communication context for foreign children (Klein 2010), Maltese policies have emphasised educators' decisive role in fulfilling the holistic needs of diverse students (MEDE 2012, MEDE 2014a, MEDE 2014b, MEDE 2019). Such responsibility has introduced educators to countless challenges for which they have never been adequately and proactively prepared (Caruana et al. 2013).

Multicultural education is based on the civil rights movement (Banks 2019) and it has the specific target of teaching all students the skills required to function effectively in a pluralistic and multicultural society with democracy and fairness. Multicultural education is a "societal platform" and an "educational philosophy" that transmits the recognition and appreciation of people's differences (Vang 2010 p.8). It aims to advocate for those who are excluded or least acknowledged.

Duby (1996) pointed out that meaningful education can foster bright and peaceful futures through acceptance, collaboration and the celebration of diversity. The inclusion of ethnic minorities and multicultural education have also been referenced as means to reach sustainable development goals (Bezzina 2020) and abolish the brain drain in Malta and other countries (UNESCO 2014, UNESCO 2019).

Barriers to Multicultural Education and Inclusion

Multicultural education is far from a straightforward matter and is considerably challenging to address in a holistic manner (Banks 2017). It has evolved over the years and moved from black/white issues to a broader ideology where all diverse individuals learn and live together. The topic became the chosen area of interest by researchers recently, when the requests for asylum started increasing from people coming from North Africa. Such reflects how the contexts of multiculturalism have changed in Malta (Spiteri 2016).

Contrary to European countries like Germany and the Netherlands, Malta is hosting many ethnic variations. As a result, the inclusion of students considered TCN is perceived as a highly challenging issue (Cilia 2012). As students' ethnicity, language, and culture differ more and more from educators', doubts and fears are bound to arise. Lack of understanding about cultural diversity, the absence of knowledge and awareness of privilege, politics, power, and other misconceptions can impede the success and benefits of multicultural education (Ambrosio 2003, Gorski 2018, Nieto 2018).

Multicultural teaching skills are acquired with time during which educators' personal and professional aptitudes improve with self-awareness and cultural competence (Banks, McGee Banks 2016, Moodley 2021, Sleeter 2010). Recent studies revealed that educators are prone to a reactive approach when dealing with multiculturalism issues in Maltese schools (Ariza et al. 2019, Debono 2020). Such factors can lead students from ethnic minorities to experience uncertainties and fears that negatively impact their sense of belonging and inclusion (Gorski 2020). Besides putting individual students at risk, jeopardising the educational needs of migrant learners is a global issue (Ariza et al. 2019, UNESCO 2014, UNESCO 2019). With this perspective, educators need guidance and support in dealing with the current reality that is notably present in many Maltese schools (Caruana, Francalanza 2013).

Catalysing the Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities

Changes in educational systems are often challenging and slow (Gorski 2020). Overcoming ethnocentric and Eurocentric ideologies requires cultural responsiveness

(Spiteri 2016). Since schools can be considered microcosms of society (Bhattacharya 2006), educators and school leaders have the power and obligation to guide the whole school community towards inclusion and cultural responsiveness.

A good enough educator can catalyse the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in mainstream schools (Banks, McGee Banks 1995, Gay 2003, Schembri 2020). While Gorski (2018, p.121) highlighted that the shortcomings of policies reflect an "illusion of concern", he added that educators who are determined and willing could be catalysts for solidifying the "illusion of equity". With suitable mechanisms and provisions, educators who have adequate positionality, knowledge, and skills (Banks 2015, Gay 2003) could become mediators who make the transition from policy to practice possible (Cooper et al. 2011). Inclusive attitudes from educators empower and nurture marginalised students, strengthen their characters, and make them more apt at functioning successfully in the complex and pluralistic society we live in (Brown 2020).

Becoming multicultural individuals entails a developmental journey of knowledge of ethnicity, diverse cultures, and confrontation with one's own deepest and sometimes even unconscious prejudice and intolerance. It requires an individual to become actively and effectively involved in the process of learning, understanding, sharing, reflecting, and analysing various aspects of the self and others, society and politics (Jackson 2003). This requires willingness and open-mindedness (Hollie 2018) to understand the various factors that may cause inequity and injustice in society, even in subtle unconscious manners (Gay 2018, Nieto 2018, Sleeter 2013). These may include but are not limited to white privilege, aversive racism, and colour blindness (Delgado, Stefancic 2012). This process facilitates educators' perspectives, awareness, and responsiveness to bring about the necessary shift to overcome the challenges acknowledged in policies that exist tenfold in practice and catalyse change in and outside the classroom.

Multicultural educators understand the necessity to design pedagogies of belonging that engage and benefit all students. Such educators possess the ideological clarity that makes them capable of judging knowledge in terms of the socio-political aspect of everyday life. They know that the essence of learning is not only relative to the kind of information we impart but to how students process and evaluate that information and experience (May, Sleeter 2010).

Banks (2019) promotes multicultural education as an instrument that helps develop an awareness of the various hierarchies that dominate today's society. To portray his ideology, Banks subdivided multicultural education into five dimensions that are "content integration", "the knowledge construction process", "prejudice reduction", "equity pedagogy", and "an empowering school culture and social structure" (Banks, McGee Banks 2016, p.16). These dimensions suggest that besides addressing the academic curriculum, educators also need to acquire knowledge about their students' diverse cultures, perceptions, and histories. Such entails that educators do not limit themselves to including multicultural content and knowledge

about diverse cultures in their teaching, as is the frequent misconception of multicultural education (Banks, McGee Banks 1995), but a holistic approach that promotes reflective and critical thinking skills and the fairness and equity that will ultimately bring about the holistic inclusion of all diverse students.

Implementing these dimensions entails moving from the banking model of education to a more critical aspect of teaching and learning, with a pedagogy that empowers students as active agents in the learning process and equips them with the knowledge and qualities that can deconstruct racism and concepts of power by challenging the existing normalised incongruencies (Freire, Shor 1987, Sleeter, Carmona 2017). Such methodology would aim at closing achievement gaps (Muhammad 2015, Sleeter, Carmona 2017) that are the consequence of a series of issues related to health and social discrepancies and experiences (Howard 2019).

Considering that societies do not have the innate disposition to teach heterogeneous populations or deal with the challenges related to diversity and equity (Sleeter, Carmona 2017) educators who want to be active agents in transforming education need to raise their expectations of students (Gorski 2018, Muhammad 2015, Nieto 2015). With the notion that curriculum greatly influences knowledge and thoughts about life, culturally responsive pedagogy is a prerequisite to multicultural education (Bezzina 2020, Gay 2018, Nieto 2001).

Banks (2017) posed questions about the degree to which educators can teach in a culturally responsive manner with the intrusion of standardised testing. Other than subject content, curricula need to provide students with realities, perspectives, and experiences (Sleeter, Carmona 2017). Inclusive education needs active policies, with educators that are readily willing to become anti-racist scholars (Scheurich 2012) who do not shy away from promoting diversity as a beautiful kaleidoscope of cultures, religions, experiences, abilities, and other human differences. Although the Maltese curriculum has evolved to accommodate students' diverse academic, social, and emotional needs (Cefai 2020), more needs to be done to reach and include students from ethnic minorities (Attard Tonna et al. 2017, Cilia 2012, Darmanin 2013), and educators can be smart enough to do it right.

Methodology

The Research Design

Qualitative methodology was chosen to enhance this research with diverse and even contrasting findings (Braun, Clarke 2013). The researchers compiled three research questions :What are the lived experiences of educators working in a particular Maltese secondary state school about the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities? What are these educators' perspectives on the barriers that may hinder the holistic inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in this particular

Maltese secondary school? What are these educators' perspectives about potential solutions to facilitate the full inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in this particular Maltese secondary school? To analyse situations, attitudes, ideologies and suggestions related to the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in a particular Maltese secondary state school. By taking a constructivist approach to derive meaning from educators' lived experiences and perspectives, the researchers hoped that this study would be transformative by improving the lives of marginalised groups and victims of oppression (Creswell, Creswell 2018). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven educators who teach in a particular state school in Malta. Considering that educators may be affected by misconceptions about multiculturalism, a qualitative approach could promote coherence (Ponterotto 2010) and give the study the potential to act as a changing agent (Schembri, Sciberras 2022), in a small island state such as Malta (Schembri, Sciberras 2020).

Sampling and Data Collection

Once the Ethics Board at the education institution where this research was carried out and the MFED Research Ethics Committee (MREC) approved this research, a detailed email was sent to the Head of School. Considering that the latter was the gatekeeper in this research, the approval and assistance of the Head of School were necessary for the study to take place in this particular school and to conform to an ethical recruitment process. Recruitment of participants took place by word of mouth and nomination. In line with Creswell and Poth (2018), purposeful snowball sampling satisfied the researchers' need for an in-depth analysis of educators' perspectives about their experience in the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in this secondary school.

Seven educators participated in the study; namely three teachers, two LSEs, and two SLT members working in a secondary state school that hosts a percentage of students from diverse backgrounds of culture, religion, and nationality. This sample was chosen to reflect the ratio of teachers to LSEs in the school and give the researchers a clearer view of the particular context (Creswell, Poth 2018). All participants have been working in an educational setting for over ten years. The latter was critical to the researchers since experienced participants could better depict their experience with the shift that has occurred over the years with the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in Maltese schools. Moreover, the qualifications of interviewees were also vital in ruling out any potential lack of training opportunities. The sample was also chosen to offer a triangulation of participants and eventually triangulation of data; eliciting the perspectives of three stakeholders within this particular research setting would offer multiple viewpoints to the issues being discussed.

Research Instrument: Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection instrument as this method allowed participants to open up and share concerns and made the researchers aware of any unanticipated aspect of the topic by evoking discussion. The interview guides were available in Maltese and English to facilitate the participants' ease during the interview, and participants were free to answer questions according to their preference. Besides demographic information, the preliminary questions of the interview included two (optional) questions about the participants' religious and political views since these could influence their perspectives. Following, four interview questions were tied to each research question, totalling twelve questions. The first four questions sought to bring out educators' personal and professional views about diversity, multiculturalism, and multicultural education. The following four were related to the barriers encountered by educators, and the final questions targeted potential changes that could facilitate the holistic inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in this particular Maltese secondary state school.

Limitations and Strengths of the Methodology

The semi-structured interviews gave the researchers access to the participants' experiences, feelings, concerns, interpretations, and suggestions. The use of Microsoft Teams® permitted the synchronism of interviews (Fielding et al. 2017) and compensated for the social distance issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the environment plays a vital role in interviews, online interviews may have made the participants more at ease for the simple reason of being comfortable in their home environment.

Although the visual aspect of the interviews permitted the researchers to view the participants' body language and facial expressions, such could have also led to misinterpretations (Keegan 2009). Another limitation could be related to the sample size which cannot provide a generic view of the situation (Braun, Clarke 2013) although this was not the aim of the study.

Findings

Data analysis took place in thematic form. Nine themes were brought out, as the perspectives of two SLT members (S1, S2), two LSEs (L1, L2) and three teachers (T1, T2, T3) were analysed in line with the three research questions.

1. Educators' View of Students from Ethnic Minorities

The Number Novelty

The number novelty for which Malta has never been prepared emerged from the start. The influx of immigrants was referred to as a *phenomenon* (L1) that has brought *many challenges* (T2). As outlined by Ambrosio (2003), Nieto (2018), and Gorski (2018), the stigma associated with TCN became immediately evident as a possible factor leading to fear, discrepancy and detachment which can impinge the success of multicultural education. The distribution and concentration of ethnic minorities in certain areas around Malta were also noted.

> *I believe we are afraid of change* (T2).

> *When you see the number of migrants entering Malta, the demography...*
> *Certain areas have become off-limits for Maltese people* (S1).

Such findings are congruent with the uncertainties elicited by the influx of diversity in Malta pointed out by Calleja et al. (2010). As specified by Caruana et al. (2013), a lack of direct experiences with people of different cultures, together with the sudden novelty of large numbers, can lead people to "feel threatened" (p.18). The imbalanced distribution of migrants in particular Maltese towns and villages pinpointed by Fenech and Seguna (2020) was communicated as one that could lead to segregated groups and possible behaviour issues. It was also implied as a determining factor in the support provided to these students.

> *Colleges that host large quantities end up with close-knit gangs,*
> *which can cause trouble…* (S1)

> *We do not have many, so it is much easier for us to give them*
> *individual attention and help them.* (S1)

> *It all boils down to numbers* (S1).

While participants specified having no issues with immigrants *as long as they are good citizens* (T3), one may wonder whether any issues related to conduct could be a form of aversive racism, as indicated by Delgado and Stefancic (2012), Sleeter (1993), Marx and Pennington (2003), and Darmanin (2013). The portrayal of violent incidents on social media could also be a potential instigator of fear.

> *We have seen videos on social media where they have referred to*
> *taking over the country* (S1).

> *That bothers and worries me, so I get these mixed feelings* (S1).

Cultural Exposure

Supporting UNESCO's view of multicultural education (2019) as a means for peace and equity, educators identified cultural exposure as a way that broadens horizons.

> *It is a gold mine that gives first-hand experience of other people's cultures* (T1).

Even more positive was the finding that, rather than being a result of interest convergence (Bell et al. 2005, Delgado, Stefancic 2012), the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in the school was defined as something that could be decisive in the elimination of misconceptions and fears and bring peace to the world.

> *It is a blessing, a ray of hope, a very positive thing for tomorrow's youths. It transmits acceptance and open-mindedness (S1).*
>
> *Multicultural education can teach students how to help another person (L1).*
>
> *The world belongs to everyone, not to one individual, or one population, or race (S2).*
>
> *Despite our differences, as humans, we are also similar (S2).*
>
> *Youths can be more tolerant as they get to know the people they are socialising with, in contrast to adults who may have ingrained ideas (S2).*
>
> *Perhaps the new generations will not fear those who are different (T2).*

As confirmed by Gay (2003), Nieto (1999), and Gorski (2018), positivity to diversity in schools can eliminate many hurdles. In line with Gay, (2018) and Landsman and Lewis (2011), the need for more cultural exposure was noted. Educators suggested including *halal burgers* in the tuckshop, collaborative learning, celebration of various feasts, and parental involvement. In contrast to Debono (2020) and Scicluna (2013), assimilation was referred to as *disastrous* (T1) and the preservation of cultural and religious identity was highlighted.

> *I do not expect someone to become Roman Catholic from Muslim or vice versa (T3).*

These novel ideas proposed by the interviewees may be taken up by this particular school and may also be welcomed in other secondary schools in Malta.

Educating for Diversity

The will to transmit a sense of belonging to students from ethnic minorities was conspicuous. All participants referred to giving the same opportunities to learn and develop through technology, good communication, group work and sharing of experiences as key to facilitating a sense of belonging. These findings support the cultivation and stimulation of meaningful contact between diverse students as a means that facilitates inclusion as suggested by Debono (2020).

> *You try to attract them as you would do with Maltese students, in*
> *subject choice, towards a hobby...*
> *help them develop their talents* (S2).

The above also reflects sporadic elements from Banks' (2017) five dimensions, mainly content integration and prejudice reduction. Despite the educators' will to reach and teach all the diverse students in their classrooms, however, a specific referral to examinations confirmed the intrusion of standardised testing upon educators' cultural responsiveness suggested by Banks (2017).

> *Whether a student does something in English, Arabic, Turkish... what*
> *matters is that he understands…*
> *Now, here I am not referring to during an exam* (T3).

Both LSEs expressed their frustration with their inability to fully support students from ethnic minorities due to time constraints and their responsibilities. They also pointed out the extent of the curriculum and the vast syllabi.

> *Teachers have a lot to cover* and *a huge challenge to reach these children,*
> *especially when they do not speak English or Maltese* (L1)*.*

2. Barriers that Hinder the Inclusion of Students from Ethnic Minorities

The Language Barrier

Parallel to Cefai et al.'s findings (2019), the language barrier was adamantly ranked as the main cause of frustration for both students and teachers, and the main hindrance to the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in the school. As observed by Ariza et al. (2019), Attard Tonna et al. (2017), and Darmanin (2013) teachers and LSEs proposed that the placement of students in the Core Curriculum Program can be a huge hindrance to their holistic inclusion.

> *Multicultural classes are often found on the lower level of the spectrum*
> *of students... (T1)*
>
> *because of the language barrier.* This *leads to less participation (*T1).

…because of lack of evidence of their attainment level. Such makes students fall behind academically (L2).

They get very frustrated when they cannot get through to you, and you get frustrated because you cannot get through to them (T1).

Although the Migrant Learners' Unit serves at bridging the initial gaps and helping students integrate (Farrugia, Sammut 2020, Vassallo Gauci 2018), educators stated that *not everyone is attending the induction course* (L2) and that *the course is not enough* (L1). Such a finding contests the ideology of integration services expressed by Vassallo Gauci (2018) and raises questions about the recruitment process involved in the provision of such services. The language barrier has also been described as additional stress for students.

On top of the culture shock, these students spend from eight till two without understanding a word (T2)*.*

Such a dense barrier to communication and socialisation opposes Premazzi's (2020) and Vang's (2010) notions of schools and education as pivotal for socialisation. With the idea that schools are micro societies (Bhattacharya 2006), such incongruency may be depicting a society that lacks equity, democracy and social justice.

Behaviours and Otherness

As specified by Cefai et al. (2019), the language barrier also emerged as a contributing factor to bullying and marginalisation. While it was expressed that *students with a sound educational family background are more prone to mix with students from ethnic minorities* (S1), Liu et al. (2019) confirmed that such students can be more academically successful. The latter conflicts with the finding that students from ethnic minorities are often placed in lower-level classes where Maltese students *often demonstrate resistance to speak English* (T2), hence inducing more opposition to the socialisation and holistic inclusion of students from ethnic minorities.

He gets bullied because he does not understand (L2).

An element of prejudice was made evident as it was communicated that certain LSEs might reprimand students of specific nationalities when they speak in their native language. This notion highly contrasts the preservation of identity mentioned earlier by participants and supports Scicluna (2013).

Such attitude is only the case with students from Syria and Libya. These students seem to have a label for coming from third world countries. The interaction with a Serbian student is much different…the Serbian student speaks English and does not wear the veil. There is a form of discrimination ... it is according to where the student

comes from. This attitude is being seen with Syrians, Libyans... I am not saying that they (referring to other educators) do things on purpose. You need to live it every day to notice it. They are unconscious attitudes...It is a mentality...because 'you came by boat' (L2).

Since students can *sense the hostility towards them* (S1), their inclusion can be seriously jeopardised. Such unconscious attitudes suggest a degree of aversive racism and white privilege (Delgado, Stefancic 2012) that, besides inducing marginalisation and segregation, are also portraying the inequity of society at large (Banks 2013, Gay 2003, Sleeter 2013). They also contrast European democratic ideologies (Caruana et al. 2013). On the other hand, they conform to the prevalence of racism in European countries outlined by Human Rights Watch (2020). These elements may shed light on why students from ethnic minorities *would not mix with others and prefer to stay together* (T2). While the latter could be misinterpreted as the formation of *gangs* (S1) earlier, episodes of violence and patriarchal behaviours from boys pertaining to an ethnic minority were also narrated.

> *A male student argued with a girl and threatened that he would cut her throat.*

> *A student from an Open Centre threatened a Maltese student that he would hit him with the chain (S1).*

> *Male students exhibit dominance over female siblings and lack acknowledgement of female educators* (T3).

The attitudes above were attributed to cultural backgrounds and past experiences. Such may denote stereotypical ideologies. However, the need for students from a migrant background to understand Maltese culture was also pointed out.

> *They need to learn about our culture… what is accepted, what is not* (T3).

As indicated by Cefai et al. (2019), the fact that these students *may even start an educational process as teens* was noted and referred to as a potential cause of stress for students from ethnic minorities. Fear related to stress and estrangement was highlighted by Gorski (2020). Such feelings tend to be misinterpreted and can lead to otherness.

> *I believe that his tension was expressed in his eyes. Unfortunately, his look was misjudged as a threat. In reality, it was the look of fear. (S2)*

> *He was still uncertain, insecure because he was feeling lost in a new environment* (S2).

The episodes mentioned can contribute to further marginalisation as they may lead *those with racist tendencies to assert their beliefs when they witness particular scenes* (S1), hence amplifying fears and misconceptions (Sleeter, 1996). As maintained by Gorski (2020) and Debono (2020), the importance of detecting and solving such matters was confirmed.

> *We must identify students' difficulties to facilitate their sense of belonging* (T3).

Basic Needs

Basic aspects of well-being were denoted as extremely important for students from ethnic minorities to function to their best possible potential. Findings correspond to Howard's suggestion (2019) that the achievement gap is a consequence of health and social issues. Moreover, in line with Brown (2020), it was unanimously sustained that a sense of belonging through an ethic of care that breaks barriers is key to learning and happiness.

> *You come to school without socks...without lunch...if you are not feeling comfortable at school, you are not paying attention. I will have difficulty reaching you...so the first thing I have to look out for when I get these students is how to make them as comfortable as possible when they come to school* (T1).

> *If you do not have the basics...if you do not understand, if you do not have what you need, you will not be able to participate...they end up feeling lonely...and will be affected both socially and academically* (L1).

> *Not feeling loved and accepted for whom you are can automatically lead one to develop a sense of deterrence to the place and its people* (S1).

> *knowing that one is loved and accepted can help bring out the best version of himself… and can also help break the language barrier* (S2).

The basic needs of trust and care discussed conform with Debono (2020), Duby (1996) and Cefai et al. (2019) in that multicultural education needs skilled educators to help eliminate uncertainties in students from ethnic minorities and that education that fosters peace and abolishes tensions and goes beyond academic content.

> *There need to be a support educator who understands cultural matters to facilitate the transition of international students into secondary school* (S2).

Facilitating the Inclusion of Students from Ethnic Minorities

Leadership

Irrespective of policies, the centrality of leadership was clearly affirmed. The suggestions of May, Sleeter (2010) and Gay (2003) resonated with the frequent reference to the positive effects of exemplary leadership at all levels to kick-start a *snowball effect* (T3) that induces change in *attitudes, discourse and perspective*s (L2). All educators communicated their belief that they can be agents of change.

> The SLT's *vision induces others to follow* and *the teacher's attitude can influence both students and LSEs (L1).*

> *Leadership intelligence, flexibility,* and *open-mindedness are needed. An inclusive person does not need a policy. It all boils down to one's love and genuine respect for other persons* (S1).

> *Our role as educators is to lead children who may get distorted ideologies from adults at home. Our direction can help them understand* (S2).

These findings strengthen educators' role as catalysts in bridging attainment and relationship gaps and inducing inclusive practices and mentalities as stressed by Banks (2013), Freire and Shor (1987), Howard (2019) and Muhammad (2015).

Learning for Inclusion

The desire to learn to become proactive and to *share experiences to diffuse better knowledge about different religions and ethnicities to all, including students* (L2) conformed to literature by Debono (2020), Premazzi (2020) and Wright (2020).

> *The more we understand one another (students and educators), the better we can adapt and accommodate change* (T3).

In view of their responsibility of including all students, participants expressed their dismay at the lack of adequate preparation programs to holistically reach the whole spectrum of multiculturalism in schools. Only the LSEs referred to a module on multicultural education in their degree course. While they both confirmed that the latter contributed to greater awareness, they added that more needs to be in place across the board.

> *We have never been prepared for this. When I was at university, these ethnic minorities did not exist* (T1).

> *More awareness about these children is needed to break barriers* (L1).
> *Education leads you to re-evaluate your thoughts. Awareness and mindfulness about these students can facilitate their education and entitlement* (S1).

The above supports Nieto's (2001) claim that an inclusive school culture of respect, equity and belonging needs educators who are willing to acknowledge their need to learn and ameliorate practices.

Positionality

While it was observed that an element of accountability is much needed in the sector, all participants communicated the will to improve their skills and develop the critical cultural competence needed to become multicultural educators. The *willingness to grow and ameliorate, openness to new realities, and disposition* (T3) support Hollie (2018) and suggest a congruency to the EU's Key Competencies (European Commission 2019).

> *I help (name) out of my own free will* (L2).
> *There has to be interest from my end. Perhaps not everyone does it (T3).*

Despite their difficulties, participants demonstrated the human qualities needed to bridge the gaps and fulfil the unique vocation of teaching all students. With educators' will to transmit good values through exemplary leadership, is consistent with what multicultural education pioneers suggest as building blocks to respond to diversity in schools.

General Discussion

This research shed light on a number of factors concerning the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in one particular Maltese secondary state school. Congruent to Sleeter's view (1993), this study deciphered educators' favourable disposition to reach, teach, and support all students in their physiological, sociocultural, and psychological needs. It opposed interest convergence ideologies (Bell et al. 2005, Delgado, Stefancic 2012) by highlighting the positive outlook of educators towards the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in this Maltese school as a means to provide a ray of hope for disadvantaged groups and to develop inclusive values in youths for a better future.

In line with Fenech and Seguna (2020), this study underscored the influence of the imbalanced distribution of students from diverse ethnicities. It especially identified

a dense language barrier as the main factor influencing students' integration, socialisation, academic performance, behaviour, and psychological well-being. Such a barrier also puts further stress on educators since it prohibits them from fully reaching and teaching students from ethnic minorities in their classes. Despite educators' disposition, findings suggest that the education of many students from ethnic minorities is at risk unless suitable provisions are in place.

Among many factors that can favour the inclusion of diverse students, leadership at both macro and micro-level stood out as pivotal in changing perspectives and abolishing misconceptions that may lead to marginalisation. In its entirety, this study confirmed Bank's ideology (2013) of educators as the main protagonists and catalysts for successful multicultural education. However, as Nieto (2001) and Farrugia Buhagiar and Sammut (2020) outlined, the urgency to promote cultural literacy as a central 21st-century skill was substantially noted.

With the proper knowledge and experiences, all educators would be assisted in gaining more awareness, empathy, and consequently, critical cultural competence and will to become successful multicultural educators and anti-racist scholars (Scheurich 2012). This research supports current Maltese literature (Ariza et al. 2019, Attard Tonna et al. 2017, Caruana et al. 2013, Cefai et al. 2019, Darmanin 2013) in that more knowledge and support are needed at all levels to accomplish the holistic inclusion of students from ethnic minorities.

Limitations, Reflections and Suggestions

There are limitations worth considering when interpreting the findings presented in this paper. First, there are limitations related to the methodological design of this study. This qualitative study was based on the perspectives of seven educators about their experiences in one Maltese secondary state school. Consequently, the sample size and findings cannot provide a general view of educators' perspectives in all secondary schools in Malta. Secondly, one can argue that the purposive sampling narrowed the choice of participants and that voluntary participation resulted in educators who are more inclined to support the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities (Kumar 2019). Thirdly, considering that gender can influence research outcomes, another limitation could have been posed by the fact that all teachers and LSEs participating in the study were females (King, Harrocks 2010).

Nevertheless, this study has a number of strengths and reflections for the way forward that should be considered. The findings of this study imply that these educators need more knowledge and a strong foundation that supports them in the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities so that all students can benefit from their rightful entitlement. Pre-service teacher and LSE training providers may rethink their current programme of studies to increase the content, study units or modules related to multiculturalism, multicultural education and knowledge construction of

students from ethnic minorities. This also applies to providers who offer courses related to leadership and management for prospective SLT members.

As suggested by Fenech and Seguna (2020), a better distribution of international students in Maltese state schools could facilitate their inclusion. Besides providing the school administration with logistical support, this would potentially abolish the segregation of students, curb fears and facilitate student attainment. Moreover, since lack of language proficiency stood out as a major cause of issues affecting the holistic attainment of students from ethnic minorities, provisions must address the lacuna that is jeopardising students' transition, communication and inclusion. Consequently, this study hopes to evoke better collaborative practices between stakeholders providing pre-integration services (such as the Migrant Learners' Unit) and mainstream secondary schools.

In line with the research participants' suggestion, the sense of belonging of students from ethnic minorities can be significantly enhanced with the recruitment of support educators qualified in multicultural education. This could also be further enhanced by providing training sessions for in-service educators (teachers, LSEs and SLT members) about pedagogies of belonging that engage and benefit all students. Furthermore, the recruitment of an HoD Inclusion in each secondary state school would potentially provide the much-needed attention to facilitate students' transition and inclusion. Such provisions would also provide educators with adequate support to reach diverse students and make way for more accountability in the sector. The right services will ultimately elicit a better inclusive system that would enhance students' academic attainment and emotional well-being.

Other provisions must relate to the consciousness and abolishment of any form of racism, white privilege, colour-blindness, and charity-based support as outlined by Marx and Pennington (2003), all part and parcel of the Critical Race Theory implied by Delgado and Stefancic (2012). Such would give educators the critical cultural competence required to cater for diversity without the involuntary promotion of assimilation. Moreover, it would hopefully lead individuals with negative mindsets and a lesser disposition to develop more awareness and more inclusive attitudes. Ultimately, facilitating cultural literacy and competence across the board would lead to better coherence between diverse communities.

This study aimed to analyse the reality of one secondary school and to reflect on the lessons learnt. The researchers propose further studies which could help achieve better coherence regarding the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in the Maltese secondary state school context. Further studies may include:

- A narrative inquiry with officials responsible for the induction process of students from ethnic minorities;
- A comparative study about the physiological and psychosocial support provided to students from ethnic minorities in Maltese secondary schools;
- A quantitative study, based on focus groups with the students themselves, about their secondary school experience; and,

- A longitudinal study about the transitions of students from ethnic minorities from primary to secondary education in Malta.

Conclusion

This paper highlighted the educators' views, struggles, resilience, and disposition to include and provide students from ethnic minorities with a more positive school experience. It also presented educators' disposition to forward inclusive values and mindsets to Maltese students. Additionally, it pointed out various barriers hindering educators from reaching and teaching students from ethnic minorities. Given the significance of all educators (irrespective of their role) in catalysing the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities highlighted by this study, it can be concluded that it is time to move forward with practices that reflect current global and local needs and which were elicited by the participants themselves. These include the provision of halal food in the school's tuck shop, the engagement (and not only the involvement) of the families deriving from ethnic minorities within the school, and the provision of a smoother transition for the students from ethnic minorities from pre-integration services to the mainstream school. Moreover, more collaboration, better preparatory programs and support provisions must be in place as soon as possible so that the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities in Maltese secondary state schools, such as this research's setting, is fully encouraged and sustained.

In conclusion, this study supports the recognition and promotion of all educators as protagonists who, besides being the main catalysts for the shift needed within inclusive education, can make the world a fairer place through their teaching and support. Ultimately educators can lay the foundations to break the barriers and bond the borders for a better, inclusive and equitable society.

References

AMBROSIO, J., 2003. We Make the Road by Walking. In: G. Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators. Personal Journey Towards Professional Agency.* San Francisco, California: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 17–41.

ARIZA, E., CALLEJA, C. and VASSALLO GAUCI, P., 2019. Lingua, cultura e istruzione nell'aula inclusiva: Educatori di migranti e rifugiati a Malta [Language, Culture, and Instruction in the Inclusive Classroom: Educators of Migrants and Refugees in Malta]. *Rivista Internazionale Di Scienze Dell'educazione E Della Formazione [European Journal of Research on Education and Training]*, *17*(3).

ATTARD TONNA, M., CALLEJA, C., GALEA, S., GRECH, M. and PISANI, M., 2017. Mercy in the Maltese Educational System: Education practices to foster respect for diversity towards the migrant population. *MELITA THEOLOGICA. Journal of the Faculty of Theology University of Malta*, *67*(1), pp. 77–99.

BALDACCHINO, A. and BRIFFA, H., 2020. Diaspora Policies, Consular Services and Social Protection for Maltese Citizens Abroad. In: *Migration and Social Protection in Europe and Beyond: Comparing Consular Services and Diaspora Policies*. Switzerland: Springer, pp. 337–356.

BANKS, J. A., 2013. The Construction and Historical Development of Multicultural Education, 1962–2012. *Theory into Practice*, *52*(1 Suppl.), pp. S73-82.

BANKS, J. A., 2015. *Cultural diversity and education: foundations, curriculum, and teaching*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

BANKS, J. A., 2017. *Citizenship Education and Global Migration: Implications for Theory, Research and Teaching*. American Educational Research Association.

BANKS, J. A., 2019. *An introduction to multicultural education*. Pearson.

BANKS, J. A. and MCGEE BANKS, C. A., 1995. Equity pedagogy: An essential component of multicultural education. *Theory into Practice*, *34*(3), pp. 152–158.

BANKS, J. A. and MCGEE BANKS, C. A., 2016. *Multicultural education: issues and perspectives* (9th ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

BELL, D., DELGADO, R. and STEFANCIC, J., 2005. *The Derrick Bell reader*. New York University Press.

BEZZINA, L., 2020. *Policy Coherence and Impact Measurement for Sustainable Development Focus on Policies Impacting Migrants in Malta*. Kopin InterCap.

BHATTACHARYA, S., 2006. *Sociological foundation of education.* Atlantic.

BRAUN, V. and CLARKE, V., 2013. *Successful qualitative research: a practical guide for beginners*. Sage.

BROWN, L. W., 2020. Black and in Grad School: Demystifying the Intersections of Race and Gender in Higher Education. In *Amplified Voices, Intersecting Identities 1*(1) pp. 56–59. Brill Sense.

CALLEJA, C., CAUCHI, B. and GRECH, M., 2010. *Education and Ethnic Minorities in Malta*. The e- SPICES Learning Partnership.

CARUANA, G., CREMONA, G. and VELLA, A., 2013. Language use, perception and attitudes amongst Maltese primary school children. In *Migration, multilingualism and schooling in Southern Europe* (pp. 304–342). Cambridge Scholar Publishers.

CARUANA, M. and FRANCALANZA, J., 2013. *ONE OF US - Towards Full Integration of Refugee Children in Local Schools.* Jesuit Refugee Foundation.

CEFAI, C., 2020. Social and Emotional Education in Maltese Schools. In C. Cefai, L. Akoury Dirani, D. Regester (Eds.), *Social and Emotional Learning in the Mediterranean. Cross Cultural Perspectives and Approaches* (pp. 25–35). Brill.

CEFAI, C., GALEA, N., KERESZTES, N. and SPITERI, R., 2019. *A Passage to Malta. The Mental Health and Wellbeing of Foreign Children in Malta.* University of Malta. Commissioner for Children.

CILIA, R. R., 2012. *Cultural Diversity: Secondary School Students' Perspective*.

COOPER, J. E., HE, Y. and LEVIN, B. B., 2011. *Developing Critical Cultural Competence: A Guide for 21st-Century Educators*. Corwin Press.

CRESWELL, J. W. and CRESWELL, J. D., 2018. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage

CRESWELL, J. W. and POTH, C. N., 2018. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. Sage.

DARMANIN, M., 2013. The "Smallness" of Minimalist Tolerance. *Education Inquiry*, *4*(1), pp. 31–62. https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v4i1.22061

DE HAAS, H., MILLER, M. J. and CASTLES, S., 2020. *Age of migration: international population movements in the modern world.* Guilford.

DEBONO, M., 2020. The Experience of Multiculturalism in Schools in Malta: A Qualitative Exploration. *Malta Journal of Education*, *1*(1), pp. 82–104. Internationalisation and Multiculturalism in Maltese Education and Society.

DELGADO, R. and STEFANCIC, J., 2012. *Critical race theory: an introduction* (2nd edition). New York University Press.

DUBY, G., 1996. Introduction. *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies*, *1*(1).

EUROPEAN COMMISSION., 2019. *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning.* Op.europa.eu, Publications Office of the European Union. https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/297a33c8-a1f3-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en [Accessed 30-10-2022].

FARRUGIA BUHAGIAR, J., and SAMMUT, L., 2020. Migrant Learners' Unit: Scaffolding a Learning Culture without Silos. *Malta Journal of Education.*, *1*(1), pp. 226–246. Internationalisation and Multiculturalism in Maltese Education and Society.

FENECH, C., and SEGUNA, A., 2020. Internationalisation of Maltese Society and Education. *Malta Journal of Education*, *1*(1), pp. 24–50. Internationalisation and Multiculturalism in Maltese Education and Society.

FIELDING, N. G., LEE, R. M., and BLANK, G., 2017. *The SAGE handbook of online research methods*. Sage.

FREIRE, P., and SHOR, I., 1987. *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on transforming education*. Greenwood Publishing Group.

GAY, G., 2003. Planting Seeds to Harvest Fruits. In G. Gay (Ed.), *Becoming Multicultural Educators. Personal Journey Towards Professional Agency*. John Wiley, Sons.

GAY, G., 2018. *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.

GORSKI, P., 2018. *Reaching and teaching students in poverty: strategies for erasing the opportunity gap*. Teachers College Press.

GORSKI, P., 2020. How Trauma-Informed Are We, Really? *Educational Leadership*, *78*(2), pp. 14–19. Trauma-Sensitive Schools.

HOLLIE, S., 2018. *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning responsive teaching and learning, classroom practices for student success*. Shell Education.

HOWARD, T. C., 2019. *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Classrooms. Multicultural Education Series*. Teachers College Press.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH., 2020. *World Report 2020: Events of 2019*. HRW.

JACKSON, C. W., 2003. Crystallizing My Multicultural Core. In G. Gay (Ed.), *Becoming Multicultural Educators. Personal Journey Towards Professional Agency*. John Wiley, Sons.

KEEGAN, S., 2009. *Qualitative research: good decision-making through understanding people, cultures and markets*. Kogan Page.

KLEIN, G. B., 2010. The SPICES Training Methodology and the E-SPICES Resources: Their Transferability to the School Context. In C. Calleja, B. Cauchi, M. Grech (Eds.), *Education and Ethnic Minorities in Malta*.

KUMAR, R., 2019. Research Methodology: a step-by-step guide for beginners. Sage.

LANDSMAN, J., and LEWIS, C. W., 2011. *White teachers, diverse classrooms: creating inclusive schools, building on students' diversity, and providing true educational equity*. Stylus Pub.

LIU, J., PENG, P. and LIAND, L., 2019. The Relationship between Family Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement in China: A Meta-Analysis.

MARX, S., and PENNINGTON, J. L., 2003. Pedagogies of Critical Race Theory: Experimentation with White Preservice Teachers. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *16*(1), pp. 91–110.

MAY, S., and SLEETER, C. E., 2010. *Critical multiculturalism: theory and praxis*. Routledge.

MEDE., 2012. *A National Curriculum Framework for All*. Ministry for Education .

MEDE., 2014a. *A National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo*. Ministry for Education.

MEDE., 2014b. *Respect for All Framework*. Ministry for Education.

MEDE., 2019. *A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools. Route to Quality Inclusion.* Ministry for Education.

MUHAMMAD, A., 2015. *Overcoming the achievement gap trap: liberating mindsets to effect change*. Solution Tree Press.

NATIONAL STATISTICS OFFICE., 2021. *Statistics on Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Formal Education. 2012/2013 - 2016/2017.* Government Printing Press.

NIETO, S., 1999. *The light in their eyes: creating multicultural learning communities*. Teachers College Press.

NIETO, S., 2001. *Language, culture, and teaching: critical perspectives for a new century*. Routledge.

NIETO, S., 2015. *Why we teach now*. Teachers College Press.

NIETO, S., 2018. *Affirming diversity: the sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. Pearson.

PONTEROTTO, J. G., 2010. Qualitative research in multicultural psychology: Philosophical underpinnings, popular approaches, and ethical considerations. *In Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *16*(4), pp. 581–590.

PREMAZZI, V., 2020. Internationalisation and Multiculturalism in Schools. *Malta Journal of Education.*, *1*(1), pp. 74–81. Internationalisation and Multiculturalism in Maltese Education and Society.

SCHEMBRI, H., 2020. How is the Learning Outcomes Framework Responding to an Internationalised School Culture in Primary Schools in Malta? *Malta Journal of Education* (MJE), *1*(1) pp. 106-133.

SCHEMBRI, H. and SCIBERRAS, C., 2020. Ethical considerations and limitations when researching education in small island states. SENTIO, 2, pp. 42-49

SCHEMBRI, H. and SCIBERRAS, C., 2022. A practical guide to conduct research in schools in Malta: Reflections, implications and suggestions. *The Educator*, 7, pp. 55-77.

SCHEURICH, J. J., 2012. *Anti-racist scholarship: an advocacy*. Suny Press.

SLEETER, C. E., 1993. How White Teachers Construct Race. In C. McCarthy, W. Crichlow (Eds.), *Race, Identity and Representation in Education,* pp. 157–171. Routledge.

SLEETER, C. E., 2010. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A reflection. *Journal of Praxis in Multicultural Education*, *5*(1), pp. 116–119.

SLEETER, C. E., 2013. *Power, teaching, and teacher education confronting injustice with critical research and action*. Peter Lang.

SLEETER, C. E., and CARMONA, J. F., 2017. *Un-standardizing curriculum: multicultural teaching in the standards-based classroom*. Teachers College Press.

SPITERI, D., 2016. *Multiculturalism, higher education and intercultural communication developing strengths-based narratives for teaching and learning*. Palgrave Macmillan.

UNESCO., 2014. *UNESCO Education Strategy, 2014-2021.* United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

UNESCO., 2019. *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education - Building Bridges, Not Walls*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

VANG, C. T., 2010. *An educational psychology of methods in multicultural education*. Peter Lang.

VASSALLO GAUCI, P., 2018. Making the Needs of Migrant Learners a Priority. *European Migration Network Newsletter 2017-2018*, 3.

WRIGHT, E., 2020. Facing the Challenge of Preparing Maltese Schools and Students for a Multicultural Society: An Opportunity to Redefine Identity in the Light of "Otherness." *Malta Journal of Education*, *1*(1), pp. 316–346. Internationalisation and Multiculturalism in Maltese Education and Society.