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ta' Malta

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Introduction

**PROFESSOR TANYA SAMMUT BONNICI**

Chair, Centre for Labour Studies

Pro-Rector for Strategic Planning and Enterprise

It is a pleasure to submit to the reader this Biennial Report of the Centre for Labour Studies (CLS), the oldest centre at the University of Malta. This collection covers the two-year period from 2021 to 2022. It highlights the Centre's activities and encourages policymakers to reflect on the current labour market's challenges and opportunities.

As Malta's main learning, research and monitoring agency for industrial and employment relations with the European Union context, CLS diligently provides training and reports on significant events in the labour market. The sections below provide a brief overview of the Centre's activities during the past two years.

Learning Programmes. CLS has been offering learning programs since 1983, providing a workforce for Malta of CLS alumni working labour policy, human resource development and occupational health and safety. CLS serves the national requirements for education and training in the labour sector through the Diploma in Gender, Work and Society in collaboration with the Faculty for Social Wellbeing, Bachelor in Work and Human Resources in

collaboration with the Faculty for Economics, Management and Accountancy, Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety, and the Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development together with the Faculty of Education. The programmes aim to provide knowledge for officers, policymakers and employers and to promote social dialogue. The design of the curriculum seeks to develop working partnerships and promote synergies between academics, government, trade unions, employers and other actors from civil society involved in the field of labour relations. The programmes aim to sensitise people actively involved or interested in labour issues to current trends, relevant concepts and analytical tools pertinent to this area.

National and International Research. CLS provides information, advice and expertise on living and working conditions, industrial relations and managing change in Malta to support policy-making activities of national institutions, government, employers and trade unions.

A notable collaboration in place for many years is CLS's contribution to policy reports specific to Malta issued by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). CLS provides Eurofound with Malta-centric research, data and analysis on a wide range of social and work-related topics. The country-specific reports on Malta prepared by the CLS are published on the web or are used by Eurofound to produce comparative reports of the EU member states. Amongst the reports the CLS contributes to, the Working Life in Malta Report provides online information on the key characteristics of working conditions and opportunities across a range of economic and social parameters. Other reports to which the CLS contributes to include Eurofound's EU PolicyWatch, reports related to company restructuring, comparative analysis reports, representativeness reports, topical updates, and other ad-hoc research work.

Outreach. CLS's commitment to dialogue and engagement with its social partners and external stakeholders helps to ensure that its work remains relevant and impactful in the field of industrial and employment relations. Researchers and students enrolled in CLS programmes are provided with

interaction with industry and the public sector through interaction with management and policy leaders. On-site visits to industry and public policy partners are organised as part of the curriculum of the degree programmes.

CLS academics and students met with national policymakers during the seminar ‘Occupational Health and Safety in Malta: The Way Forward’ held in December 2022. Students from the bachelor’s programme discussed the regulation and management of specific sectors such as construction, the growth and regulation of the profession of health and safety in Malta, and emerging issues such as mental health at work.

CLS organised the Labour Studies Research Conference in February 2022 for internal and external stakeholders to present research findings achieved by academics and students. Research projects discussed during the conference included an analysis of how poverty in Malta has changed over the years and the factors that have influenced it. Leading researchers presented findings on the evolution of women in the Maltese labour market in the last sixty years, the working conditions experienced by migrant workers with the largest expatriate cohort of Filipino workers, and the effects of remote working conditions during the pandemic in the technology and telecommunications sectors. Researchers presented their thesis projects in the area of human resources and occupational health and safety.

In June 2021, CLS held a roundtable discussion between internal stakeholders and national leaders in the field, focusing on ‘Measuring and Understanding Inequality Dynamics in Malta’. The event highlighted the results of a national study in the area covering factors pertaining to education levels, labour market status, and the occupation of household members. The study found a modest inequality increase in recent years, which was mitigated in part through government intervention. The study reviewed the positive outcomes and unintentional consequences of policy intervention, and the need to continue reducing barriers to economic inclusion.

Accreditation. CLS seeks to improve competency standards within the profession. All programmes offered by CLS are accredited and recognised

in member countries of the European Higher Education Area through the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The system allows credits taken at one higher education institution to be recognised in other member countries and to be counted towards a qualification studied for at another institution. ECTS credits represent learning based on defined learning outcomes and their associated workload.

The Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety has received further recognition from an international industry-specific institution. The degree programme has been reviewed and re-accredited by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), the Chartered body and largest membership organisation in the world for health and safety professionals. By means of achieving re-accreditation, the CLS has ensured that the degree continues to meet the standards needed by contemporary health and safety practitioners whilst also providing the course with international visibility. Students who complete this course are eligible to become IOSH graduate members. This provides alumni with international networking opportunities whilst providing them with access to continuous professional development opportunities.

The report highlights the output of the dedicated members of academic and administrative professionals within CLS, which has a substantial, tangible impact on the provision of knowledge in the local and international labour sector, as well as the ongoing provision of trained specialists for the labour market in Malta.

Foreword



Dr LUKE A. FIORINI

Director, Centre for Labour Studies

It is with great pleasure that I write this Foreword to the 2021–2022 Biennial Report of the Centre for Labour Studies (CLS). The CLS was established in 1981, making it the oldest Centre at the University of Malta, and in 2021 celebrated its 40th anniversary. Fittingly, the current biennial report looks back not only at the period under review, but also celebrates the first 40 years of this small but impactful Centre.

The CLS has developed from offering its first course in 1983, a Diploma in Labour Studies, to offering four tertiary courses: the Diploma in Gender, Work and Society (held in collaboration with the Faculty of Social Wellbeing), the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Hons) (in collaboration with the Faculty for Economics, Management and Accountancy), the Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons), and the Masters in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development (together with the Faculty of Education). The courses offered by the CLS have been a considerable success. The CLS has contributed to society by producing qualified practitioners in fields of national importance, including industrial relations, gender equality, human

resources, occupational health and safety, and career guidance, amongst others. Over the years, several alumni have held top positions in public and private organisations, whilst also contributing to society via NGOs.

The CLS also has a commendable track record in research. Over the years, the CLS has produced many noteworthy research papers. Since 2003, the CLS has held a contract with the Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions (Eurofound), an EU Agency, to produce related research reports. In 2022, the CLS won the tender to continue contributing to this Agency's Network of European Correspondents for the next four years. During the period under review, the CLS also produced research of national importance, commissioning studies regarding poverty and inequalities in Malta. Over the years, CLS academics have been active in producing research, sometimes for peer-reviewed scientific journals, and other times in collaboration with social partners. Historical research can be viewed on the CLS website (www.um.edu.mt/cls), past biennial reports and via the academic profiles of CLS staff on the UM website. This biennial report presents the research conducted during the review period.

The CLS has been active in outreach and in contributing to wider society. Over the last 40 years, the CLS has been involved in several notable initiatives, such as facilitating the setting up of the Forum Nazzjonali tat-Trade Unions (FNTU) in conjunction with the President of Malta. The CLS has also held several events in an effort to contribute to policy discussion and enhance awareness of CLS research. During 2021-2022 alone, and despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the CLS carried out its first online public Research Conference, whilst also holding physical events on inequalities in Malta and hosting a discussion between health and safety students and the Minister responsible for the Occupational Health and Safety Authority. During this period, the CLS also hosted a special event held at the Aula Magna, Valetta Campus, that celebrated the 40th anniversary of the CLS. A series of videos where some notable alumni reflected upon the impact of the CLS were also produced to celebrate this anniversary. More information on some of the

events held during the period under review can be found in this Biennial Report. Past CLS biennial reports document the efforts made by those working at the Centre over the years.

Of course, this short forward cannot do justice to the work carried out over the last two years, let alone the last forty. With that in mind, this special edition of the Biennial Report contains the reflections of each of the past Directors of the CLS. First, the speech provided by the CLS' founding father, Professor Edward Zammit on the occasion of the CLS' 40th anniversary event is reproduced. This is followed by an article by Professor Godfrey Baldacchino who reflects upon adult education in Malta and the influence of the CLS. In a related article, Mr Saviour Rizzo describes political education in Malta and the CLS' pioneering involvement. This is followed by two articles by Professor Manwel Debono. These discuss the Centre's contribution to the career guidance and human resource professions, respectively. A contribution by Dr Anna Borg then reflects upon the development and impact of the Diploma in Gender Work and Society. Finally, I discuss the CLS' impact on occupational health and safety education in Malta. This latter piece was written in collaboration with Dr Francis La Ferla who coordinated the course in health and safety prior to 2011.

Of course, the CLS cannot rest on its laurels, but must also plan for the future. Amongst our plans for the coming two years, we aim to:

- Develop a strategic plan that will be approved by the CLS board and will provide valuable future direction to the Centre.
- In terms of education, re-open each of the CLS' four courses. The CLS also intends to explore opening a new postgraduate course which will provide added opportunities for our current students to continue their education, whilst also aiming to offer some short courses for those who are yet to study with the CLS.
- In terms of research, the CLS intends to focus on publishing peer-reviewed research which is relevant to the Maltese labour market. The CLS will also continue producing deliverables for Eurofound. In order to

enhance the ability of the CLS to conduct research, funds obtained from current and past research activities will be re-invested to hire a full-time research support officer.

- In terms of outreach, the CLS has a number of activities in the pipeline. These include events for students, such as topic-specific seminars and industry visits, as well as public local events such as a second research conference. An international event, a conference on the history of work, is also planned. CLS academics will also continue to distribute their research findings via the media, and local and international conferences.

In closing, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the CLS Board, Professor Godfrey Baldacchino who chaired the CLS until the latter months of 2021, Professor Tanya Sammut Bonnici who has since chaired the CLS, my colleagues Dr Anna Borg and Professor Manwel Debono, and our invaluable administrative members of staff, including Ms Josephine Agius, Ms Stephanie Muscat, and Ms Alessia Zahra, who helped in putting this biennial report together.

Articles





PROFESSOR EDWARD ZAMMIT

Honorary member, Centre for Labour Studies Board

From Confrontation to Dialogue

A speech delivered by Professor Edward Zammit on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Centre for Labour Studies at the University of Malta.

When it comes to commemorating the planting of a seed and tracing its development over almost half a century, one might be tempted to indulge in feelings of nostalgia. Actually, it is not my intention today to indulge in such an exercise of sentimentality because I rather believe it is our duty to assess and evaluate objectively whether that original seed has actually grown into a healthy tree with strong roots and wholesome fruit. I believe that this would be a more useful exercise from which may emerge some lessons for the future. Hence, I would like to start by glancing at the original environment in which this Centre was conceived, its original aims, the way these aims were perceived and concretised over the years. Then one may look at the Centre's main achievements, what stage has been reached so far and look ahead at what

I personally regard as the challenges which the Centre is confronting now and in the foreseeable future.

At the time when the Centre was set up, dramatic changes were taking place in Malta on the social, political and economic levels. It was only two years after the end of the British military base on which the economy had been heavily dependent and so, for the first time in its long history, Malta had to fend for itself. As a result, the economy and many aspects of its society had to be restructured and these changes had a profound impact on the field of industrial relations. The two main trade unions did not see eye to eye, particularly in their relations with the Labour government of the time. These were the General Workers' Union (GWU) which was the biggest one and the Confederation of Maltese Trade Unions (CMTU) which embodied a number of other unions, mainly in the public sector. In fact, between them, there was a deep division, frequent criticism of each other's policies and downright antagonism. One main bone of contention was the statutory union between the GWU and the Labour Party which the government perceived as fundamental for the country's new economic development. This policy was not acceptable to the CMTU which upheld a very different policy.

Under these circumstances, the incidence of strikes was high, particularly in the public sector. As soon as the Labour government had been elected, ten years earlier, it adopted a policy of *workers' participation* at Malta Drydocks – between the government and the GWU. Many thousands of workers were employed in this public enterprise which, under the previous government, had been plagued by industrial strife. Under these circumstances, some drastic measures were required. The newly elected Labour government was determined to remedy this situation and it was for this reason that the first form of *workers' participation* was then adopted in Malta. As the new system led to an end of industrial actions and, for some time to financial viability, the government intended to extend the system to other sectors of the economy.

Let me at this stage, make some personal reflections. When I started working at the University, I was assigned to the Department of Economics.

There my superiors expected me to focus on the subject of industrial relations which was still new for Malta. For this reason, I encountered Gerard Kester, a visiting lecturer from Holland who had the same task and academic interests as me. The two of us started a programme of lecturing and research on workers' participation in Malta and overseas – a project which we continued to carry out in different contexts practically throughout the rest of our lives. We saw participation as an integral part and an extension of the democratisation process of industrial democracy. This is so because it's not enough to have a system which endows citizens with the right to vote once every five years. Democracy really ought to be a living experience at all levels – including at the level of work – from top to bottom.

It became clear from the start that despite the good intentions of the main protagonists, in Malta there was a lack of knowledge about the real meaning and practical implementation of workers' participation. Actually, the idea was not completely new as a number of international organisations had already been promoting it for some time. These included the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in which the GWU was listed and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) to which the CMTU pertained. Likewise, the Young Christian Workers, an organisation which was active in Malta at the time, were inspired by the social teaching of the Catholic Church. But there were many others against it for various reasons. Both local and international research has concluded that the development of participation required an autonomous supporting structure. Such a structure was necessary to provide an action plan on different levels which included a legal framework, an ongoing research programme and above all an educational and training strategy of all the members of enterprises from top management to the shop floor. The conclusion reached was that the best location for the operation of such a project was at the university where there is a long tradition of autonomous research and the best persons to perform the required functions. It was for these reasons that the *Centre for the Development of Workers' Participation* was then established at the University of Malta – better

known today as the *Centre for Labour Studies*.

It's also worth recalling today what state the University of Malta was in at that time. There was a division between the so-called *Old University* and the *New University*. A number of faculties were suppressed whilst new ones were created. The idea of having an autonomous entity, as the Centre was being proposed, which did not fall under any faculty was a novelty. There were some who viewed this proposal suspiciously, as an attempt by the unions to dominate academia while others saw it as a Marxist idea. At this juncture, the efforts and diplomatic skills of the late George Agius from within the University Council and those of the late Salvinu Spiteri from outside were crucial for obtaining the Council's approval for establishing the Centre. After this, another battle had to be fought to obtain the necessary funds and other resources to enable the Council's decision to be implemented in practice. Unhesitatingly I can claim that bureaucratic challenges – by fair means or foul – were never lacking and these came both from outside and from within the University itself. The severe limitations of staff, finance, and even of physical space for the Centre to operate absorbed much of our energy. Some of these problems could be traced back to the fact that this was the first University structure with one leg inside the University and the other outside. One way of meeting financial shortcomings was through the possibility of generating and utilising funds obtained from outside the University. Financial matters were always carried out always according to the established procedures and following the Rector's approval. Nonetheless, there were stumbling blocks even to utilise the funds obtained from outside the University. In fact, if it were not for these outside sources of income – mainly from the unions – the whole project would have been stillborn.

During the first years, much of the Centre's work was focused on workers' participation at Malta Drydocks. The system there needed support for its further development. For this reason, together with my colleagues, we used to go there to teach and discuss the functioning of participation with the workers, the management and the members of the Council. I vividly

remember one worker protesting: ‘So do you mean that now, in addition to my own work, I am expected to perform the duties of management? Isn’t it better for everyone to do their own work?’ Clearly, a cultural change was required. For this reason, a number of short courses were being organised on the shop floor for small groups of workers in turn. These courses were designed on the basis of ongoing research. Simultaneously, at the University the first of a series of courses leading to an academic Diploma in Labour Studies was started. This course aimed to develop among the participants a critical view of workers’ participation. Among the first batch of students for the course – which was naturally open to all – a number of Drydocks’ workers were included who came to the University for the first time in their lives. Many of these, later on, became union activists and occupied vital roles in them. Some others today occupy important positions in the public sector or in private enterprise, while still others became active in the field of education. Participation necessitated changes in the traditional roles of both unions and management. Disagreements sometimes occurred among the union officials – particularly shop stewards – and the members of the workers’ participation committees. These were the subjects about which the Centre carried out programmes of teaching on the basis of surveys about concepts and expectations of workers from participation. Intensive studies were also carried out by local and international experts due to the financial losses which, in spite of participation, the Drydocks were still making. It became evident that the absolute reliance on Government subsidies was unsustainable in the long run. As we all know, the financial losses eventually brought about a drastic reduction in the number of workers, with the loss of all their skills and of the predominant role of the Drydocks as a leading industry in Malta. This was also a setback for those who like us firmly believe in the promotion of industrial democracy through workers’ participation.

At the same time, the Centre was carrying out other local educational activities and research on the international level. These included university courses on industrial relations and human resources, occupational health and

safety, career guidance and, a novelty for Malta at that time, the changing role of women at work and in society. On the international level, the Centre became actively involved in the work of the *European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions* years before Malta's application for EU membership. The information on industrial relations forwarded by the Centre is rated by the Foundation itself among the most valuable ones among EU correspondents. Additionally, the Centre played an active part in various other international research projects including the *International Centre for Public Enterprises* based in the former Yugoslavia and the Scenario 21 Project - under the auspices of the *Confederation Francaise Democratique du Travail*.

Under the political and economic circumstances which prevailed towards the end of the 1980s, and as a result of periodic evaluations carried out by the Centre, it was decided that it should throw its weight on the promotion of another form of participation, namely that of producer cooperatives. The cooperatives movement had been in existence in Malta for many years but had remained restricted to the agricultural sector. The need was felt for a radical re-organisation of this movement. This could only be achieved through a programme of educational activities, research, public promotion and consultation – along the lines of what was being performed at Malta Drydocks. In time, this work resulted in some important reforms of the cooperatives movement. In addition to a reform of the existing services cooperatives, a number of cooperatives were established in new sectors. A reform of the legislative framework for the regulation of the movement and of its central structures were implemented. An extensive educational programme for children, called *SCOOPS*, was launched which was intended to teach children about cooperatives and help them to become well-disposed towards working in them. The Centre is proud of its contribution towards an injection of new blood and new ideas in the promotion of the cooperatives movement.

The Centre has always maintained a close collaboration with the unions. As voluntary organisations which strive for the emancipation of workers, the unions embody the ideals of industrial democracy and workers' participation.

When performing their traditional roles – through negotiations with management about conditions of employment leading to collective agreements – the unions are *de facto* practising one form of workers’ participation. The main difference is that in the past, these relations were always conducted in an atmosphere of conflict with management and sometimes even with other rival unions. Such actions were often counter-productive and did much damage to the enterprise, the economy and sometimes even to the workers themselves. It was therefore a priority to find a way for the unions to collaborate with each other and start pulling the same rope. For these aims to be attained, from the 1990s onwards, the Centre started organising an intensive programme of residential weekend seminars for the union leaders. These used to meet periodically in a local hotel, together with their families, and in an informal, friendly setting to study and discuss matters of common interest. The discussions were normally animated with the help of foreign experts who were brought to Malta following the Centre’s invitation. This programme could be implemented thanks to the generous assistance of the *Friedrick Ebert Stiftung*. For this reason, we at the Centre are very grateful for the collaboration of the local representatives of this German foundation in Malta: principally of Rolf Nagel, Manfred Turlach and Ebba von Fersen Balzan. Although unfortunately these friends and benefactors are no longer with us, they are fondly remembered and will surely never be forgotten by us.

When we look back now and reflect on the achievements which have been implemented over the years – since the foundation of the Centre – it is clear that the industrial relations environment in Malta has taken a definite turn for the better. The former hostility between the unions and employers and even among the unions has definitely diminished. I do not claim that this change has come about exclusively as a result of the constant efforts of the Centre. But it is no exaggeration to claim that the Centre may have contributed towards this change of culture. The change started being felt towards the end of the 1980s with the setting up of the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development. Arguably, the biggest achievement was

the agreement reached among the social partners whereby the *income policy* henceforth became linked with the registered cost of living increase. It should be noted that this issue was periodically a bone of contention and the cause of industrial unrest. As the country came closer to EU membership, there was an increase of institutions with structures in which the social partners began to meet and discuss how to solve peacefully the problems arising from time to time. Thus it may be stated that participation is being widely implemented on a practical level through social dialogue. And although not much is heard about worker directors today, there are no fewer than four laws which establish different forms of workers' participation through information and consultation with worker representatives about matters of interest to them. It is highly satisfactory that the Centre has contributed – mainly through its educational programmes – towards the attainment of these goals. These changes are also reflected in the new name of the Centre which ensures that it is better understood by today's public. While remaining faithful to its original mission, the Centre is now called the *Centre for Labour Studies*.

At this stage, one may justifiably explore the challenges which the Centre is facing currently and in the foreseeable future. Despite the temporary setbacks caused by the recent pandemic and economic recession, the pace of rapid economic development here in Malta has been unabated. In addition to the traditional economic activities, the main expanding sectors are those of construction, pharmaceuticals, financial services, betting and tourism. There is full employment and the country has been experiencing an economic boom for the last few years. As a consequence, there is unprecedented prosperity, and this is visible in higher living standards, consumer spending and ironically, environmental degradation. Many youths with working-class backgrounds are now making considerable income and have turned into entrepreneurs and speculators. At the same time, there are many others who are finding it difficult to cope and, in addition to their main occupation, are constrained to perform second and third jobs. This endless work is tantamount to a new form of self-imposed serfdom. In this context, the Centre, in conjunction

with the unions, has an important mission to teach young workers the real values of life, the need for physical and mental health, relaxation with family and colleagues, self-expression and artistic creativity. Hence there is a need for the enforcement of laws regarding the balance between work and the rest of life and about the fruitful use of leisure time.

We are all aware of the big upheavals taking place in the world of work and in the economy which are threatening the loss of all the benefits and rights which were achieved by the workers over the years through heavy work and sacrifices. The largest industry is no longer that of manufacturing or of shipbuilding and repairing but the services industry. Through the development of information technology, many traditional trades and jobs have disappeared and are replaced by new occupations based on artificial intelligence and carried out by individual workers scattered in various places, working on their own or in very small companies. Under these circumstances, many unions are finding it difficult to organise the workers. Hence, in Malta as in other countries, they are in a state of crisis. This conclusion emerged from a scientific study carried out recently by the Centre. The value of solidarity which is the basis not only of unionisation but also of democracy is being eroded and replaced by individualism and hedonism. Everyone is on his own and a feeling of entitlement predominates for services to be furnished by others. The traditional proverb is highly applicable: *If I were an Emir and you were an Emir who will do the donkey work?* It is important for us to realise that we are all in the same boat and that we can only overcome the obstacles ahead of us if we all pull the same rope. I firmly believe that this ought to be one important political and educational message in today's world. Despite all the years gone by and all the past achievements, there is still a lot of work ahead of us so that the aims for which the Centre was set up may be accomplished.

Before ending these few words, I must mention at least some of our collaborators and colleagues over the years – along with others who have completed part of their studies at the Centre and today occupy important positions through which they may be putting into practice their learning

and experiences. Among these should be mentioned the former Minister of Labour: Hon Carmelo Abela, the former Admin Secretary: Mario Cutajar, Professor and former pro-Rector: Godfrey Baldacchino, the former President of the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development: James Pearsall, the current General Secretary of the GWU: Josef Fiorini. A special mention must also be made of Edith Rizzo, the Centre's secretary for many years who collaborated with the academic staff with great enthusiasm, efficiency and professionalism. To these must also be added a number of union officials and activists some of whom served periods as members of the Centre's governing board. Above all, I believe that a special commemoration must be made of three persons and friends who stood out as a source of great inspiration and assistance in various ways, particularly during the initial years of the Centre. Unfortunately, these persons have passed away but they are still very much alive in our minds and hearts. These are George Agius, ex-Secretary General of the GWU, Salvinu Spiteri, ex-President of CMTU and Professor Peter Serracino Inglott, ex-Rector of the University of Malta who was among the first persons who firmly believed, taught and practised the concept of workers' participation. Finally, on a personal note, I formally thank my dear wife Carmen and my sons David and Jonathan for the generous support that they've always given me through thick and thin over the years.

Note: Professor Edward Zammit served as the Centre's founding director and was Chairman of the Board from 1981 to 2008. In recognition of his professional activities and particularly for his contribution towards workers' education, in 2022 he was officially awarded membership of Malta's National Order of Merit.



PROFESSOR GODFREY BALDACCHINO

Honorary member, Centre for Labour Studies Board

Worker Education in Malta:

Unfreezing, Changing, Refreezing

ABSTRACT

Worker Education was pioneered in Malta at the University of Malta by the Workers' Participation Development Centre – the precursor of the Centre for Labour Studies – with the first programmes launched in 1982, just over 40 years ago. Lewin (1947) proposed a three-step model for social change: one that requires “mental unfreezing, group value changing and new level refreezing”. In this short essay, and using a broad brush, I review the changes that have taken place in worker education in the last 40 years in Malta, using the Lewin model.

Keywords: adult education; Kurt Lewin; labour education; Malta; paid educational leave; training.

INTRODUCTION: FOUR CHARACTERS

Allow me to start this brief essay with a character sketch of four of my acquaintances. I resort to pseudonyms here, to protect identities but also to focus readers' attention not so much on who these people are but what they stand for in relation to the theme of this article.

Peter graduated with a bachelor in electrical engineering from the University of Malta (UM). Exceptionally for those of his age and qualifications, he has been working with the same telecommunications company ever since his graduation, 15 years ago. He is obliged to follow bespoke training sessions and seminars as mandated by his employer; but he has also voluntarily followed evening programmes in adult education, such as those offered by UM's Centre for Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Michael graduated in sociology and anthropology from a foreign university but has been living in Malta since 2014. After a few odd jobs, he landed a starting position with a gaming company 8 years ago, and has moved up the ranks since then. He is obliged to follow company training (which includes team building), but is also co-responsible for the training and mentoring of those recruited to his department.

Fiona is an EU national now married to a Maltese and living in Malta. She followed basic programmes of study that qualified her as a florist, first in her birth country and then in Malta since 2019. She works with a small, family owned business and must adapt to the work cycles associated with the flower industry, with peaks around Christmas, St Valentine's Day and Easter, as well as the work involved in catering for special events such as weddings and conferences. Her hours can be long. She was furloughed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Her employer does not offer training opportunities and, what she learns, she does so 'on the job'.

Joseph is a graduate of MCAST and is passionate about art and product design. He has landed a successive number of jobs with small firms in the local private sector, and has recently started doing some industry-related work with his own equipment on the side. Work is hectic and

the company he works with is understaffed; work gets even more hectic around big events like international festivals or exhibitions. His employer does not offer training opportunities.

Here are four workers in contemporary Malta, differently exposed to the opportunities of worker education, or lack thereof. While worker education is mainstreamed in the case of Peter and Michael; it is an unlikely prospect for both Fiona and Joseph.

CHANGES IN THE BUSINESS OF EDUCATION

I remember the beta-version of a publicity video that was produced by UM's Communications Office, based on what was meant to be a typical working day at its bustling Msida Campus. It started early in the morning, before sunrise. Then the camera pans to show the arrival of staff to work, the arrival of students, the first lectures kicking off at 8 am and the sequence of lectures throughout the day. The business of tertiary education, along with campus life more generally – laboratory work, poring over a book in the library, chatting over a drink in the canteen – were all illustrated, as the sun meandered across the sky. Then, as we hit 5 pm, the staff and students prepare to leave, and the sun prepares to set, the video ends.

This was simply unacceptable. I pointed out to the producers that their draft promo-video had stopped its recording too abruptly, just as a new cadre of users and service deliverers was preparing to converge on the UM campus. These are the (now many) students, mostly mature, who are taking up evening classes in a diverse range of liberal or vocational programmes, from certificate courses to master's degrees, along with their mentors and tutors, some of whom are part-time, guest, visiting or occasional lecturers at UM.

The business of education is now a lifelong concern in various professions. Many adults today pursue programmes of study for personal enrichment; in various cadres, a minimum number of hours dedicated to professional development is now an essential annual requirement. Reskilling and upgrading is inevitable given the rapid pace of change in various industries, such as

computer programming or information technology. Even at the University of Malta, professional development is now essential for those seeking promotion to Senior Lecturer or for those who take on specific administrative duties such as heads of department or faculty officers.

It is thus hard to imagine that the state of affairs until a few decades ago was anything but so. The world of work and that of education were nicely and clinically isolated. One would study and only study; it was only after finishing one's studies that one – and mainly males – would then look for and land a job. And, at that point, education would end and the only professional formation would take place at the workplace, and via learning by doing. There was hardly any going back. Indeed, many employers were suspicious of anyone wanting to 'study' because that could mean that they had ulterior aspirations, which might include resigning from their current job, or even open up their own business, offer stiff competition and lure away clients. Freshers' Week at UM was a show case of the kinds of jobs waiting for the eventual graduates to consider, three or four years down the line.

Not any longer. These two solitudes – education and work – have now tantalizingly started to connect. Indeed, the notion of a full-time university student in Malta has become the exception rather than the rule; since many (notionally full time) university students may be working – some doing so on a full-time basis - whilst studying. The exhibitors at UM Freshers' Week every October, desperate for suitable human resources, are now offering attractive starting working packages for part time or full time recruitment, even to first-year undergraduate students. No delayed gratification is to be borne; and no long-term career plans are required.

In this paper, I plan to focus on the changes that have taken place in worker education over the last four decades in Malta, a time during which I remained affiliated to the Workers' Participation Development Centre (WPDC), then transformed as the Centre for Labour Studies (CLS) after the demise of worker participation from the Maltese labour relations scene.

CENTRALITY AND MARGINALITY OF WORK

It is quite ironic, as De Botton (2010) points out, that work is such a central feature of our life; and yet it is grossly underrepresented in how we examine, explore and investigate this life: whether in fiction, theatre, film as well as education. Perhaps it is because it is such a heavy presence that we do our best to imagine it away, and keep our thoughts away. Or perhaps because it is such a meaningless, drab and banal use of so much of our time for many of us that we cannot bear to bring it up for scrutiny. Other than the suite of four interlocking programmes now offered by the CLS – the Diploma in Gender, Work and Society; the Degree in Work and Human Resources; the Degree in Occupational Health and Safety; and the Postgraduate Diploma in Career Guidance – the sustained study of the world of work, and of its workers, does not feature at all or only obliquely in most of the 700+ programmes of study offered at UM. Only one of UM's 140-odd departments – that of Human Resource Management – is explicitly so focused; and there the focus is on workers as 'human resources', servicing corporate objectives. There is more to work than that.

And yet, a dynamic labour market demands skilling and re-skilling, as well as a critical eye to analyse its machinations. Smart responses to mechanisation (including robotisation, digitalisation, artificial intelligence and machine learning) do not involve luddite attempts to stop or thwart advances in technology but rather encourage professionalisation and the enhancement of 'soft' skills (which are hardly soft or insignificant). It pays to understand why and how labour markets work, why workers get employed (typically and clinically: marginal value needs to exceed marginal cost), how best to leverage one's position in an organisational hierarchy, and how trade unions and pluralist industrial relations compare and contrast with strategic human resource management (HRM). Moreover, it helps to be equipped with suitable knowledge, skills, insights and other competences if you are trying to confront professional managers at their own game: which is what trade unions try to do.

For these reasons, and more, the WPDC embarked on its first worker education programmes in 1982. Drydocks workers were especially targeted then: as the exponents of a complex form of worker self-management, they needed to better understand the nuances of running a ship repair yard in a competitive market, as well as how economic democracy needed to align with professional management therein to get the job done. But workers from other places of work joined in: what had effectively started off as an extra-mural training and education centre for Malta Drydocks started diversifying its target audience beyond that institution: civil servants, airline cabin crew, trade union activists from various sectors, middle level managers ... all joined as part-time evening students, keen to get some additional insights on that which consumes most of their lives (as it does ours). The actual content of these programmes – starting with a Diploma in Industrial Relations – embraced elements of the sociology and psychology of work, labour law and labour relations, labour economics, principles of management and finance, communication and negotiation skills, and international political economy.

Classrooms were sites of contestation. Patriarchal and ‘strategic HRM’ driven ideologies of work and leadership were examined and critiqued; while students built the confidence and competence to confront and challenge these dogmas. There was no shortage of discussion and cross-examination: after all, the students could relate what was being presented and discussed to their own, all-too-common experiences. (A comparison with regular, younger, day students, who are more intent on assiduously learning and taking notes from their lecturers, is unavoidable here.) The evening students of these pioneering programmes would also typically spend one weekend per semester in a hotel, for an intensive bonding and learning experience, often moderated by local or international experts. (Allow me to thank here the Malta Office of the German Friedrich-Ebert Foundation [FES] which wholeheartedly financially supported these activities over many decades.) Many graduates of these programmes were promoted to significant roles within human resource management departments, the Malta public service,

as well as within the leadership cadres of local trade union organisations. Being both ‘in and against the state’ was a common dilemma faced by both students and mentors in these programmes: a ‘political economy’ approach – where causality and consequence for workplace dynamics can be traced to the broader sphere of economic logic – was the preferred pedagogy of some (but not all) lecturers; but, at the end of the day, each student had to decide the extent to and manner in which they were prepared to challenge the system, if at all. Mayo (1997) had undertaken a brilliantly insightful, and still relevant, critique of the workings of the then WPDC.

These programmes of study were initially offered as certificate courses. But they soon got caught up in the wave of certification that gripped the country. Higher education was moving away from being the exclusive preserve of the few and, in the act of democratising access to tertiary education, there was a demand for higher levels of qualification. Today, the middle class benchmark for completing one’s education is, as a minimum, an undergraduate degree. As with other programmes of study, the WPDC-CLS offerings duly morphed into diplomas, then into degrees. This has obliged even longer study periods on students: a part-time, evening degree programme takes at least five years to complete (although one can always exit the programme earlier at certificate or diploma level).

If the WPDC-CLS took the lead in worker education, others were soon to follow. Various medium to large size firms have developed regular, in-house, training programmes for their own employees. In other cases, where this training capacity is not possible, workers are supported (or at least tolerated and allowed) to follow courses with certified service providers from both the local public and private sector. UM has, for example, provided a popular, part-time, three-year, evening executive master’s programme in business administration (MBA) for many years. And various foreign institutions have capitalised on the disposition of the Maltese mid-career professionals to seek certification by opening branches or satellite campuses in the Maltese Islands: over 70 such institutions have a warrant to offer fee-paying diplomas and

degrees in Malta. There are 247 institutions with a training licence at the time of writing in Malta, registered with the Malta Further & Higher Education Authority (MFHEA, 2022): they cover a very broad knowledge range, from dance and film studies to language schools, taxation and auditing. Much of this is broad, adult education; but it comprises many examples of specialist worker and professional formation. The two-year Covid-19 hiatus also gave a solid boost to on-line learning and tuition, with a range of hybrid, synchronous and asynchronous programmes now on offer.

MENTAL UNFREEZING

Four decades have helped to mentally ‘unfreeze’ the notion that education had to stop at the school leaving age of 16. Malta still has a high proportion of youth aged 18-24 (and mainly males) who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) of around 10.5% when compared to the EU average of 9% (Eurostat, 2022; Vella & Cassar, 2022). And older members of society have taken up many opportunities for adult and worker education.

But there is always opposition to change. Levin (1947) warns that entrenched groups may have “solidified ideas” that militate against reform; and the implementers of change need to be prepared to encounter intense resistance, even hostility, from various stakeholders. With greater exposure to education and training comes the nurturing of a meritocracy; and this needs to confront and overwhelm an entrenched system where seniority, rather than talent, is rewarded (Baldacchino, 1997). Older and experienced workers find themselves increasingly confronted or accompanied by younger but better qualified employees (including graduates): in such dyadic encounters, scoffing at the other’s naïveté needs to be replaced with mutual respect. In Malta, the introduction of graduate recruitment into the large public service was one of the implemented recommendations of the Public Service Reform Commission (Polidano, 1996).

There are other pockets of resistance. Not all units in private industry encourage or tolerate their staff in their pursuit of worker education and

training. Certain classes of employees are able to pursue reskilling or competence upgrades only in their own (free) time, which may also involve taking time off, switching shift duties or foregoing overtime. The situation is most dire in small and mainly family owned enterprises, where job-related demands can be so intensive as to thwart all opportunities for a sustained programme of studies. A tight labour market, with negligible unemployment, makes it increasingly difficult to find replacements or understudies able to support the effort required in various manufacturing or service industries. Clearly, the resort to immigrant labour, which has accelerated in the last ten years, has stemmed some – but not all – labour market gaps. In spite of persistent employer demands for even more immigrant workers, it behoves the country and its decision makers to take a step back and reflect as to whether such a policy is indeed the best suited for Malta, already one of the most densely populated countries in the world. I expect a greater readiness to consider investment in technology in order to replace labour in the coming years.

GROUP VALUE CHANGING

In Levin's second stage, 'change' occurs after staff get unsettled from their previous 'comfort zone' and become willing to move, adapt and take up new opportunities. People accelerate to embrace the new values and goals and, as they get more familiar with the change, additional change agents may come into play, and further assist in the transition, resulting in a virtuous, feedback loop. New training and educational institutions have rushed in to plug the gaps and thus satisfying this new demand for certification, benchmarking and skill upgrades. MCAST's 'Gateway to Industry' offers bespoke courses to employers in the applied sciences, agriculture, aquatics and marine animals, business management and commerce, creative arts, engineering and transport, community Services and information and communication technology (MG21, 2022). The European Commission has been encouraging micro-credentials, such that workers and other adults can opt to follow one or more specific

study units of their choice, and at their own pace, and without necessarily being registered to follow and complete a full diploma or degree programme of studies (Hunt et al., 2020). At UM, such study units have been pioneered mainly within the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy as well as within the Centre for Liberal Arts and Sciences.

NEW LEVEL REFREEZING

The third and final stage of change, according to Levin (1947) is ‘refreezing’; or the process of reinforcing and solidifying the change, such that it is more likely to stay put and develop resilience. Managers and policy makers are expected to develop reward systems and sanctions that effectively work to support and promote the change. Backsliding in worker education is not likely: employers have recognized the importance of trained personnel as part of their competitive edge, and particularly in the sprawling services sector which dominates the Maltese economy. Workers are increasingly looking at customised professional and skill development as part of their ambitions and obligations, in order to maintain their employability and market edge. Even the registered unemployed and others looking for work are internalising the need to take ‘refresher courses’ to enhance job prospects and to remain eligible for certain benefits: worker education and training now constitute a key and essential plank of ‘active labour market policies’ (Vella, 2021).

CONCLUSION: RESTRUCTURING FOR RESILIENCE

It is sobering to note the advice of a senior and seasoned Maltese HR professional who refers to “regular reskilling and upskilling” as a requirement for the future of work (Caruana, 2021, p. 308).

As usual, the devil lies in the details. Malta has a sprawling private sector, with most business units being small or micro-enterprises by any definition. These are the workers, including the self-employed, who will hardly have time for anything remotely resembling ‘worker education’; while thousands of foreign migrants continue to perform relatively menial and precarious jobs

where the opportunities for regular reskilling and upskilling are, realistically, non-existent. All these categories of workers tend not to be represented by trade unions; which means that their conditions of employment are not subject to any collective bargaining and are therefore totally dependent on the minima prescribed by labour law and legislation, plus their own ability to leverage resources when negotiating with management. Taken together, these constitute between a third and a half of all working men and women in Malta today.

And it is here that the proof of the pudding ultimately lies: there are no provisions as yet for worker education and training as a basic right at law in Malta. There is no legal expectation that every employee is entitled to at least a few hours of training annually. And there is not even a European Directive to this effect, reflecting the policy climate in Europe. The only legal obligation in Malta so far is for employers to provide information and training to employees about health and safety issues at the place of work (Servizz.Gov, 2022). The closest instrument to such a provision would be the Convention on Paid Educational Leave, adopted by the International Labour Organisation in 1974, and which came into force in 1976: a time when the power of organised labour was considerably stronger than today (ILO, 1974). In this case, the term ‘paid educational leave’ refers to leave granted to a worker for educational purposes for a specified period during working hours. So far, 35 countries have ratified this convention; Malta is not amongst them (ILO, 2022).

In Lewin’s terms, worker education in Malta has become ‘frozen’ and locked as a principled expectation – by workers and managers – but only in a number of specific economic sectors (such as the warranted professions) and specific enterprises (the 100-or-so private sector enterprises that each employ over 300 employees, and most of which are unionised). Peter and Michael, introduced at the start of this article, would fall broadly within this grouping.

But Fiona and Joseph do not. What are *their* prospects for professional

development, whether supported, condoned or discouraged by their employers?

Worker education has come a long way in forty years; but it still has a long way to go.

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Political Education for Adults as a Means of Resocialisation

ABSTRACT

An evaluation of the theories about political education raises a number of questions. Could the movements engaged in this type of education mount a challenge to the prevailing system in the socio-political scenario or simply seek spaces of peaceful co-existence with the mainstream culture? This essay attempts to address this question by subjecting the theories of political socialization to a critical analysis of the social movements that are engaged in the practice of this type of education. The argument being presented is that the resocialisation of adults is possible through a movement that tries to re-orient adult political beliefs and attitudes. Within such a perspective adult political education is viewed in terms of deliberate and planned attempts to provide regular and sequenced programmes explicitly aimed at orienting or re-orienting the political beliefs and images which are held by individuals.

Keywords: adult education; resocialisation; plasticity; industrial democracy; counter culture; credentialism.

Political education may be likened to a programme designed to teach and refine the knowledge of the grammar of the language which has been learned in a formal or non-formal way and to whose nuances the learners may be well attuned. This knowledge related to the grammar of politics may be tempered by experiences of political activity at a formal or informal level.

In other words, political education can serve to complement or modify a type of knowledge which can be acquired through direct or indirect forms of learning. It can also incorporate attempts to provide regular and sequenced programmes aimed at orienting or reorienting the values and beliefs which deeply influence the psyche of individuals. In line with this mode of thinking Freire believes that adult political education ought to lead adults to comprehend the reified nature of knowledge and negate the objectivity which is widely believed to be its distinguishing feature. The ideology of Freire is based on an attitude that may modify or alter the dominant values and in the process create awareness among adults that can lead to new perceptions and approaches to social and political issues (Freire & Shor, 1987). This transformative element of education with its capacity to challenge and change the existing order has formed the rationale of the activities of the Centre of Labour Studies (CLS) in the field of adult political education.

This objective is spelt out in its mission statement which delineates a commitment “to organise educational courses aimed at sensitizing people actively involved or interested in labour issues to current trends, relevant concepts and analytical tools pertinent in this area” (Education Act Chapter 327, LN 414 of 2011). This approach to learning aims at a reorientation of the learning process, related to adult learning. It is based on the premise that resocialization can take place through a reorientation of the learning process. This form of resocialization is possible because many individuals, through their plasticity, retain the capacity to change and embrace new beliefs.

This means that the norms and values internalized through a sequence of events in childhood and adolescence can be transformed by late experiences and consequently make the course of human development more open and susceptible to change than we might be led to believe (Evans, 1987, pp 6–11).

This plasticity of human nature can serve as a means to devise programmes of learning that can channel the learners to a different set of values that may help them interpret life differently (Youngman, 1986). There may of course be a number of individuals among the group of learners who may nurture a strong sense of commitment to the established norms and values that prevail in the socio-political scenario. This resistant attitude may stem from the hegemonic moulding force of the disciplined cultural style embedded in the educational system.

This resistance may also be instigated by a sense of uneasiness to the complexities of the modern state and the imperatives of the globalized nature of society. The intensification of the globalized economic competition, economic recession and the prevalence of the dominant market forces have served to intensify a general sense of economic insecurity. To deal with these new dynamics the government tried to overhaul the structure of the interrelationship prevalent at the place of work by effecting changes in the industrial relations system. During this transformative process, changes were being made to make the Maltese industrial relation scenario fit with the exigencies of the decolonization process which in the post-independence period, especially during the seventies, was gathering momentum. To solidify this decolonization process, changes were being made to detach the industrial relation regime from the practices characterised by the adverse inter-relationships inherent in the Anglo-Saxon model. Towards this end, an attempt was made to put into practice the principles pertaining to industrial democracy which tend to feature prominently in the European system of industrial relations. Naturally, this shift entailed a new and maybe transformative set of values, beliefs and practices.

In response to the dynamics of this transformative scenario, the Centre entered into the field of adult education in order to put into practice the ideals spelt out in its mission statement. In 1981, the year of its inception, the Centre started organising short, intensive three months, certificate courses aimed at introducing workers to the fundamental concepts in economy, law, sociology, psychology and political science. It is worth noting that half of the participants were manual workers, while 29% did not have any 'O' level certificates.

These short intensive educational courses for workers were designated with the aim of equipping the participants with the ideal tools to sharpen their critical analysis of the subtleties and complexities of the socio-political scenario. They were not designed to serve as mere extensions of the second type of learning for the older age group. By seeking to distance itself from education as schooling, the Centre in line with its stated aims, implicitly or explicitly, was promoting a counterculture of education for adults. These courses introduced the workers to the fundamental concepts in economics, law, sociology, psychology and political science in order to increase their understanding and awareness of the world around them and of their own experience (WPDC, 1981).

This first venture in workers' education must have acted as a good appetiser to higher forms of learning, as the participants in these short courses made consistent demands to the Centre to provide them with the opportunity to follow a formal evening academic course. In response to these demands, the Centre designated a three-year diploma part-time evening course in Labour Studies modelled on the adult educational programmes organized by the two English colleges of Ruskin and Plater. This diploma course was mainly targeted at trade unionists and personnel who in one way or another tend to be active in the labour market.

As a coordinator of this course, I can vouch for the high motivation and heightened sensitivity to learning shown by these workers. This diploma became the flagship of the Centre in the realm of political education. Eventually,

it had to succumb to the forces of credentialism and was subsequently replaced by a degree course in work and human resources. However, in the structural adjustments which had to be made to satisfy the academic requisites of a degree course, the contents of the diploma course have been retained and incorporated into the first year of the course. A student can opt to finish the course at the end of the second year of the course and qualify for the conferment of the diploma provided he/she has successfully completed the programme of studies as outlined in the first four semesters.

Through these initiatives, the Centre managed to provide regular and sequenced programmes aimed at orienting or rather reorienting the visions and images held by individuals. In its recruitment policies related to these educational activities, the Centre sought to attract the widest possible categories of workers or their representatives. Indeed among the participants of the first diploma course in Labour Studies, 50% were from the shop floor level.

Of course, the Centre has not been the only player in the field of political education for adults. The Maltese Catholic Church and the two mainstream Maltese political parties, namely the Partit Nazzjonalista (Nationalist Party) and the Partit Laburista (Labour Party) established their own institution for workers and adult education.

The Church was the first to set foot in the field of adult political education in order to counteract the impending wave of secularization which was slowly but surely supplanting its traditional power structure. Seen within this perspective, the setting up of the Social Action Movement in 1955 represents a move by the church to brave this eventuality which was likely to challenge its influence. It also embraced a branch, the Centre for Social Leadership, which was founded in 1956. This centre was entrusted with the task of organising seminars, symposia and other educational activities.

The Nationalist Party (Partit Nazzjonalista – PN) entered into the field of formal adult political education in 1976 by establishing the Academy for the Development of a Democratic Environment (AZAD). What makes the year

1976 significant for the PN was the second successive defeat it suffered at the polls in the general election held that year. The morale of the party was rather low as the second defeat diffused a fear that the Malta Labour Party had solidly entrenched itself in power. As part of the strategy to regain power, the PN adopted a more dynamic approach. The setting up of AZAD fell within this scope by aiming to disseminate the party's message in a more effective way. In 1977 it started publishing a quarterly bi-lingual review 'Perspektiv' which consisted of articles of socio-political content.

This foundation is still active. In September 2022 it launched a political training programme designed to provide Systematic Training for Effective Politics (STEP). This programme, geared towards political activism, aims to attract the widest possible range of people who are either politically active or involved in the political scenario (The Malta Independent, 2022)

The Partit Laburista acted in conjunction with the General Workers Union in setting up The Guze Ellul Mercer (GEM) foundation in 1984. The *raison d'être* of this foundation was 'to organize adult education courses for personal fulfilment, vocational progress, cultural emancipation and social integration towards a wider participative structure (Mayo, 1990, p.24). In the eighties, the morale of the PL was rather downbeat. It had managed to win another five-year mandate in the general election held in 1981. However, the PN, the party in opposition, managed to get more than 50% of the votes cast but failed to obtain the majority of seats in parliament. The PN claimed that this unfair distribution of seats in parliament was due to a gerrymandering exercise by the party in office. The events, that unfolded following this electoral result, defined by the party in opposition as being pervert, in one way or another had a destabilisation effect on the mechanism of governance. A campaign of civil disobedience conducted by the PN to assert its right to govern compounded the complexities of this mechanism. The setting of GEM by the PL/GWU tandem, founded amid this political turmoil, was primarily aimed at conveying the message of the PL in a more convincing way. Something more rational rather than mere propaganda was needed to regain the ground lost during its years in office following its victory at the polls in 1971. The founding of GEM

was set within the polemics prevailing during the eighties.

CONCLUSION

The brief profiles of these three agencies of adult political education suggest that they sprang out of a deep sense of the need to promote the values and beliefs of the respective organisations to which they support or to which they belong. They may therefore be perceived to be an extension or a branch of a deeply rooted institution which is continuously concerned with renewing itself in order to survive and sustain itself in an ever-changing world. In contrast, the Centre for Labour Studies was much less fettered by shackles which might be imposed by the institution within which it was founded and through which it was operating. By virtue of its location at the University, the Centre enjoys a high degree of autonomy in the designation and the running of adult educational programmes. Indeed, this academic orientation and concomitant autonomy prompted the Centre to veer towards a more action-oriented approach in pursuance of its commitment to promote the principles of participation at the place of work and society at large.

Given the dynamics of the evolving changing scenario amid the political turmoil that prevailed in the 1980's the Centre tried to put into practice the ideals of education for liberation as espoused by Freire. By adopting such a stance it proved to be a potent tool for the dissemination and practices of the ideals pertaining to workers' participation and industrial democracy. In pursuing these aims it sought to move away from the stereotypical conceptions of adult education by attempting to find and adopt the ideal mix of training and education.

By and large the guidelines of the educational programmes organised by the Centre which in one way or another underlies its principles were the following:

- i Adults have the capacity to educate themselves. The adult educator rather than being a mere teacher should assume the roles of facilitator, adviser and helper.

- ii The adult political educator should be open and flexible while applying participatory methods and approaches.
- iii The learner should be provided with moments of critical self-reflection and be engaged as an active participant during the learning sessions
- iv The object of adult political education is to empower the adult to face the real conditions of working life and be able to solve practical day-to-day problems.

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Enhancing Professional Standards in Career Guidance:

The Postgraduate Programme in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development and its Impact on Graduates

ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of the Postgraduate Diploma and Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development programme offered by the University of Malta. It delves into the rationale for the programme's development and examines its impact on the graduates' professionalism and career outcomes. By tracing the programme's evolution, including its transition to a master's degree and the integration of research and practical components, the paper highlights its continued relevance and effectiveness. The paper draws on data from a survey conducted among programme graduates to evaluate their employment and educational outcomes, revealing high employment rates, diverse job opportunities, and positive career trajectories. Furthermore, the paper explores the programme's influence on

graduates' personal and professional growth, highlighting improvements in the quality of their work. Concluding reflections emphasise the pressing need for further professionalisation in the career guidance field, urging active government involvement to establish recognized standards and credentials for career practitioners.

Keywords: career guidance; career outcomes; postgraduate diploma; master; professionalism.

INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to analyse the Postgraduate Diploma and Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development (PGD&M.LCGD) offered by the University of Malta (UM). It delves into the rationale, development, and impact of the programme on graduates' professionalism and career outcomes. The paper concludes with reflections on the programme and a call for increased government involvement in the field.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAMME OF STUDIES

The channelling of individuals into suitable occupations based on abilities and societal needs has been practised since ancient times. However, the contemporary career guidance movement is much more recent and is attributed to Frank Parsons, an American intellectual who lived at the end of the 19th century. The formalisation of career guidance as a distinct occupation is a relatively new phenomenon. In several countries, the occupation is still in the process of establishing itself among other helping professions. In Malta, career guidance is not warranted and does not yet benefit from legal professional status. In practice, this means that work opportunities in the field have to date attracted persons with varying qualifications, knowledge and skills, and the quality of services offered has not always been acceptable.

The PGD&M.LCGD programme at the UM, the only one of its kind in the country, was thus developed “to promote and develop the services of career guidance in Malta by raising its professional standards” (UM, 2021). This was not the first UM programme about career guidance. For example, a Diploma

programme in Educational Guidance and Counselling started to be offered by the Faculty of Education back in 1985 (Degiovanni, 1997). However, the aspect of career guidance in such a programme was gradually sidelined, making space for personal counselling. In 2003, the Centre for Labour Studies offered a Diploma in Social Studies in Occupational Guidance and Career Counselling to cater for the arising needs of Malta's public employment services (then called the Employment and Training Corporation). But the LCGD programme, offered for the first time in 2006 as a postgraduate diploma programme was unique for a number of reasons. Unlike previous programmes of studies, it was developed as a collaboration between the Centre for Labour Studies and the Faculty of Education, emphasising its multidisciplinary nature. As implied in its name, the programme did not just focus on young students or initial career choices; it comprised a more holistic lifelong career development perspective. It was also UM's first programme at postgraduate level solely dedicated to career guidance. The decision to offer the programme at a postgraduate level was made to upgrade the skills and qualifications of students and place them on par with graduates of interconnected occupations such as counselling and teaching. The two-year programme was developed on the basis of a review of some of the best-known courses across Europe, taking into consideration the realities of Malta and the needs of potential applicants. It was offered on a part-time evening basis to cater for the needs of workers, many of whom were already working in the field.

The programme of studies, which has been offered five times to date, has evolved considerably over the years, adapting to the changing needs of the field and the participants. The most significant change took place in 2014 when the programme was upgraded to a master's degree, increasing its length to three years, with the last year dedicated to the writing of a dissertation. The transformation of the programme of studies strengthened its research and practical components. Both changes had often been recommended by students and alumni. Dissertations generate useful empirical data about career guidance in Malta. The programme now also contains two study units entirely dedicated to practice, including the recent "Career Guidance Practice" unit,

where students have the opportunity to develop and carry out a career guidance intervention of their choice. The programme's mode of delivery has recently transitioned from being totally on campus to mostly online. This change was driven by student requests and was greatly facilitated and accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Through its connections with industry, education and public employment services, the programme has attracted contributions from many stakeholders and career guidance practitioners over the years, providing hands-on knowledge and skills to students. Additionally, it is enriched by the services of numerous visiting lecturers from around the world. These lecturers, through the UM's collaboration with the Malta Career Guidance Association (MCGA), also make valuable contributions to the continuous professional development of career practitioners.

CAREER OUTCOMES OF GRADUATES

After discussing the programme of studies, this paper will now delve into the career outcomes of the programme's graduates. The data for this analysis derives from an online survey conducted in 2023 among PGD&M.LCGD graduates. Participants were first sent an email from the Centre for Labour Studies, informing them about the survey. Subsequently, they were contacted by phone and invited to take part in a telephone interview or fill out the survey online. Out of 41 graduates from four different cohorts (three that obtained the postgraduate diploma and one that obtained the master's), 32 individuals replied, representing 78% of the population. Among the participants, 81% were female, 16% were male and 3% identified as other. The largest group of participants (47%) was aged between 40 and 55 years, while the second-largest group (44%) was between 25 and 39 years old.

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Almost all graduates currently work (97%). They have typical employment arrangements, working as full-time employees on indefinite contracts (97%). Over two-thirds of the employed graduates (71%) have professional

occupations, mostly working as teachers (including guidance teachers and PSCD teachers), followed by career advisors. The rest of the professionals work in a variety of other mainly people-oriented occupations, including social work and youth work. The remaining 29% of participants occupy senior or managerial roles, often in the field of education. Over three-fourths of the graduates (77%) are employed in the public sector, mostly in education, with a few working in the social or health sectors. A few graduates work in the private sector, in iGaming, education, or consultancy. Graduates appear to be generally satisfied with their jobs. Indeed, their present job matches the expectations of nearly three-quarters (71%) of the graduates, while it moderately matches the expectations of the remaining graduates (29%). Only a small minority (10%) are actively seeking employment. Since obtaining their LCGD qualification, virtually no graduate has been unemployed and seeking employment. However, their career trajectories have varied. 41% have always kept the same job, 28% have held two jobs, while, 31% have held three or more different jobs.

Nearly half (44%) of the PGD&M.LCGD graduates obtained other subsequent qualifications. A third (31.3%) obtained a master's degree, most often in career guidance. Other graduates specialised in a variety of related areas such as occupational psychology, research in education, youth and community studies, educational leadership and management, counselling, and disability studies. 12.5% of the graduates are currently pursuing a tertiary educational programme, two of whom are pursuing a doctorate. Nearly half of the respondents (44%) would be interested in furthering their studies in a topic related to Lifelong Career Guidance and Development. Presumably, many of these would like to upgrade their postgraduate diploma into a master's degree.

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF THE PROGRAMME ON GRADUATES AND THEIR CAREERS

Qualitative feedback indicated that graduates appreciated the contribution

that the course made to their personal and professional development. They mentioned how the course helped them grow both personally and professionally by enabling them to reflect on themselves and their work practices. Graduates increased their confidence in their work by gaining a deeper understanding of their role in career guidance. They also mentioned the networking opportunities they had throughout the course.

Graduates working in the field of career guidance stated that the course provided them with technical knowledge, skills, experience and insights through which they could provide a better service to clients. They acquired a more holistic perspective on the field of career guidance, which facilitated their work. Some graduates specifically mentioned the improved quality of their work when they started basing their interventions on sound theory, and the fulfilment they experienced when they were able to put their learning into practice. Graduates working in fields peripheral to career guidance, such as human resource management, also mentioned the utility of such technical knowledge and skills. Many graduates, including those who do not work in career guidance, mentioned the utility of generic skills they learned in the course, such as academic writing, analytical skills, work management, interpersonal skills, and decision-making skills. Through their studies, graduates were sensitised to appreciate the need for continuous professional development to remain in touch with the continuously evolving world of work.

The programme of studies also improved the career prospects of graduates in other ways. A quarter (26%) specifically required the course to apply for their current job. Several respondents expressed their appreciation of the new career opportunities, both in full-time and part-time employment, that they obtained through the programme. The personal and professional development acquired through the programme of studies motivated some graduates to venture into more challenging work opportunities. For example, after obtaining the PGD&M.LCGD, some graduates decided to direct their careers towards leadership roles, not necessarily directly related to their studies.

Even when the career guidance qualification was not explicitly required for the new job, some participants stated that it helped their CV as an additional qualification.

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The development of the PGD&M.LCGD programme at the UM has played a significant role in enhancing the professionalism of career practitioners and addressing the need for higher standards in the field of career guidance. The programme's evolution over the years, including its upgrade to a master's degree and the strengthening of its research and practical components, has ensured the programme's continued relevance and impact. The programme's graduates have experienced positive career outcomes, with high employment rates and diverse job opportunities in professional and managerial occupations. The influence of the programme on graduates and their careers is also evident through their increased confidence, deeper understanding of their role in career guidance, and the improved quality of their work. Graduates have not only benefited from the programme's emphasis on technical knowledge and skills, but have also been equipped with transferable skills that may be applicable beyond career guidance.

Looking towards the future, the emerging challenges and opportunities in the face of rapid changes in education and employment necessitate further professionalisation of the field and the establishment of recognized standards and credentials for career practitioners to ensure the continued quality and effectiveness of career guidance. The MCGA is a crucial player in the promotion of high quality career guidance services. But stakeholders such as the UM and the MCGA require active government support to improve their impact. Indeed, the government, in its dual role as regulator and major provider of career services, has a vital role to play in establishing a comprehensive and holistic approach to career guidance. Government initiatives such as facilitating the recognition of the profession, enhancing entry and career progression requirements for career practitioners, redirecting Jobsplus to focus on lifelong

career guidance services, and establishing a National Career Guidance Centre are particularly important for the further development of career guidance in Malta. By actively sustaining and facilitating the professionalisation of the field, the government can create an enabling environment that maximizes the impact of career guidance services, resulting in better-informed career choices, reduced skills mismatches, increased productivity, and enhanced social and economic mobility for individuals in Malta.

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Strengthening HR and Labour Market Expertise:

The Development and Impact of The Bachelor in Work and Human Resources Honours Programme

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the rationale and development of the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources Honours programme at the University of Malta. It discusses the programme's evolving curriculum and its alignment with industry needs. Additionally, the paper investigates the career outcomes of programme graduates, their attitudes towards the programme, and the positive impact it had on their professional growth. The findings underscore the effectiveness of the programme in equipping graduates with the necessary knowledge, skills, and confidence to excel in HR and related fields. The paper concludes by emphasising the continued need for the programme to adapt to emerging trends and challenges in the dynamic world of work, while also

advocating for further initiatives to strengthen the HR profession in Malta.

Keywords: bachelor degree; work and human resources; professionalism; career outcomes; graduates' attitudes; curriculum development; labour market; programme effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

This brief paper delves into various aspects of the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources Honours (B.WHR) programme, shedding light on its evolution and outcomes. The findings from a tracer study conducted among WHR graduates provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and relevance of the programme, as well as the career paths pursued by the graduates. Additionally, the paper discusses the attitudes of graduates towards the programme and highlights the positive transformations they experienced. Ultimately, this paper aims to showcase the achievements of the B.WHR programme in strengthening the HR and related fields in Malta, and underscores the importance of continuous improvement and ongoing professional development within the HR profession.

THE CONTEXT AND RATIONALE BEHIND THE PROGRAMME

The development of the B.WHR programme was mainly driven by the aim of strengthening the field of human resources (HR) by enhancing the professionalism of its workforce. The HR field is not well developed in Malta. HR jobs are not legally regulated, and the interests of practitioners are not promoted by an independent professional association. Until a few years ago, organisations tended to have a limited appreciation for the optimisation of workers' performance and the role of HR practitioners in Malta. Dealing with people has often been perceived as obvious, assuming that understanding human behaviour comes naturally because we are all human.

Indeed, many organisations in Malta, especially family-owned businesses, still adopt traditional personnel management practices, focusing on administrative and transactional practices rather than the broader,

strategic approach of HR management. However, employers and leaders are increasingly recognising the benefits of having a dedicated HR function in their organisations, as seen from the vacancies being advertised. They acknowledge the importance of effective employees in a changing labour market characterised by shifting demographics, evolving skill requirements, and diverse career aspirations. There appears to be a growing recognition of the need of employee engagement, motivation, and the fostering of a positive work culture to drive higher performance and organisational success.

The myth that experience alone is sufficient to become an effective HR manager is gradually dissipating. Traditionally, individuals were often recruited for personnel management or HR positions without specific qualifications. However, this trend is changing as more organisations now require candidates to possess relevant qualifications. As a result, over the past two decades, a growing number of individuals interested in the field have started seeking qualifications in HR, often embarking on correspondence courses. Until the B.WHR programme was established, the University of Malta (UM) did not have specialised undergraduate degree programmes focused on HR or the labour market. Instead, aspects of such topics were often covered in more general programmes.

Recognising the need to fill this gap, the Centre for Labour Studies (CLS) in collaboration with the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy (FEMA) developed the B.WHR programme to provide a dedicated and comprehensive education in HR and the labour market. By offering theoretical knowledge and practical skills, this programme aims to meet the increasing demand for qualified HR professionals in Malta. Through its 'work' component, the programme also provides a macro view of the labour market that benefits not only HR practitioners but also trade union officials, other stakeholders in industrial relations, and policy makers, among others.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

The B.WHR is a five-year part-time evening programme of studies. Students who discontinue the programme after successfully completing their second year are entitled to a diploma. The programme has been offered seven times (biennially) since 2010, and over 140 students have graduated to date with a diploma or a bachelor's degree.

The programme of studies targets workers who already work or wish to work in HR management, industrial relations, employment policy, or related fields. Similar courses offered in other European universities and the changing needs of the Maltese labour market were considered during the development of the programme.

The programme bridges the gap between traditional personnel management approaches and the broader, strategic perspectives of HR management, delving into a wide range of HR and labour market topics. It has an interdisciplinary approach, “including perspectives from management, sociology, organisational psychology, education, economics, statistics, public policy, law, accountancy, and health and safety among others” (University of Malta, 2022). The programme aims to balance teaching from UM academics with that of practitioners in the field.

The programme was structured in such a way as to give a general theoretical understanding in its first two years and then gradually focus on more applied elements. The programme has evolved over the years, reflecting the changing realities of the labour market and students' feedback. The CLS Board, which includes representatives from the government, trade unions and employers, is an important contributor to the programme's evolution. Several study units were amended or discontinued, and others were introduced. In particular, more applied elements were added to the programme, focusing on issues such as employment law, payroll, employee relations, disciplinary processes, dismissal, and more. The research component of the programme was also strengthened to meet the increasing professional need for conducting research, writing reports, and analysing data. Significant revisions to its

assessment methods were carried out, streamlining them and ensuring they are varied and reflective of the established learning outcomes.

In recent years, following students' requests, the course started to be offered in a hybrid mode, with some of the lectures conducted online in real time. This change was facilitated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in the strengthening of the technical facilities for online teaching and reducing institutional and lecturers' resistance to such developments. This change was greatly appreciated by students who consistently request more flexibility.

GRADUATES' CAREER OUTCOMES

Investigating the career outcomes of graduates enables the assessment of the effectiveness of a programme of studies that focuses on the professionalisation of workers in HR and labour market fields of work. Tracer studies can reveal whether a programme adequately prepares students for relevant employment opportunities. They can shed light on the relevance and alignment of the programme with industry needs and demands, identifying strengths and weaknesses in the programme's curriculum, teaching methods, and support services.

A tracer study was conducted among WHR graduates in April 2023. 106 graduates replied, resulting in a response rate of 76% (out of a population of about 140 graduates). 28% of the respondents graduated with a diploma, while 72% graduated with a bachelor's degree. 68% of the respondents were women, and 32% were men. Most respondents (55%) were between 25 and 39 years old, 35% were in the 40 to 55 age bracket, while 10% were older than 55 years.

Virtually all respondents were employed on a full-time basis (97%). Out of those employed, nearly all were employees (98%) and had indefinite employment contracts (96%). Most graduates (52%) worked in the private sector. Graduates worked across a spectrum of economic sectors, with the largest groups employed in public administration and defence (16%), education (14%), manufacturing and energy (11%), gaming (10%), and audit,

banking and finance (10%). Half of the graduates (50%) earned a net income of EUR 1,501–2,500 in the month preceding the survey, while about a fifth (19%) earned EUR 2,501–2,500, another fifth (20%) earned more than EUR 3,000, and only 11% earned less than EUR1,501.

The career paths of graduates varied. 38% held two different jobs since they graduated with a diploma or bachelor's degree in WHR, about a third (32%) held only one job, while the remaining graduates (31%) held three or more jobs. The large majority (95%) of graduates were never unemployed and seeking employment since graduating, with only 4% being unemployed for less than 6 months.

65% of graduates worked as senior officials or managers, 17% as professionals, 6% in technical occupations, and 10% in clerical jobs. Most of the graduates' occupations were directly related to HR. Indeed, the job titles of more than half (53%) of the respondents included the terms HR, people management, or more specific aspects of HR such as recruitment, training or compensation. Many other jobs such as those in administration, management, and industrial relations benefit from a good grasp of HR or/and the labour market. Half of the graduates (50%) stated that the WHR qualification was a requirement to apply for their current job. Graduates with a B.WHR were significantly more likely to have required their qualification to apply for their current job when compared to those with the diploma. The majority of graduates (60%) stated that their current job matched their expectations, 33% stated that it moderately did so, while only 8% stated that their current job did not match their expectations. The latter graduates were significantly more likely to be among the 11% of the respondents who were seeking employment or alternative employment.

After concluding their WHR programme, 44% of the respondents pursued additional qualifications.¹ The majority of these (68%) successfully completed or were in the process of completing a Master's degree. The Master of Business

1 One should note that some graduates obtained tertiary qualifications (including at master's level) before joining the WHR programme.

Administration (MBA) was the preferred area of specialisation, chosen by 47% of those who pursued a Master's degree. Another 17% specialised in work psychology or organisational behaviour, while only 10% opted for HR. The low latter figure appears to be due to reasons unrelated to graduates' interest in the field. Indeed, two-thirds (75%) of the respondents stated that they would be interested in furthering their studies in a topic related to work and HR.

GRADUATES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PROGRAMME

The WHR programme left a significant impact on the lives of its graduates. The survey revealed that numerous graduates credited the programme with propelling their careers forward. Many acknowledged that their WHR qualification acted as a crucial entry requirement for their current jobs. It expanded work opportunities, opened doors to advancement and attracted better salaries. Notably, the WHR programme even facilitated graduates' further educational development, not only by providing them with the necessary background and skills needed to pursue further education, but also by inspiring and motivating them. Graduates mentioned that the programme's recognition provided tangible evidence of their professional competence, and in some cases played a crucial role to be awarded scholarships to pursue master's degrees.

The WHR programme was credited by the graduates for their heightened professionalism and enhanced service delivery. Many highlighted their ability to apply the skills they had learned, enabling them to implement changes and handle difficult workplace situations constructively. However, some graduates confessed the challenges faced when their new ideas were met with resistance. The WHR programme instilled graduates with confidence in interacting with management. They reported better understanding and support for colleagues. The programme also provided networking opportunities, enhancing graduates' connections within the field.

The WHR programme broadened graduates' technical knowledge and skills. They specifically mentioned that they became aware of the strategic

aspects of HR, gained knowledge of employment laws, recruitment strategies, training and performance appraisal methodologies, and strengthened their understanding of workplace inclusivity and workers' needs and expectations. Additionally, graduates said that the programme gave them insights into the labour market and economic development and helped them acquire a holistic view of businesses beyond HR. The WHR programme also enhanced graduates' transferable skills. It instilled in them an appreciation for continuous learning, emphasising the importance of understanding the complexities of work situations and making informed decisions. Many graduates wrote about the utility of the analytical thinking abilities they developed during the programme. Graduates also developed organisational and leadership skills. They mentioned that they gained proficiency in managing teams, communicating effectively and providing critical feedback. They became adept at carrying out research, writing reports and delivering presentations. Many graduates stated that the WHR programme played a pivotal role in their self-understanding and personal growth. The programme fostered graduates' self-confidence, resilience, perseverance and self-discipline, enabling them to overcome challenges and excel in their professional endeavours. It stimulated their critical thinking and gave them a fresh perspective on tackling issues. For many graduates, completing the programme marked their first university-level achievement, giving them a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The B.WHR programme was developed to enhance the professionalism of HR and labour market practitioners and improve the services they offer. Findings from the tracer study highlighted the transformative impact of the programme on graduates' careers and personal growth. Meanwhile, the programme is successfully filling an increasing number and variety of HR positions with qualified practitioners. Graduates' feedback led to considerable improvements in the programme since its inception in 2010. To maintain

effectiveness, the programme should continue striking the right balance between theoretical and practical knowledge.

Moving forward, the programme must continue evolving to address emerging needs in the changing world of work. This includes aspects such as the growing recruitment of foreign workers, the disruptive impact of artificial intelligence, and the importance of HR metrics in analysing HR management. Consideration should be given to organising work placements or internships for students without prior HR experience. Currently, the CLS is developing a related Master's degree in response to the high demand and need for further specialisation in HR and organisational behaviour.

While educational programmes like the B.WHR are making significant progress in capacity building, additional initiatives are needed to further strengthen the field. Establishing an association of HR practitioners could play a vital role in further elevating standards, fostering ongoing development, and promoting professionalism within the field.

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The Gender, Work and Society Diploma Course: Its Impact and Way Forward

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the Diploma in Gender, Work and Society. Using data from a tracer study conducted in early 2023, with the last four cohorts of graduates, it was revealed that the course largely attracted mature women who are in paid employment. When assessing the impact of the course on past students, the study revealed that it had a positive impact on their personal and professional development, with many citing benefits in both areas. Their increased awareness of gender issues also helped them in their parental roles and in their relationships with others. The course clearly served as a springboard and motivated many of the course graduates to continue studying. The past students made several suggestions on how to improve the course. On reflection, the course clearly needs to attract more men and

younger women and needs to be restructured to reflect the push for online learning in a post Covid environment.

Keywords: tracer study; gender course; mature students; impact; suggestions.

INTRODUCTION

In 1994, the Workers' Participation Development Centre (WPDC), as the Centre for Labour Studies (CLS) was formerly known, launched its first certificate course in Women's Studies. This course was ground breaking for its time and garnered a strong interest. In the following year, it was turned into a two-year part-time Diploma. Nearly 3 decades later, the revised course, is still running as a Diploma in Gender, Work and Society and is offered in collaboration with the Faculty for Social Wellbeing.

The multidisciplinary content of the Diploma Course seeks to sensitise participants about the importance of gender as a transversal theme. It enables students to analyse various subjects through the gender lens including issues related to work, sociology, psychology, social policy, politics, law, economics, health, culture, and poverty among others. After completing the course successfully, students are able to join the third year of the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Honours) course, which is also offered by the Centre for Labour Studies.

Since its inception, the course has attracted about 200 students. A tracer study with seven different cohorts of graduates (1997, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2011, and 2013) was conducted in 2013. The results of this study showed that the vast majority of our graduates had extremely positive remarks about the course, and many claimed that it had helped them in multiple ways. In 2023, a new tracer study was conducted with the last four cohorts of students who graduated from this course between 2011 and 2021. In total, these amounted to 65 students. These were contacted by email and telephone between March and April 2023 in order to assess the impact that the course had on their

professional and personal life. 68% of those contacted, participated in this study which included both quantitative and qualitative questions.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Being one of the few part-time morning Diplomas offered at the University of Malta, the course has largely attracted mature female students who generally enter through the Adult Learner clause. Men made up less than 5% of the student population in the last four cohorts. This is not an exception, but the general rule. Currently, the majority of graduates fall in the 40-55 age bracket and only 7% are under 40 or younger.

Just over 70% of the graduates are in employment, with the majority being in full-time work (57%) which fully matches their expectations (52%). However, 10% of the respondents are not happy with their current job. Of those employed, 54% work in the Public Sector with the three biggest cohorts working in the Educational, Social, and Public administration fields. For nearly a third of the graduates the Diploma was a requirement for their job.

THE IMPACT OF THE COURSE ON THE GRADUATES

Apart from the closed-ended questions in the study, the graduates were asked two open-ended questions. The first was to assess how the Diploma in Gender, Work and Society had impacted them at the personal and professional level, whilst the second question was in relation to suggestions on how the course could be improved. I shall discuss the impact that the course had on our graduates first.

THE IMPACT AT THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LEVEL

When asked about the impact of the course, it immediately becomes clear that first and foremost the course had a significant impact on the graduates at the personal level. Many commented that the course broadened their perspectives and opened their minds. One of the female graduates remarked:

Your mind opens up and you start realising certain things. So personally it was really helpful. I felt like I grew up.

Likewise, another student commented:

It has improved my judgement both professionally and personally - e.g. when watching the news, and so on.

Some of the graduates noted that the course increased their awareness about gender stereotypes and existing inequalities between women and men that previously may have gone by undetected. A male respondent remarked:

Personally, as a man with certain privileges, I wouldn't have experienced certain things directly, so I realised what women go through in their everyday lives, and how it also indirectly affects men; it also influenced me in my personal life, because it made me a lot more aware and conscious of the world around me.

Many of the respondents noted that the course enabled them to gain new skills and increased their self-confidence. They mentioned that thanks to the course they became more critical and analytical in their observations of the world around them. One of the graduates reiterated that now:

On a personal level, I am able to perceive and understand better people's perceptions of common matters. I distinguish certain weaknesses among my friends vis a vis understanding of news, and fake news, without [them] doing the proper research.

The skills mentioned by the graduates include time management, public speaking and how to research specific topics. Many noted that the course brought them multiple benefits at the personal level. Some of the students noted that they were able to use the skills gained in their professional roles at work too. For example, they did so when writing up policies for their place of work or drafting a Gender Equality Policy. A graduate who works in the health sector summed up the impact of the course by saying:

...it helped my professional life as I carry out training and lecture on gender and health and in my personal life as I developed critical thinking. It helped a lot to make 'gender' issues more prominent within the health system.

Similarly, a graduate who now works in the HR field remarked that the course:

Professionally, it helped me to understand and listen to employees as individuals - their backgrounds, the way they act, etc. I was always that person who tried to understand, but I think that the Diploma opened my views and helped.

So overall, many of the students felt that the course helped them both at the personal and professional level with many citing benefits in both areas.

HELPING THE GRADUATES IN THEIR PARENTING ROLES

Whilst the course helped many past students to grow at the personal and professional level and to gain new skills, the impact seems to extend to other members of their families. For example, some of the past students noted that their increased awareness of gender inequalities encouraged them to move away from traditional norms and stereotyping at home:

Even with my children, I try not to be too stuck on stereotypes, and I try to make them aware and accepting of differences.

One of the parents said that her children are gay, and the course allowed her to relate more to them. She reiterated that:

If I were not informed about certain things, I might have more difficulty understanding their views as a mother - because when I was young, we were not educated on this. My daughter's friends tell her she is very lucky to have such an understanding mother.

This is a positive aspect of the course that is rarely discussed when thinking of its impact.

A SPRINGBOARD TO CONTINUE THE ACADEMIC JOURNEY

One of the most positive aspects of the course is that it served as a launching pad for many of the past students to further their studies. When looking at all the course graduates, 41% secured other qualifications since completing the course, and nearly a third are currently continuing their studies at the tertiary level, with the majority doing so at Master level. When probed whether they are interested in furthering their studies, 60% replied in the positive with the majority opting to follow the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources course.

When looking at the qualitative answers supplied by the graduates, it seems that the multidisciplinary aspect of the course allows the students to decide which subjects were more suited for them before they continued their academic journey. For example, one of the female students commented that the course:

Gave me a number of directions I could take academically. Gave me the opportunity to establish the subjects that I was more suited for. Gave me a start to my academic journey.

Another female graduate who was previously inactive in the labour market noted that:

The Diploma has basically opened my academic path to further my studies in the Management sector and also it helped me in returning to the Labour market after an absence of several years due to raising my family.

Hence the course seems to serve as a useful stepping stone that allows the students to get a taste of academic life and once they prove their abilities, many are motivated to continue their academic journey.

After looking at the impact of the course on the graduates, in the final section of this study I will discuss what they had to say in relation to how the course could be improved.

SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE DIPLOMA COURSE

Several students seemed happy with the course in its current format and remarked that they would leave it as it is, even if some found it to be quite intense and challenging, especially at the beginning. For example, one of the past students said:

The course is quite intense, and I found it extremely interesting. I would not change anything.

However, there were several others who had suggestions, the most common one being to extend the course to a degree.

I think for all the time we spent on the assignments we did, we could have done it at degree level. It felt like the equivalent of a degree level. It was the same but shorter

and involved smaller amounts of work, but at the same level.

On a similar note, another student reiterated that:

The Diploma was very intensive. An upgrade to a degree should be considered.

Apart from a common thread to upgrade the Diploma course to a degree, several students spoke about the challenges they face when they are given group work and the lack of fairness when students piggyback on others and do less work.

Others commented that when a unit has multiple assessments it becomes more difficult to manage especially if they also work full time. Considering that some students are studying whilst working and raising a family, it was suggested that employees who want to invest in their education should be relieved from work when attending such courses. There were suggestions to link the course better to Human Resources, although some students wanted less HR content.

A number of students suggested that the course takes on a more practical approach and would for example include visits to shelters for women in prostitution and women experiencing violence. The idea is to allow the students to do voluntary work with NGOs and other institutions which are working to improve women's lives.

I believe there should also be a unit or allocated credits for students to do some sort of voluntary work during the course. I think this activity will raise awareness and continue opening their eyes; it would also open doors for the students.

A male graduate proposed that more effort should be made to attract more men to the course because they too are struggling due to gender stereotypes. Furthermore, he argued that in order to close inequalities between women and men, more men need to become aware of existing inequalities between women and men through such a course:

We need to get more men to apply for this course, because without their help things are not going to change for women, and for themselves too because I think they're struggling as well.

There were other random but interesting suggestions like, for example, changing the name of the course, and to open the course in the evening and adding an online option for students to do the course remotely.

CONCLUSION

This tracer study shows that the impact of the Diploma Course on our past students is significant and positive to a large extent. It is also encouraging to see so many of our graduates continuing their studies after the course. Looking at the suggestions, the time may be ripe to explore ways of improving the course and finding ways to attract more men and younger students to it. In a post-Covid environment, it is also important to seek ways of making the course accessible to many others through remote learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone for gathering the survey data used in this paper and Professor Manwel Debono for analysing the quantitative data.



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DR FRANCIS M.E. LA FERLA

Honorary Member, Centre for Labour Studies Board

The Development of Health and Safety in Malta:

The Contribution of the Centre for Labour Studies, University of Malta.

ABSTRACT

The following article traces the Centre for Labour Studies' (CLS) contribution to the field of occupational health and safety in Malta. Over the past 25 years, the CLS has offered two influential programmes in this field: the Diploma in Social Studies (Occupational Health and Safety) and the subsequent Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons). 232 individuals have graduated from these programmes. However, the CLS' contribution is not limited to

offering undergraduate programmes, having also organised and supported several outreach efforts. The article analyses the impact of these efforts whilst also discussing the way forward in Malta.

Keywords: Occupational Health and Safety; Malta; Tracer Study; Centre for Labour Studies; University of Malta.

THE DIPLOMA IN SOCIAL STUDIES (OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY)

In 1997, the CLS introduced the Diploma in Social Studies (Occupational Health and Safety) to address the urgent need for investment in expertise and skills related to health and safety at work. In line with the CLS' ethos of providing educational opportunities for working individuals, the course was offered as a two-year, part-time evening course. Consequently, most of those who read for the diploma were mature students, some of whom were already working in health and safety.

The course was primarily coordinated by Dr Francis La Ferla and delivered by selected academics and practitioners competent in these fields. The course curriculum, which was regularly revised, took a holistic approach to occupational health and safety and generally covered topics such as risk assessment, occupational safety, occupational health, law, industrial relations, ergonomics, business management, research methods, toxicology, occupational hygiene, health promotion and environmental health.

The impact of this course was manifold. The diploma was highly regarded internationally and accredited by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) UK, the largest global membership organisation for health and safety professionals: IOHS has 47,000 members and is recognised in England by the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (ofqual). Graduates of this course were able to become IOSH members, which enhanced the profile of the course and provided useful opportunities for students, including those related to continuous professional development (CPD). At the national level, the majority of Malta's occupational health

and safety practitioners are graduates of this diploma programme. Although health and safety is not a regulated profession in Malta, the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) maintains a list of practitioners who are competent in this field: as of March 2023, almost 80% of these practitioners are CLS graduates. The main purpose of the course was to improve health and safety standards in Malta, and since the course was introduced, workplace accidents have decreased substantially (Fiorini & La Ferla, 2021). Of course, several factors are likely to have had an impact on the frequency of accidents, including the establishment of the OHSA in 2002: many of the health and safety graduates employed by this authority are CLS graduates.

A TRACER STUDY

Since the CLS aims to act as a gateway to education for working individuals, it was also anticipated that the course would directly benefit its graduates. To investigate this, and in anticipation of offering a degree course in the area, a tracer study was conducted with graduates of this diploma course (Fiorini & Chetcuti, 2017). The results of the tracer study ($N = 73$) showed that most graduates were male (85%), were in full-time employment (88%) and worked in the private sector (60%). The sectors in which graduates worked varied, with enforcement (20%), manufacturing (17%), consultancy (15%), education (9%) and transport and communications (6%) being the most common categories.

The study indicated that the programme offered graduates robust employment opportunities. Only 1% of the sample was not in employment and looking for a job. Additionally, almost 70% of the graduates categorised the grade of their job as that of a professional, senior official or manager. On a positive note, many of the graduates continued to contribute to health and safety in Malta: almost half of the graduates reported that their primary job title was related to occupational health and safety. Excluding those who were unemployed or inactive, less than 10% of the sample were not involved in health and safety to some extent.

The tracer study also looked at whether graduates had furthered their studies since graduation and whether they were interested in continuing their studies. Only 25% of the sample had gained further qualifications since graduating, with most having gained a further diploma. However, 60% of the sample were interested in continuing their education if a Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons) was offered by the CLS.

THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (HONS)

The stand-alone diploma programme was offered until 2014, following which the CLS introduced the Bachelor's Degree in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons) in 2016. The transition to a degree was made for several reasons. Firstly, as previously discussed, the graduates of the diploma programme (and thus the practitioners) wanted to continue their studies. Secondly, the degree was needed nationally in light of the ever-evolving world of work, which is leading to new, complex and often poorly understood hazards. These include new technologies, new ways of working, new jobs, entirely new sectors and changing work profiles, amongst others. The considerations are so extensive that they cannot be dealt with in satisfactory detail within the framework of a diploma course. This was also recognised by IOSH, which at the time informed the CLS that going forward diploma graduates would only be eligible for technical membership, while those with a degree could obtain full graduate membership.

The new degree was developed in consultation with the CLS board (which includes representatives from employers' organisations and trade unions, among others) and various other stakeholders, including former graduates and lecturers of the course, who include academics and practitioners in the field, the latter working in a variety of settings, including private practice, for leading organisations and government entities, including the OHSA. During this consultation process, several topics were highlighted that could be included or expanded upon in the new course, including occupational

health and safety management systems, new technologies such as robotics and nanotechnology, a focus on psychosocial factors and changing worker profiles, and the introduction of topics such as auditing. Feedback also highlighted the need for more practical components and for strengthening the research and academic components of the course.

The degree programme developed and subsequently coordinated by Dr Luke A. Fiorini was created on the basis of this feedback. While retaining the topics originally covered in the Diploma, it also included new units that focused on practical skills, novel topics such as management systems and auditing, and units that took a more holistic and progressive look at workers – including those that focused on migration, gender, and ageing. Other new units focused on new and emerging hazards, while still others aimed to strengthen students' academic, legal and research skills. In keeping with the ethos of the CLS, the course remained a part-time five-year evening course and the option to exit the course earlier and graduate with a diploma was retained. The latter was also lengthened to include more of the new topics in order to ensure that students that chose this pathway would also have a higher level of competency. Furthermore, a clause was introduced to allow graduates of the Diploma in Social Studies (Occupational Health and Safety) to enter the course in the third year to upgrade their qualifications. The new course has been accredited by IOSH and graduates are eligible for graduate membership.

Since 2016, the CLS has opened the course four times, with the first graduates of the programme occurring in 2021. Although it is too early to judge the impact of the course, initial signs are positive. From an academic perspective, student feedback suggests that the course has been well received. A Periodic Program Review (PPR) – an internal University of Malta quality process conducted in 2022 found that only minor changes to the programme were required. Furthermore, the course was re-accredited by IOSH in 2022.

Regarding the transition from diploma to degree, two cohorts of students have so far completed the requirements for the diploma exit-award in occupational health and safety. Of these cohorts, no students have chosen

to leave the programme early and graduate with a diploma, and instead continued their studies to obtain the degree. This illustrates that the students themselves, many of whom are already working in occupational health and safety, recognise the added value that the degree offers them.

In terms of employment, many of the students who were not already working in occupational health and safety found related jobs while they were still reading for the degree. Several of those who were already in occupational health and safety jobs were also able to advance their careers. The profile of the occupational health and safety profession also seems to have benefitted from the introduction of the bachelor's course, as some of the graduates were elected to the Malta Occupational Safety and Health Practitioners Association (MOSHPA) committee, giving new impetus to this important group. Finally, the educational impact of the course is already evident: more students from the first group of Bachelor graduates have continued their studies at postgraduate level than diploma students who had participated in the tracer study.

IMPROVING THE PROFILE OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IN MALTA

The impact of the CLS is not limited to the courses it offered and its graduates, who work to improve standards in Malta. The CLS has also contributed to the development and exchange of knowledge in the field. Academics from the CLS have published several internationally peer-reviewed papers related to the wellbeing, health and safety of workers in Malta. They have also presented their research findings at several international conferences, and have been invited to form part of local and European expert groups. The CLS also produces research for the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), a tripartite EU agency. The outputs of this project often focus on issues related to well-being, health and safety at work.

Over the years, the CLS has also organised several well-attended outreach events on issues related to workplace health and safety aimed at students,

practitioners, professional groups, and the general public. Amongst them, an international conference on extreme temperatures held in 2007 in collaboration with MOSPA and IOSH; a national conference in 2012 entitled ‘Enhancing Occupational Health and Safety through Research’; and the 2021 Centre for Labour Studies Research Conference, which included a session dedicated to occupational health and safety. Outreach events targeting key decision-makers were also organised, such as the meeting organised between the Minister responsible for the Occupational Health and Safety Authority and the students of the Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons) held in 2022.

THE WAY FORWARD

Although much progress has been made in Malta in the area of occupational health and safety, it is evident that more needs to be done. As the foremost institution providing relevant undergraduate education, the CLS will continue to strengthen its educational offering, by regularly updating its bachelor course, enhancing its resources, holding outreach events and seeking collaboration with domestic and foreign organisations. The CLS will also strive to offer new educational pathways to its graduates, especially by developing possible postgraduate opportunities.

A sound education is also the bedrock of any profession. To further improve standards in Malta, it is time to discuss regulating the health and safety profession. Currently, the OHSA’s voluntary competency list is the only guide as to who can be considered a professional in Malta. It also lists a diploma as the minimum requirement: a level that many professions have long since moved away from. Now that the University of Malta offers a stream of graduates with degrees who are able to understand the complex multifactorial aspects that affect the health and safety of workers, it is proposed that the minimum level required to work in the country is raised: at least for those who graduate after a certain cut-off date. In addition, the CLS can contribute

to raising the level in the country by continuing to offer diploma holders the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications.

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DR LUKE A. FIORINI Ph.D. (Nottingham), M.Sc. (Derby), P.G.Dip., B.Sc (Hons), S.R.P. is a lecturer in labour studies and holds degrees in health science, ergonomics, occupational health psychology and management. He was appointed Director of the Centre for Labour Studies in 2020 and coordinates the Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety course. Dr Fiorini lectures in areas related to occupational health and safety, human resource management and ergonomics. He has been involved in a number of the Centre's projects and since 2022 coordinates the Centre's contract with Eurofound. Dr Fiorini represents Malta on the European Trade Union Institute's (ETUI) Worker Participation Network and is the country ambassador of the European Network Education and Training in Occupational Safety and Health (ENETOSH).



PROFESSOR MANWEL DEBONO Ph.D., M.Sc. (Hull), B.Psy.(Hons), C.Psychol is an Occupational Psychologist and has worked as an academic at the Centre for 20 years, where he also served as Director (2009-2014). He coordinates the Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development and the Bachelor Honours in Work and Human Resources. Prof. Debono lectures in organisational psychology, human resource management, the labour market, career guidance, and research methods. He managed the Centre's research projects with Eurofound until 2022. Between 2020 and 2021, Prof Debono was appointed as the Rector's Delegate to the Adjunct Office for the Institute for Public Services.



DR ANNA BORG Ph.D.(MDX), M.Sc.(Manchester Met.), Dip. Soc.St.(Melit.) is a Senior Lecturer and former Director of the Centre. She lectures in the area of equality and diversity in the labour market, HR-related topics, work-life issues and qualitative research methods. She coordinates the Diploma in Gender, Work and Society and the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources.

Research Staff



MR SAVIOUR RIZZO M.Ed.(Melit), B.A.General has been active in the Centre since its inception in 1981. He lectured in Sociology of Work, Education and the Labour Market and Gender in Sociology. He took an active part in the organization of seminars, courses and conferences organized by the centre. He was also one of the contributors to the publications of the centre. Between the years 2003 and 2009 he occupied the post of Director of the Centre. At present, he occasionally works as a research officer at the centre

Administrative Staff



MS JOSEPHINE AGIUS has been employed at the University of Malta since 1995 and joined the Centre's staff in January 2000. She works as an Administration Specialist and provides administrative support to the Diploma in Gender, Work and Society, Bachelor in Work and Human Resources Cohorts 2018-2023 and 2022-2027 as well as the Masters in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development.



MS STEPHANIE MUSCAT Cert. Lang. Pr.(Melit.), Dip. Soc. St.(Melit.), B.A. (Hons) (Melit.), Ms Muscat has been employed at the University of Malta since 1995 and joined the Centre for Labour Studies in March 2011. She works as an Administration Specialist and provides administrative support to the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources cohort (2020-2025), as well as taking care of the fifth-year cohorts' (2018-2023) dissertations of the Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety. In October 2022, Ms Muscat was appointed Secretary to the CLS Board.



MS CAROLINE CHETCUTI B.Comms (Melit.), has been employed at the University of Malta since 2015. She handled the administrative work related to all the cohorts of the Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons) as well as that of the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources Cohort 2014-2019 until September 2022.



MS ALESSIA ZAHRA B.Sc. (Hons) HE(Melit.) Ms Zahra joined the Centre in September 2022. She works as an Administrator II and provides administrative support to the Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety cohort 2022-2027 and cohort 2020-2025. She also plans the academic year timetables of all courses offered at the Centre for Labour Studies and handles work related to design, and social media content.

Academic Programmes



Diploma in Gender, Work & Society

Course Coordinator: Dr Luke Fiorini (till-2021);
Dr Anna Borg (since-2021/2022)

INTAKE:

(COHORT YEAR 2019-2021)

Females	Males	Total
10	0	10

(COHORT YEAR 2022-2024)

Females	Males	Total
4	1	5

The course aims to give students an introductory overview on gender issues and how these impact on the individual within the social, cultural, economic and political behaviour.

Its objectives are to:

- Sensitise participants into the importance of gender as transversal theme in appreciating social, cultural, economic and political behaviour,
- Facilitate the effective participation of men and women in decisions which invariably affect their lives,
- Empower women and men to request, develop and maintain gender friendly and gender sensitive policies in the home, at work and in society.

COURSE PROGRAMME

YEAR ONE

GDS1004	Introduction to Gender Studies and Public Speaking
GDS1009	Gender, Sociology and Politics
CLS1209	Gender and Economics
CLS1225	Gender and the World of Work
GDS1002	Gender and Culture
GDS1003	Gender, Poverty and Development

YEAR TWO

CLS1226	Gender and Health
CLS1230	Gender and Research Methods
GDS1005	Gender and Psychology
GDS1010	Gender and Law
CLS1229	Gender and Social Policy
CLS1227*	Gender and Organisational Behaviour
CLS1228*	Gender and Labour Economics
GDS1007*	Media Literacy and Gender Issues
GDS1008*	Violence Against Women

*Elective study-units

2021 CLS GRADUATES

During the 2021 graduation ceremony, 10 students of the CLS were awarded their diploma, as follows:

2021 Graduate - Diploma in Gender, Work and Society

Females	Males	Total
10	0	10

Bachelor in Work and Human Resources

Course Coordinator: Prof Manwel Debono (till 2021); Dr Anna Borg (since 2021/2)

INTAKE:

(COHORT YEAR 2016-2021)

Females	Males	Total
13	7	20

(COHORT YEAR 2018-2023)

Females	Males	Total
11	3	14

(COHORT YEAR 2020-2025)

Females	Males	Total
20	8	28

(COHORT YEAR 2022-2027)

Females	Males	Total
9	5	14

COURSE OBJECTIVES

As organisations strive to adapt to the ever increasing challenges of globalisation, the need for skilled and qualified human resource professionals increases. This course, offered in collaboration with the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy, aims to fill a gap in this much needed area of specialisation. The curriculum provides students with sound underpinning knowledge and the necessary skills that will enable them to work professionally in settings related to human resources.

COURSE PROGRAMME

YEAR ONE

CLS1107	Sociology of Work
CLS1108	Occupational Psychology
CLS1111	Introduction to Social Science
CLS1112	Academic Skills in Work and Human Resources
CLS1102	Equality at the Place of Work
CLS1103	Employment Law in the Maltese and European Contexts
ECN1200	Introductory Economics for Work and HR

YEAR TWO

CLS1110	Labour Economics
CLS1114	Qualitative Research Methods
MGT1944	Human Resource Management
CLS1104	Organisational Communication
CLS1105	Introduction to Occupational Health and Safety

CLS1109	Industrial Relations
CLS1113	Quantitative Research Methods

YEAR THREE

CLS1106	The Evolving Labour Market
CLS2101	The Recruitment Process
CLS2102	Group Behaviour
CLS2103	Performance Management
ECN2213	Economic Growth and Development
ACC2941	Elements of Financial Management
CLS2104	Social Policy and the Labour Market
CLS2105	Education and the Labour Market
CLS2106	Motivation and Compensation
CLS2107	Collective Bargaining

YEAR FOUR

CLS2108	Training and Development
CLS2109	Work-Life Issues
CLS2111	Career Choice and Development
CLS3104	Employee Involvement and Participation
IOT2301	Ideas and Intrapreneurship
CLS3103	Topics in Occupational Health and Safety
CLS3112	Organisational Design
CLS3113	Topics in Employment and Industrial Relations Regulations
PPL2224	People Development in the Public Sector
CLS3101	Applied Quantitative Research Techniques
CLS3102	Applied Qualitative Research Techniques

YEAR FIVE

CLS3106	Personality at Work
CLS3109	Managing Abuse at the Work Place
CLS3110	Workplace Design and Ergonomics
CLS3114	Applied Topics in Work and Human Resources
CLS3115	Research Process in Work and Human Resources
CLS3116	Dissertation

2021 AND 2022 CLS GRADUATES

During the 2021 and 2022 graduations ceremonies, 21 students were awarded their diploma or degrees, as follows:

2022 Graduate - Diploma in Work and Human Resources

Females	Males	Total
1	1	2

2021 Graduates - Bachelor in Work and Human Resources

Females	Males	Total
11	7	18

2022 Graduates - Bachelor in Work and Human Resources

Females	Males	Total
1	0	1

LIST OF DISSERTATIONS FOR THE BACHELOR IN WORK AND HUMAN RESOURCES (HONOURS)

Cohort 2016 – 2021

Exploring the uptake of telework from the masculine lens - A study in the public sector

Exploring the working conditions of Filipino workers in the manufacturing sector in Malta

The challenges faced by women in management within a financial institution

Analysing the introduction of new paternity and parental leave entitlements for fathers in accordance with European Union directive 2019/1158; A qualitative study on the employers' perspective in Malta

Exploring parental leave from the employers' perspective in gaming sector

Impact of qualifications during recruitment and selection

Promoting and safeguarding the psychological and social well-being of hotel workers, with special attention to the covid-19 crisis

The employees' monetary contribution towards trade unionism in Malta

Gender equality within the Malta police force - Is this being enjoyed by all genders

Stress levels among health care professionals in Malta: The role of the work environment

Evaluation of work-life balance measures when availed of by headship positions in the Malta public service

Working in the presence of furry others: Exploring the effect of an animal-friendly policy on employees in an educational setting

Meeting the quota: The challenges encountered by employers when employing people with disability

The human resource effects of mergers and acquisitions in small to medium wholesale and retail enterprises; A qualitative case study of FBS (marketing) ltd.

Exploring mothers' attitudes towards fathers' uptake of parental leave in Malta

Exploring the uptake of paternity and parental leave in view of the new EU work-life balance directive (2019)

Industrial relations in the gaming industry: The Maltese context

Motivation and performance among employees in a food manufacturing and retail organisation

Employment accessibility for transgender women in Malta

Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety

Course Coordinator: Dr Luke Fiorini

INTAKE:

(COHORT YEAR 2016-2021)

Females	Males	Total
3	27	30

(COHORT YEAR 2018-2023)

Females	Males	Total
2	11	13

(COHORT YEAR 2020-2025)

Females	Males	Total
3	18	21

(COHORT YEAR 2022-2027)

Females	Males	Total
4	10	14

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course objectives are:

- To introduce the concepts and skills involved in the promotion and effect pursuit of health and safety at work,
- To develop the basic investigative and analytic competences necessary so that workplace hazards can be recognised, evaluated and minimised,
- To inculcate the principle of risk reduction of workplace hazards and practices,
- To identify and appreciate the psychosocial features of workers and working environments that have a bearing on the nature and incidence of occupational hazards and diseases.

COURSE PROGRAMME

YEAR ONE

CLS1314	Academic Skills in Occupational Health and Safety
CLS1315	Physical Sciences in Safety, Health and the Environment
CLS1316	Organisational Behaviour
CLS1317	Work, Industrial Relations and the Business Environment
CLS1318	The Promotion of Health and Wellbeing at Work
CLS1319	Biological Principles in Health, Safety and Occupational Toxicology
CLS1320	Risk Management and Principles of Control

YEAR TWO

CLS1321	Occupational Safety
CLS1322	Health and Safety Statistics and Epidemiology

PBL1020	Health and Safety Legal Framework
CLS1206	Research Methods and Design
CLS1323	Ergonomics and Human Factors
CLS1324	Fire Safety and the Management of First Aid
CLS1325	Investigative Skills and Occupational Safety Practice

YEAR THREE

CLS2301	Gender, Age, Race and Disability
CLS2302	Occupational Hygiene
PBL2016	Topics in Health and Safety Law
CLS2303	Occupational Health
CLS2304	Environmental Health Management: Policy and Legislation
CLS2305	Health and Safety Management and Supervisory Skills
CLS2306	Practical Skills and Application

YEAR FOUR

CLS2307	Properties of Materials, New Technologies and Technical Drawing
CLS2308	Health and Safety Audits
CLS2309	Applied Occupational Safety and Health
CLS3301	Supported Study-Unit in Occupational Health and Safety
CLS3302	Personal Development, Ethics and Ability to Train Others
CLS3303	Advanced Practical Skills and Application
CLS3101	Applied Quantitative Research Techniques
CLS3102	Applied Qualitative Research Techniques

YEAR FIVE

CLS3304	Topics in Applied Occupational Safety and Health
CLS3305	Occupational Incident and Accident Investigation
CLS3306	Occupational Health and Work Performance
CLS3307	Synoptic Study-Unit
CLS3308	Dissertation
IOT3100	Creative Thinking and Innovation

2021 AND 2022 CLS GRADUATES

During the 2021 and 2022 graduations ceremonies, 29 students of the CLS awarded their diploma or degrees, as follows:

2022 Graduates - Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety

Females	Males	Total
0	1	1

2021 Graduates - Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety

Females	Males	Total
3	25	28

LIST OF DISSERTATIONS FOR THE BACHELOR IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (HONOURS)

Cohort 2016 – 2021

The stressors that affect the performance of occupational health and safety officers.

Analysing bullying as one of the main factors that leaves a negative experience of the workplace.

Managing psychological trauma in the Malta police force.

Possible correlation of incidence rate and specific musculoskeletal disorders between blue and white-collar workers within the Maltese shipping (import / export) industry.

A survey on the cognisance of risks and mitigation measures from occupational noise in the construction and building industry.

Social media addiction within an occupational environment.

Acknowledgment of health and safety risks among construction workers of Islamic faith in Malta: Perception of local employers versus employees.

The pleasure (or harm) is in the work itself.

Assessing the impact of change (stress, rumours and communication) on middle management nurses (charge nurses) from a government-run hospital to a private public partnership.

Laboratory safety in research and academic settings.

Occupational health and safety performance within construction projects: Project managers' role and influence.

Exploring the safety culture in a manufacturing company: A case study approach.

The relationship between psychosocial risk factors and musculoskeletal disorders amongst nurses in Malta.

Are iGaming employees being exposed to high psychosocial risks?

Psychosocial risk factors at the work place.

Exploring the role of the site foreman and its impact on the level of health and safety within the construction industry.

Occupational health and safety legislation in Malta and the United Kingdom
- A comparative and critical analysis.

To understand the frequency of musculoskeletal disorders and the factors associated with their development.

Determinants that increase health and safety risks for migrant construction workers in Malta.

The presence of foreign workers and related health and safety challenges being faced by a leading cleaning company.

Occupational stress and coping strategies of police inspectors within the Malta police force.

The barriers perceived by migrant workers in occupational health and safety in Malta.

The aftermath of occupational accidents - The lived experience of Maltese employees.

The level of fire preparedness in the Maltese manufacturing industry.

Needle stick injuries – An evaluation of awareness among nurses working in a geriatric setting.

Assessing psychosocial risks in education: A case study in occupational stress among educators in the private sector.

Ergonomics and workplace designs in schools in Malta.

The effectiveness of risk assessment and human factors training in the Maltese aviation industry.

Master In Lifelong Career Guidance and Development

Course Coordinator: Prof Manwel Debono

INTAKE:

(COHORT YEAR 2016-2021)

Females	Males	Total
4	4	8

(COHORT YEAR 2020-2023)

Females	Males	Total
4	0	4

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Employment is becoming more flexible and careers less predictable. The problem of unemployment is a national priority debated at the highest levels of our society. At the same time, there has been an expansion of education with a particular focus on lifelong learning. People are thus seeking increasing

amounts of career-related assistance throughout their whole lives. The Postgraduate Diploma in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development, offered jointly by the Centre for Labour Studies and the Faculty of Education, seeks to enhance professional career guidance services in Malta. The course is designed for applicants in possession of a graduate level of education who wish to work at a professional level in the career guidance field.

COURSE PROGRAMME

YEAR ONE

CLS5101	Sociology of Work
CLS5102	The Labour Market
COU5401	Skills in Vocational Guidance and Counselling for Career Guidance Practitioners
EDS5602	Guidance Theories, Models and Strategies
CLS1206	Research Methods and Design
CLS5103	Placement in Career Guidance Settings
CLS5104	Career Guidance Tools
CLS5110	Service Provision for Different Client Groups

YEAR TWO

EDS5608	Career Guidance Practice
EDS5603	Professional Development
EDS5604	Career Guidance Management
EDS5606	Career Development and Lifelong Learning
CLS5107	The Workplace
EDS5605	Career Information Systems
CLS5111	Applied Quantitative Techniques for Career Guidance
CLS5112	Applied Qualitative Techniques for Career Guidance
EDS5609	Dissertation

2020 AND 2021 CLS GRADUATES

During the 2021 and 2022 graduations ceremonies, 3 students were awarded their master degrees, as follows:

2020 Graduates - Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development

Females	Males	Total
1	1	2

2021 Graduate - Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development

Females	Males	Total
1	0	1

LIST OF DISSERTATIONS FOR THE MASTER IN LIFELONG CAREER GUIDANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Cohort 2016-2021

An analysis of the new role of student mentors in the career advisory process at Mcast

The role of carer guidance in secondary school subject choice: A case study

People Management & Industrial Relations for Public Officers

C L S 4 0 0 0

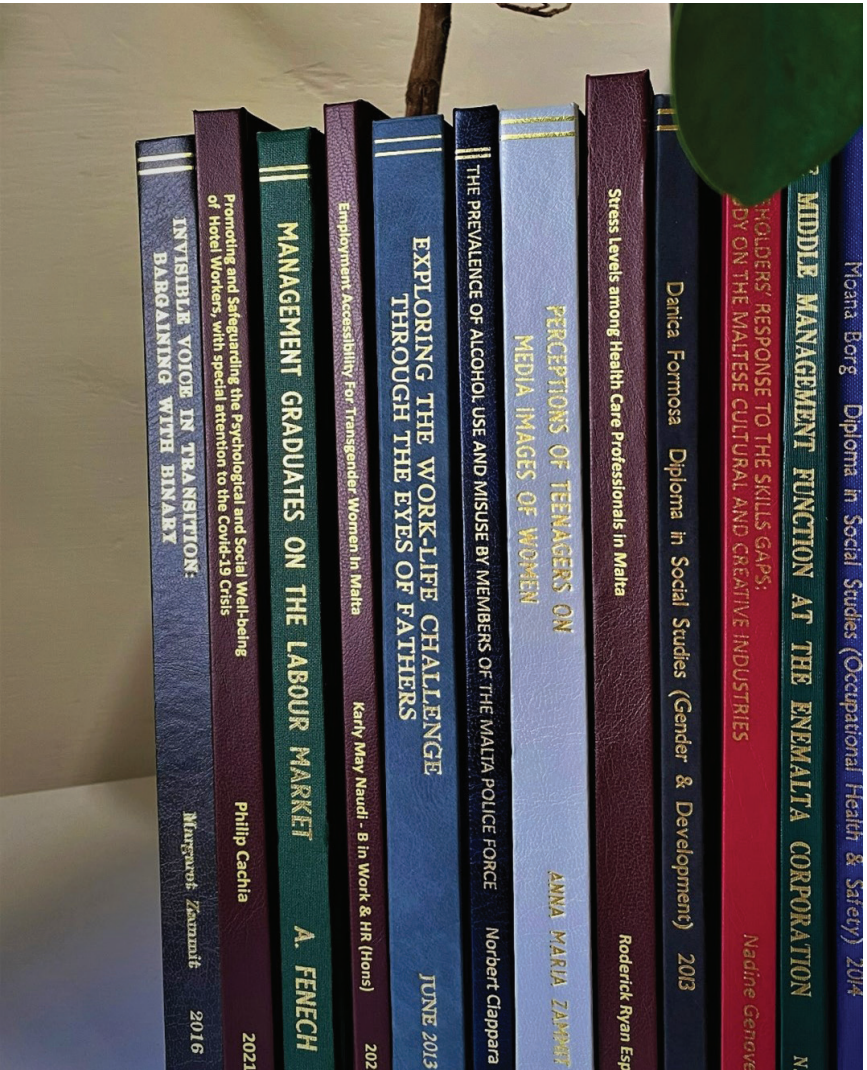
Course Coordinator: Prof Manwel Debono

This short course, offered in conjunction with the Institute for Public Services aims to train public officers to deal effectively with issues relating to people management and industrial relations.

(COHORT YEAR 2021-2022)

Females	Males	Total
5	3	8

Research Efforts



Research Work and Publications of CLS Staff

Dr Luke Fiorini

- Fiorini, L.A. (2022). Remote workers' perceived health during the COVID-19 pandemic: a mixed methods study of influencing factors, *Safety and Health at Work*, 13(Supplement), S194.
- Fiorini, L.A. (2022). Remote workers' perceived health during the COVID-19 pandemic: an exploratory study of influencing factors in the IT and communications sector in Malta. *Industrial Health* (Advance Online Publication).
- Fiorini, L.A., Borg, A., Debono, M. (2022). Part-time adult students' satisfaction with online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Adult & Continuing Education*, 28(2), 356-377.
- Fiorini, L.A., Houdmont, J., & Griffiths, A. (2022). Nurses' perceived work performance and health during presenteeism: Cross-sectional associations with personal and organisational factors. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 30(5), 37-45.
- Fiorini, L.A. (2022). *The role of social dialogue in the design, implementation*

and monitoring of Territorial Just Transition Plans - Malta. Eurofound. Unpublished country report.

- Fiorini, L.A. (2022). *Malta: Project DEFENCE - Social Dialogue in Defence of Vulnerable Groups in the Context of COVID-19 Labour Markets.* Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI) (Slovakia) & The University of Helsinki (Finland). Unpublished country report.
- Fiorini, L.A. (2022). *Social protection for self-employed - Malta.* Eurofound. Unpublished country report.
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- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound. (2022) *Energy prices to remain frozen 2022.* MT-2020-1/2177, Eurofound.
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- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound. (2022). *Distribution of one-time bonus and tax refund cheque.* MT-2020-6/2197, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound. (2022). *Monthly survey of employers.* MT-2022-1/2495. Eurofound
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound. (2022). *Provision of cancer treatment for Ukrainian refugees* MT-2022-12/2748, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound. (2022). *Ukraine community crisis centre Malta.* MT-2022-10/2750, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound. (2022). *Investment aid for energy efficient projects.* MT-2018-20/2752, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound. (2022). *Energy Audits in small and medium sized enterprises.* MT-2021-18/2754, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A. (2021). *COVID-19 as an occupational disease: enhancing social protection for at risk workers in Malta.* *Malta Journal of Health*

Sciences, 8(2), pp. 29–31.

- Fiorini, L.A., & La Ferla F. (2021). *Developments in Occupational Health and Safety in Malta (pgs 217-236)*. In Debono, M., & Baldacchino, G. *Working life - The Transformation of the Maltese Workplace: 1960-2020*. Malta University Press
- Fiorini, L.A., Griffiths, A., Houdmont, J. (2021). Work engagement among nurses in Malta : associations with psychosocial working conditions. *Malta Journal of Health Sciences*, 8(1), 30–38.
- Fiorini, L.A. (2021). *Job retention schemes in Europe – Malta*. ETUI. Available: <https://www.etui.org/>
- Fiorini, L.A. (2021). *Protecting employment and businesses in Malta during the first twelve months of COVID-19: A chronology of support measures*. Centre for Labour Studies Biennial Report 2019–2020. Centre for Labour Studies, University of Malta.
- Fiorini, L., Borg, A., Debono, M., Rizzo, S., & Baldacchino, G. (2021). *Centre for Labour Studies Employment and Industrial Relations Act (EIRA) Review Recommendations*. A document prepared on request for the board reviewing EIRA regulations.
- Fiorini, L.A. (2021). *COVID-19 as an occupational disease – Malta*. In ETUI Seminar on Covid-19 as occupational disease: National Reports. ETUI. Available: <https://www.etui.org/>
- Fiorini, L.A. (2021). *Topical update on Social dialogue and collective bargaining in hospitals and civil aviation during the Covid-19 pandemic*. Eurofound. Unpublished country report.
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- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound. (2021). *Restaurants & snack bars support scheme*. MT-2021-10/1804, Eurofound.
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12/1805, Eurofound.

- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound. (2021). *One-time grant for businesses forced to close in 2021*. MT-2021-20/1924, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound. (2021). *Smart and sustainable investment scheme 2021*. MT-2021-18/1929, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound. (2021). *Restart Incentive Scheme 2021*. MT-2021-18/1930, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound. (2021). *Mentpreneurial (Ment+): supporting entrepreneurial mental health*. MT-2021-36/2020, Eurofound.
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Prof Manwel Debono

- Debono, M. (2022). National recovery and resilience plan: Malta. *Italian Labour Law e-Journal*, 15(1S), 1-16.
- Fiorini, L. A., Borg, A., & Debono, M. (2022). Part-time adult students' satisfaction with online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Adult & Continuing Education*, 28(2), 354-377.
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Dr Anna Borg

- Borg, A. (2022). *Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming in COVID-19 Recovery – Review of the Beijing Platform for Action*. European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). Unpublished Country Report, Malta.
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Eurofound Contract 2021–2022

REPORT

During 2021 and 2022, the Centre for Labour Studies (CLS) produced many deliverables as requested by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions (Eurofound). As part of Eurofound’s Network of National Correspondents, the CLS prepares reports on Malta upon request. As part of this network, Eurofound has correspondents in all EU member states and Norway.

While some of the reports prepared by the CLS are published on the Eurofound website, others are not. Contributions published in 2021 and 2022 included an annual report on industrial relations, social dialogue and working life in Malta, and quarterly updates of Eurofound’s Policy Watch database. This database initially tracked policies related to COVID-19, but later included policies related to local responses to the war in Ukraine and policies to combat inflation. Other publications covered company restructuring and living conditions in Malta.

Eurofound uses data from unpublished reports to produce comparative European reports on selected topics. Reports produced by the CLS during this

period included ones on hybrid work, the minimum wage, essential workers, and digitalisation, amongst others. Several other deliverables addressed the impact of COVID-19 on various aspects, including the impact on the living conditions of older people, the tracking of governmental confinement decrees, and the use of public services during the pandemic. Other reports dealt with the representativeness of specific sectors, such as the extractive, construction, chemical, woodwork and furniture industries.

In order to produce these reports, the Centre for Labour Studies has put together a team of researchers, some of whom are resident academics, whereas others are from outside the University of Malta. The CLS would like to thank all the individuals who worked on this project during this period, and included:

- Prof Manwel Debono (Overall project manager until February 2022 and author)
- Dr Luke A. Fiorini (Overall project manager from February 2022 and author)
- Ms Christine Scerri (Deliverable coordinator and author)
- Ms Christine Garzia (Deliverable coordinator and author)
- Dr Anna Borg (Author)
- Dr Charlotte Camilleri (Author)
- Mr Gilmour Camilleri (Author)
- Mr Louis Grech (Author)
- Dr Vincent Marmara (Author)
- Mr Saviour Rizzo (Author)
- Mr Charles Tabone (Author)
- Mr Melchior Vella (Author)

The CLS would also like to thank the Project Support Office at the UM, particularly Ms Stacey Goodlip and Ms Natushka Mulvaney and the Finance Office for their valuable support. Special thanks also go out to the social partners that regularly provide the CLS with data.

Dissertation Synthesis



MARIO DELICATA

Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons)

TITLE

Are iGaming employees being exposed to high psychosocial risks?

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The objective of this research was to explore whether psychosocial risks are prevalent among employees in the iGaming industry. To accomplish this the researcher adopted the model proposed by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, which outlined six primary sources of work-related stress, namely: Excessive Job Demands, Lack of Control & Role Conflict, Inadequate Support, Poor Relationships, Poor Management of Change, and Violence & Harassment. This framework provided a solid basis for the study, facilitating a thorough assessment of the psychosocial risks experienced by iGaming employees.

METHODOLOGY

To gather primary data, a qualitative method was utilized whereby 8 semi-structured interviews based on the model proposed by Jonker and Pennick (2010) were conducted. The collected data was analysed thematically, using the method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Purposive sampling was utilized as recommended by Bryman (2008). The sample selection criteria included individuals with a minimum of 2 years of work experience in the iGaming sector, between the ages of 25–45.

KEY FINDINGS

‘Long hours,’ and ‘High Intensity’ were the most prevalent psychosocial risks faced by the employees across every sector. High intensity was an issue that was encountered by all employees, most at risk were those working in the roles of ‘Customer Care’, ‘Odd compliers’ and ‘Live traders’ since they work shifts and even on weekends (Uehata, 2005; Hing & Breen, 2008). However, these employees normally worked a 40 hour a week and never exceed the 48 hours, so their exposure was limited. On the other hand, those in managerial positions often work longer hours, typically around 50 hours per week, and may even work on weekends, increasing the risk of burnout (Taormina & Kuok, 2009).

Conflicts due to a diverse and multicultural environment were present on a very small scale. There was a consensus among all the participants, that conflicts or heated arguments were rare and not a common occurrence (Ebbers & Wijnberg, 2017). The study however showed that certain employees from specific nationalities may be more sensitive to certain attitudes due to cultural differences, leading to a potentially uncomfortable work environment. Additionally, the study found that unintentional cliques do form among employees from the same nations who at times speak in their native language, which is unwelcoming to some colleagues.

Job control was identified as a factor that could potentially have a negative impact on the mental wellbeing of employees in the iGaming industry.

Given the nature of their work, since sports events have a predetermined time when to start but not when to finish, many employees in this industry have limited control over their job tasks. However, the study revealed that wherever possible, organizations were making a concerted effort to provide their employees with some degree of flexibility regarding when and how they perform their duties. Measures such as frequent breaks, split shifts, early departures, and relief staff among employees were implemented to mitigate the impact of job control limitations.

There is no concern about role clarity among the participants in the non-managerial positions as they confirmed that their roles were clearly defined and aligned with the tasks specified in their job contracts. The management also appears to adhere to the specified tasks. Additionally, the participants in managerial positions were confident in their knowledge of their responsibilities and tasks. As a result, it appears that there is no potential threat of either “Role conflict” or “Lack of clarity” among the study participants.

Poor change management was found to be a major issue and should be of a grave concern to iGaming companies. Seven out of eight participants confirmed that employees were not involved and consulted prior to change and kept in the dark. Employees occupying managerial positions also admitted that information is only shared at a managerial level. Hence this factor was found to have a negative impact on the mental wellbeing of the employees (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006).

The ‘iGaming Industry’ appears to excel in fostering positive relationships and providing favourable working conditions for its employees. According to this study, all participants reported experiencing good relationships with both their colleagues and management. Additionally, the research highlighted the excellent working conditions and support provided by the companies, which helps employees to become more resilient to stress and burnout. The study also confirmed that exceptional support and a friendly work environment can delay or counter the onset of stress and anxiety at the workforce (Shimizu et al., 1997). These positive relationships between employees and management,

along with the outstanding assistance provided by the company, are critical aspects of organizational support that help employees cope with stressful events and combat stress.

CONCLUSION

When the mitigation measures implemented by iGaming companies are taken into consideration, the study findings indicate that iGaming employees have a low to moderate risk rating for psychosocial risks. Nevertheless, it is crucial to consider three essential factors;

- 5 Psychosocial risks are not uniformly experienced by all employees.
- 6 The level of risk factors varies depending on the nature of the job.
- 7 Employees' resilience and ability to cope with work-related stressors differ from one another.

The study concluded, that although some of iGaming employees are faced with intense demands, lack of Job control/flexibility, and are not consulted during changes, they have the necessary procedures and support programmes in place. The implementation of 'Zero Tolerance' policies for violence and harassment, as well as mental health programs were found to promote both physical and mental health among employees. Furthermore, the exceptional support provided by companies, combined with positive relationships between management and employees, increased employees' resilience in managing work-related stress and mitigated the negative effects of such risks.

The thesis was supervised by Ms Stelmart Khalil

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CHRISTIAN ABELA

Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons)

TITLE

The stressors that affect the performance of occupational health and safety officers.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

This qualitative research sought to explore the stressors impacting Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Officers in relation to their work performance. The basis of this research was to insightfully analyse, workplace specific stressors (Gilboa et al., 2008) being experienced by OHS Officers. The research focused on the perspectives of OHS Officers employed within the local sector since related research on the matter is very limited.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional qualitative design was adopted capitalising on semi-structured interviews. All research participants were chosen on specific criteria of interest ensuring that their outcomes were both valid and reliable to the objectives of the research. The participants were selected based on their work experience in the occupation as OHS Officers, so that common stressors may be identified and thus generate specific data which could be analysed. In total twelve participants were engaged in this research. A thematic analysis was adopted which helped in the structure and analysis of the data compiled (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach was beneficial to the research as it served to interpret the distinct dimensions of the research area in comprehensive terms.

KEY FINDINGS

A set of themes emerged in view of the interviews carried out, with regards to the stressors experienced by employees at the workplace. At a later stage these were classified into six primary themes.

- Stressors related to OHS Officers' Professional Duties
- Management Related Stressors
- Employee Related Stressors
- Adverse Circumstantial Factors due to Covid-19
- Stressors generated by Communication
- The Impact of Stressors on Performance

Six themes were eventually identified and further expounded in terms of their relevant sub-themes. Five of which focused on stressors whilst the last theme addressed performance. The study highlighted stressors being experienced by OHS Officers in various aspects aligned to the conduct of their professional duties. The research concluded that although the perception is that the OHS Officers can generally cope with the elements of stress, uncertainty still persists when it comes to potential stressors which exert a direct impact on their professional duties. Following Dormann and Zapf (2004), participants need to be aware of their responsibilities on a 24/7 basis. OHS Officers were found to adopt flexible approaches in addressing management and employees, granting priority to organisational efficiency and effectiveness. One factor that emerged as an impact on the performance level of OHS Officers was the sheer lack of human resources within the H&S department.

The findings indicate that within organisations, it is the managers who tend to be the most sceptical regards OHS Officers' recommendations. This created the inertia being experienced within the organisation which ultimately impacted its OHS Culture. This resulted in the ineffective implementation of control measures as suggested by OHS Officers. Although employees were more willing to implement the OHS recommendations, whenever the management was perceived to be unsupportive, it resulted in a failure

of the required initiatives from being implemented. This led to higher levels of stress impacting both management and employees, resulting in lower job satisfaction levels in the latter category as described by Brough and Pears (2004).

Employees proved to be highly vulnerable to stressors. Their root cause being family issues rather than organisational. Psychological counselling services served as a support in this respect. This factor was also impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, a contextual factor on which the business can have limited control.

The organisational culture was likewise qualified as a stressor, particularly whenever safety was not prioritised, as affirmed by Leitão, McCarthy and Greiner (2018). A safety culture needs to be smartly supported by safety policies, procedures and practices tailored to the specific exigencies of businesses. Additionally, organisational stressors were generated by the communication system whenever this lacked transparency and openness. Poor communication in this regard impacts adversely the organisation's culture particularly as regards issues related to safety. Consequently, this results in misallocation of resources, a vicious cycle of pressure on the employees and a less effective value delivery chain throughout the organisation.

CONCLUSION

The research outcomes brought to light stressors that influence OHS Officers in the conduct of their professional duties. It transpired that currently there is a sheer absence of qualified personnel within OHS departments. This constraint has been long standing but has not been specifically addressed. Additionally, it is evident that managers tend to be highly sceptical of the recommendations voiced by OHS Officers. This is probably in view of perceived implementation costs and apprehension to changes in familiar working methods. Thus, the managers tend in most situations to perceive the OHS Officers as an intrusion rather than a source of support.

To mitigate these challenges, an array of recommendations is presented.

These are addressed to distinct stakeholders including the management and the employees. As regard to the former, OHS Officers need to sustain a culture where the management appreciates and respects OHS, its functions and values. Consequently, management would become an active participant alongside OHS Officers. As regards employees, since stressors are usually related to family issues, sufficient time needs to be allocated so they can be appropriately resolved.

Finally, organisations need to develop safety cultures. Effective communication systems reinforced by customised procedures and operations may represent a constructive step so as to address stressors.

This thesis was supervised by Dr Luke Fiorini.

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DANIEL SAMMUT

Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Hons)

TITLE

Motivation and performance among employees in a food manufacturing and retail organisation

AIM OF STUDY

In a competitive business climate, motivation and performance are important factors to consider for organisational growth and success. Studies have shown that motivation and performance are linked, however, locally, there seems to be a need for relevant research in manufacturing and retail organisations. The aim of this study was to determine the levels of different types of motivation and performance amongst employees in a food manufacturing and retail organisation in Malta. Moreover, this research will explore the relationships between different types of motivation in relation to overall performance. Furthermore, this research study can serve a higher purpose as it can help to establish policies and/or tailor-made reward systems that seek to increase positive work performance and as a result, decrease counterproductive work behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

This research study adopted a quantitative research method and as a result, a structured questionnaire was used to gather primary data. The questionnaire had the following structure:

Demographic data: This part of the questionnaire involved questions to help gather demographic information such as age, gender, educational level,

departments within the organisation, job roles, as well as length of service.

Motivation: This part of the questionnaire focused on intrinsic, identified, introjected, and extrinsic regulation, and their effect on the motivation of individual employees. Three perceptions for each type of motivation were adopted from the Motivation at Work Scale (MAWS) developed by Gagne et al. (2010). Moreover, the Higher-Order model was used to obtain autonomous and controlled motivation. Intrinsic and identified regulation were combined to form autonomous motivation, whilst introjected and extrinsic motivation were combined to form controlled motivation (Howard et al., 2020).

Work performance: This part of the questionnaire was used to evaluate the performance of individual employees. The dimensions for performance involved task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviour, based on the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) (Koopmans et al., 2012; Koopmans et al., 2014). Task performance involved eleven perceptions, whilst contextual performance and counterproductive work behaviour were based on five perceptions each.

KEY FINDINGS

In terms of motivation, mean scores were greatest for intrinsic motivation, followed by identified, introjected and extrinsic motivation. Consequently, autonomous motivation was greater than controlled motivation. A significant difference between the mean scores of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as between autonomous and controlled motivation were identified.

In terms of performance, mean scores for contextual performance were greater than task performance. A significant difference between these scores was identified.

It was found that there was a significant positive relationship between overall work performance and various types of motivation including intrinsic, extrinsic, autonomous, controlled, and overall motivation. From this hypothesis, it emerged that overall motivation has a considerable positive effect on performance.

Finally, the findings indicated that autonomous and intrinsic motivation tends to lead to the highest performance when applied at the right levels.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, this study can benefit the studied organisation as it exposed the organisation's strengths and weaknesses in relation to motivation and performance, thus providing guidance on areas of improvement. Motivation is a driving force that inhabits each and every human being. The direction and magnitude of motivation depend on regulation and as a result, it is by modifying these regulations that employees' motivation can be directed. This research study indicates that an organisation can expect better employee performance by focusing on achieving the right balance between autonomous and controlled motivation. Employees are likely to perform better when they are intrinsically involved in their job task, believe that their work task is of value, are exposed to good levels of communication, and are able to participate within the work community.

This thesis was supervised by Dr Luke Fiorini

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Data from this thesis was used in the following published study:

- Fiorini, L.A. & Sammut, D. (2023) The relationship between employee motivation and work performance in a manufacturing and retail foodservice organisation, *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, DOI: 10.1080/15378020.2023.2214069



ANTONIO BUHAGIAR

Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Hons)

TITLE

Analysing the introduction of new paternity and parental leave entitlements for fathers in accordance with European Union Directive 2019/1158: A qualitative study on the employers' perspective in Malta

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

Through the European Union (EU) Directive 1158/2019, the EU imposed on all its member states to introduce a minimum of ten days paid paternity leave and four months parental leave for fathers, two months of which will be paid and non-transferable between parents. Research shows that if there is a specific paid leave entitlement for fathers, it encourages men to share childcare responsibilities and household duties more equally (ILO, 2019). Thus, given that the EU is pushing for more fathers to be away from the place of work to raise their children, the aim of this research was to explore the perspective of employers on the introduction of such measures for fathers in Malta.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative approach was selected, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from the participants by utilising the “general interview guide approach” (Turner, 2010, p. 744). Eight Human Resources (HR) professionals who worked in medium sized enterprises employing between 50–249 employees took part in the research. The study was directed towards medium sized enterprises as 99.8% of private enterprises in Malta are

SMEs (European Commission, 2019). To further increase the validity of the research, the choice of interviewees was restricted to the three male-dominant employment sectors identified: the wholesale and retail trade, the food service and hotel industries (HORECA) and the manufacturing sector (NSO, 2019). To identify the right participants that could provide relevant information to the questions being posed, purposive sampling was adopted (Bryman, 2012), irrelevant of interviewees gender and grade within the HR department.

KEY FINDINGS

The main findings captured through this research revolved around two main themes:

- Awareness of EU Directive 2019/1158 and the new entitlements
- The tussle between organisational and employees' needs

The results suggest that the interviewees were not completely aware about the new entitlements, especially those involving parental leave. Albeit being knowledgeable about an increase in the number of days associated with paternity leave, they were not informed that the increase constitutes ten days. That said, once employers were made aware what the new entitlements emanating from the directive entail, their overall reactions were quite positive. They also acknowledged, at least theoretically, the need of a longer paternity leave entitlement.

A reason why employers may have had limited awareness about the new paternity and parental leave entitlements was due to the low number of requests being received from fathers to avail themselves of such leave. Whereas some fathers do make use of their paternity leave, the uptake of parental leave is non-existent. This does not come as a surprise when considering that Malta has one of the lowest birth rates across the EU (Eurostat, 2020).

When the reasons for the low uptake of parental leave by the fathers were discussed, several issues were raised, such as the fear that this might jeopardise their relationship with management and colleagues, and that it could also

negatively affect their career prospects. The persisting gendered social norms and the fact that fathers may not even be aware of their entitlement to use parental leave were other reasons brought forward. Such remarks resemble findings by Briffa (2019) and her research conducted from the fathers' point of view.

In relation to the rate of pay associated with such leave entitlements, most employers agreed that to have fathers making use of the new paternity and parental leave entitlements, the compensation rate for both entitlements should be paid at 100% of their earnings. Such observation is in line with O'Brien (2009) who asserts that men are more likely to take up parental leave if it is paid at 100% of their earnings. Most of the employers also reasoned out that the costs associated with the new leave entitlements should ideally be shared between the Government and employers.

Employers from the manufacturing and HORECA industries showed more concern about the operational, organisational and financial impacts that such measures might bring to their businesses, particularly if the leave is taken during high peak seasons. They were concerned that they would need to hire temporary staff to cover up such absences, which could lead to additional logistical problems and costs. However, overall employers were keen to seek compromise with both the Government and employees on the implementation of the new rights.

CONCLUSION

This study had provided useful insights on the Work-Life Balance Directive and fills a gap in the literature on the perceptions of employers concerning the idea of having fathers making use of their entitlements. It revealed how employers have two opposing views on the subject matter whereby the needs of employees are recognised and yet, these clash with organisational demands to sustain operational functionality. Such point of view was empirical for the implementation of the much needed measures for fathers which should hopefully aid to close the gender caring gaps between mothers and fathers,

instil further equality, promote work-life balance and enhance the relationship between fathers and children. Even though employers recognise that gender stereotypes are ill-suited at this age and era, it seems that these are still dominant in a society within which patriarchal roots are deeply embedded. It transpires that a change in legislation together with the right implementation of such entitlements is the right way forward to challenge the status quo.

This thesis was supervised by Dr Anna Borg

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JESSICA BORG

Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development

TITLE

An analysis of the new role of student mentors in the career advisory process at a vocational college for arts, science and technology in Malta.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

Many students are at risk of dropping out of the Maltese education system. Malta had the second-highest rate of Early Leavers from Education and Training (ELET) within the European Union at 16.7% in 2019 (Eurostat, 2020). The Maltese education system is making great efforts to combat ESL in order to meet the European Commission's 2030 target of no more than 9% of the population falling into the ELET bracket (Eurostat, 2022).

This qualitative study examined the newly created role of student mentors at a post-secondary vocational college in Malta and the goal of the mentoring program to improve student retention rates and enrich their educational experience. Ryan and Deci's (2017) Self-determination theory is used to explore whether the mentors' relationship helps students develop their inner resources from the mentors' perspective. In addition, Patton and McMahon's (2014) Systems theory framework is used to examine how the mentoring program is perceived by other student support service providers and to gain insight into the internal dynamics between professionals.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative design and an interpretivist approach was adopted for this research study. Multiple perceptions about the at-risk mentoring program

were investigated via interviews with nine stakeholders including the student mentors, career advisors, counsellors, and their respective directors. Student mentors were appointed to act as an intermediary role that filters and refers students to both career advisors and therapists. Since career guidance is the main discipline around which this study is centred, the focus on the mentors' work reflects the parts which intersect with the career advisory process. The research was carried out between 2019 and 2020 when the mentoring program had already been running for a whole academic year within the vocational institution. The interviews were audio-recorded, in-depth, individual, and semi-structured. Data was transcribed and analysed through Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

KEY FINDINGS

Three main themes emerged from this research, shedding light on the effect the new role of student mentors has on the service provided by the professionals, as follows:

- A positive shift in service delivery
- Students still dropping out
- Challenges faced by professionals

All participants involved in the study concurred that the addition of student mentors generates various benefits within their service provision. Student-mentor relationships are restoring the mentees' trust in the student services within the vocational college. This provides a better footing for the other professionals to start their career guidance or counselling work with students. Career advisors and counsellors have increased referrals which led to the reinstatement of multidisciplinary team meetings. This provides a space for the whole team to discuss cases from a holistic perspective. Such collaboration between professionals decreases the number of students slipping through the net as students are better monitored.

Reducing the number of foundation students dropping out is one of the main reasons student mentors are employed in this post-secondary institution. However, the student mentors' work does not necessarily result in increased retention rates. The main reasons why students leave their studies vary from personal issues and/or the course not meeting their expectations. Furthermore, all participants agreed on the existent percentage of students who remain 'invisible' to student services and who do not obtain the required support. These students might have reached 50% of absenteeism and must therefore terminate their course or remain unnoticed for the difficulties they might experience. ELET is a cumulative process in which 'invisible students' might have reached its peak earlier on during their educational journey (Audas & Williams, 2001). Given that students are sixteen years of age and over, once they decide to drop out, all efforts and compensatory measures from the institution's end may be rejected and become in vain.

One of the main challenges that ensue within the career advisors' department is the imbalance between the internal and external service provision. The institution being studied has a ratio of two career advisors to 6,000 students. This makes it very complicated to cater for both the internal (official full-time students, including at-risk students within foundation level) and external (prospective) students' needs proportionately. The career advisors' focus is on outreach to prospective students, which leaves very little time for internal students. The introduction of the role of student mentors has bridged such lacunae. In fact, the student mentors contribute by helping mentees with study skills, opportunity awareness through job searching and career fairs, soft skills and employability skills, and school-to-work or placement transitions. Even though the college embeds some of these employability skills within the curriculum, it seems insufficient. The intersection between mentoring and the career guidance provision, leads to the understanding that career advisors need to collaborate with the mentors in order to extend their service provision to support internal students to enhance their self-career management skills.

CONCLUSION

One of the main findings pertaining to this research is that, although the mentoring program has brought a positive shift in the students' service delivery, professionals face many challenges which might impact the dynamics with the other teams and their respective clients. As a result, this might affect the number of students slipping outside the system.

A distinct challenge these professionals are faced with is the fragmentation of services which results from having 3 different directors for 3 teams which all fall under one umbrella- the student services. Fragmentation of services ensues when multiple decision-makers make disjointed decisions on each of their services rather than a unified decision that encompasses the bigger picture of such service (Elhauge, 2010).

Overall, this study proves and advocates that mentoring could be considered a feasible subsidiary resource to collaborate with career guidance practitioners within post-secondary institutions, as it helps such practitioners adequately cater to internal students' needs. Moreover, the support provided needs to empower students to have personally agency. As Rolfe (2007) said metaphorically about lifelong career development skills and the empowering relationship between the mentor and mentee, "Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day; teach a person how to fish and they can feed themselves for a lifetime".

This thesis was supervised by Dr Katya De Giovanni

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TANIA GIORDMAINA

Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development

TITLE

The role of career guidance in secondary school subject choice

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The study sought to examine local influences on students' subjects choice and the students' perceptions of career guidance services they were offered to support them in this choice. Although the Career Guidance Policy for Schools (Debono et al., 2007) ensures that there are quality services aimed at supporting Year 8 students in their choice of subjects, every year, there are a number of students who ask to change one or both of their option subjects upon starting their lessons.

METHODOLOGY

A case study approach was adopted to research students' subjects choice in one state college. The study was carried out in two phases during the scholastic year 2018-2019. In phase one, quantitative data was collected. Questionnaires were administered to 135 Year 9 students who had gone to the College's Middle School in the previous scholastic year. During phase two of the study, a number of face-to-face interviews were carried out. The college career advisor, a guidance teacher from the Middle School and another guidance teacher from the Senior School were interviewed. Following the interviews with these professionals, six Year 9 students who expressed a desire to change one or both of their option subjects were interviewed. Two themes emerged from the data collected: the factors which affected students before they made

their subject choices; and the role played by career guidance throughout this exercise.

KEY FINDINGS

Three main factors transpired when students were asked about the reasons for their choice of subjects: the likeability of a subject; the subject's utility in finding a job; and the students' ability in that subject.

The main reason for choosing a subject was identified as liking a subject and finding it fun. Teaching methods appeared to have a bearing on whether a subject is perceived as fun and enjoyable with students showing a preference towards hands-on and practical subjects. Very few students were influenced by the teacher who spoke to them about a subject or by the surroundings in which lessons were held.

The second most common reason for choosing a subject revolved around the utility of that subject. Some of the interviewed students mentioned how sometimes this issue was a source of disagreement between students and their parents, as parents would advise in favour of or against a subject depending on the career prospects this subject would offer. Students were asked about their career aspirations and data collected from this question indicated that students' aspirations were linked to their family background. These findings corroborate other research (for example, Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997; Sullivan, 2001; Debono, 2008; Glaesser & Cooper, 2011) which explains how the socio-economic background and the cultural capital of an individual impact their educational choices. When fathers occupied a blue-collar job, there was a higher likelihood that students had low aspirations, when compared to students whose fathers had white-collar jobs.

Ability emerged as the third most common factor affecting student choices. Students' responses indicated that when they made their choice, they considered the grades they used to get in Middle School and the perception they have of a subject, with some opting for certain subjects because they thought they would be easier than others. Moreover, a few of the interviewees

mentioned that they sought reassurance from teachers on their ability in a subject before they chose it.

Gender differences in the take-up of subjects were observed in line with Gottfredson's theory of Circumscription, Compromise and Self-Creation (1981). No female student chose Vocational Engineering and no male student chose Health and Social Care. Only two female students chose Vocational IT and both students expressed a wish to change this subject. A major disparity between the genders was also observed in the take-up of Computer Studies and Design and Technology, where the number of male students outnumbered the number of female students by far.

The vast majority of students (84.4%) sought their parents'/guardians' advice and approval before they committed to a choice. In contrast, 17.1% of students spoke to a career advisor or a guidance teacher. This does not mean that students were not exposed to career guidance, as there were many activities organised during Year 8 aimed at helping students make informed choices. Students were asked to comment on the effectiveness of these activities.

Although the number of students who sought one-to-one guidance sessions was not high, almost all of the students who sought this service reported that it was very effective. In general, PSCD lessons on decision-making were identified as being most helpful, followed by an information meeting which was held in the school's hall for all Year 8 students. Online information or printed material about subjects were next, followed by a visit to the senior school. Discussions with interviewees on these activities revealed how some students preferred talking to someone in person, in particular, teachers of the subject they were interested in, even though they had reviewed the information which was made available to them online or in printed form. It is also interesting to note that many students identified the meeting which was organised for their parents/guardians as another activity which helped *them* in making their choice.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study provided further insight into the factors which influence students' academic choices. Furthermore, it allowed students an opportunity to discuss which career guidance activities they found to be most helpful. These findings have important implications for practice which can assist the practitioner when s/he is designing and implementing the options exercise. Furthermore, a number of recommendations were also put forward by the students themselves, including having taster lessons in all subjects before choosing. Finally, parents' role in this exercise needs to be researched further.

This thesis was supervised by Prof. Manwel Debono

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CLS Activities 2021-2022: Events, Meetings & Milestones



2021

40th Anniversary Event (24th February 2021)

The CLS celebrated its 40th anniversary at a well-attended event, held at the Aula Magna, University of Malta Valetta Campus. The occasion was opened by Prof Godfrey Baldacchino, CLS Chair, and Prof Alfred Vella, Rector of the University of Malta. This was followed by a keynote speech by Prof Edward Zammit who reflected upon how work and Industrial Relations have changed over the last 40 years. Prof Godfrey Baldacchino then chaired a panel discussion of distinguished guests on the same topic, including, Mr Josef Bugeja, Secretary General of the General Workers Union, Mr Josef Vella, CEO of the UHM - Voice of the Workers, Mr Marco Bonnici, President



of Forum Unions Malin, Mr Joe Farrugia, Director General of the Malta Employers Association, and Ms Diane Vella Muscat, Director General of the Department of Industrial and Employment Relations. The panel discussion was followed by interventions by Members of Parliament, including Hon Clyde Caruana the Minister for Finance and Employment, Hon Carmelo Abela, the Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister responsible for Industrial and Employment Relations, and Hon Jason Azzopardi, Opposition Spokesperson for Employment, Enterprise and Industrial Relations. The occasion was closed by speeches by the current and previous directors of the CLS, including, Dr Luke Fiorini, Mr Saviour Rizzo, Dr Anna Borg and Prof Manwel Debono.

As part of the 40 year anniversary celebrations, a series of videos were created to mark the event. These focused on the experiences of notable alumni as well as memorable events and occasions.

New Employment Policy – Discussion (March 2021)

Prof Manwel Debono participated in an online focus group organised by the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development, Malta. He discussed aspects relating to transferable skills, career guidance, morality and sustainability, foreign workers, employee relations, and unionisation.

Focusing on Values During Career Change or Progression

(March 2021)

Prof Manwel Debono carried out a keynote address at the online “2020 Europass Annual Conference” organised by EUPA, Malta. The address focused on the meaning and importance of values and outlined a model that can help individuals reflect on their own work values.

Autism Advisory Council (March 2022)

Dr Luke Fiorini was appointed a member of the Autism Advisory Council. The council operates under the auspices of the Ministry for Inclusion, Social Wellbeing and Voluntary Organisations.

Migrants and Decent Work in Malta (May 2021)

Prof Manwel Debono participated in the online “Third International Workshop about Decent Work”, organised by the University of Malaga, Malaga, Spain. His presentation focused on the challenges faced by Filipino migrant workers in Malta and how the pandemic affected their working conditions.

COVID-19 as an Occupational Disease (10th June 2021)

Dr Luke Fiorini was invited to provide a presentation about the occupational implications of COVID-19 in Malta at an online conference organised by the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), Brussels. The presentation focused on if COVID-19 was considered an occupational disease in Malta and the implications for occupational health and safety, workers’ compensation and the employment of workers in Malta.

Evaluation of the University of Malta’s Sexual Harassment Policy (June 2021)

Prof Manwel Debono was invited to present the results of a survey to the University of Malta Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity Committee. The presentation showed the attitudes and experiences of University of Malta workers and students relating to sexual harassment.

Measuring and Understanding Inequality Dynamics in Malta Conference (22nd June 2021)

The CLS organised a hybrid conference held at the University of Malta to present research commissioned by the CLS and conducted by Mr Melchior Vella and Mr Gilmour Camilleri on inequality dynamics in Malta. Following the presentation of the research, representatives of key social partners and academics were asked to comment on the findings during a panel discussion. The panel discussion was chaired by CLS senior academic, Dr Anna Borg, and included interventions by Mr Kevin Camilleri the Deputy Secretary General of the GWU, Ms Isabelle Farrugia, the Assistant Director of the UHM –



Voice of the Workers, Mr Joseph Farrugia the Director General of the MEA, Dr Daniel Gravino, a Lecturer from the Department of Economics, Faculty of Economics, Management & Accountancy, University of Malta, and Dr Anne Marie Thake, the Head of Department, Department of Public Policy, Faculty of Economics, Management & Accountancy, University of Malta. The meeting was opened by CLS Director, Dr Luke Fiorini, and closed by CLS Chair, Prof Godfrey Baldacchino.

Change in Leadership Position (July 2021)

Prof Tanya Sammut Bonnici, Pro-Rector for Strategic Planning and Enterprise, was appointed Chair of the CLS board. She succeeded Prof Godfrey Baldacchino who occupied the position of Chair for around ten years. The CLS would like to thank Prof Baldacchino for his efforts over the years, who was instrumental in many of the CLS achievements both during this period, as well as prior.

Richmond Foundation - Appointment to the Board of Trustees

(October 2021)

Dr Anna Borg was appointed as a member of the Board of Trustees to the Richmond Foundation. The foundation provides community mental health services that promote mental wellbeing, address the prevention of mental health problems and provide support for good quality of life.

Book launch - Working Life and the Transformation of Malta:

1960-2020 (4th November 2021)

The book ‘Working Life and the Transformation of Malta: 1960–2020’ was launched during the Malta Book Festival 2021, held at the MFCC. The book was edited by Prof Manwel Debono and Prof Godfrey Baldacchino. The book documents and discusses the transformation of the world of work in Malta from the 1960s till the present day.

Ergonomics Seminar (24th October 2021)

The CLS held a seminar on ergonomics for the Bachelor (Hons) in Occupational Health and Safety second year students. The seminar, held at the Radisson Blu Resort, St Julian’s, was delivered by Dr Luke Fiorini and forms part of the unit on the same topic.



Bachelor (Hons) in Work and Human Resources Student Visits (2021)

As part of their studies, and accompanied by Prof Godfrey Baldacchino, students of the Bachelor (Hons) in Work and Human Resources students carried out visits to Farsons (October) and to Koperattivi Malta (November).



Undergraduate Graduations (December)

The CLS celebrated the graduations of three different cohorts of students. These included students who had studied for the Diploma in Gender Work and Society, the Bachelor (Hons) in Work and Human Resources and the Bachelor (Hons) in Occupational Health and Safety. The latter, pictured above, were the first cohort to graduate with this degree.



The Economic Impact of COVID: Sectors Strengthened

(December 2021)

Prof Manwel Debono was asked to participate in the international conference “Impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on employment and social matters”, organised by the Union Haddiema Maghqudin – Voice of the workers, Malta. He discussed how particular economic sectors adjusted to the impact of the pandemic.

National Order of Merit (13th December 2021)

Professor Edward Zammit, the founder of the Centre for Labour Studies (CLS), as well as an ex-Director, ex-Chair, and current honorary member of the CLS Board, was bestowed with the National Order of Merit on the 13 December 2021 by the President of Malta in recognition of his academic career.

2022

Workgroup on Mental Wellbeing in the Maltese Workforce

(January 2022)

Dr Luke Fiorini was appointed a member of the Workgroup on Mental Wellbeing in the Maltese Workforce. The group was chaired by Prof Edward Zammit and was organised under the auspices of the Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister of Malta.

Centre for Labour Studies Research Conference (16th February 2022)

The CLS organised a very well-attended online conference which aimed to present the many research findings of CLS academics and alumni. The conference was opened by Dr Luke Fiorini who presented the CLS research efforts. This was followed by a presentation on poverty in Malta. The study was commissioned by the CLS and was conducted by Mr Gilmour Camilleri



and Mr Melchior Vella. This was followed by presentations by Dr Luke Fiorini on the health of remote workers, by Dr Anna Borg, who offered a gender perspective on the evolving Maltese labour market, and by Prof Manwel Debono who presented research findings on the working conditions of Filipinos in Malta. These presentations were followed by two parallel sessions featuring alumni from the Bachelor (Hons) in Work and Human Resources and alumni from the Bachelor (Hons) in Occupational Health and Safety. In total, thirteen alumni presented the results of their theses.

The Health of Remote Workers During COVID-19 (February 2022)

Dr Luke Fiorini participated in the 33rd International Congress on Occupational Health (ICOH) where he presented research conducted on the health of remote workers during COVID-19. The conference was carried out online due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Diversity Pays (March 2022)

Dr Anna Borg delivered the keynote speech at a conference organised by the Malta Chamber called “Diversity Pays”. Her presentation focused on Gender Balance and Decision Making at the Workplace.

Postgraduate Graduation (March 2022)

The CLS celebrated the graduations of those who completed the Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development in March. The ceremony was held at the Valletta Campus, University of Malta.

External accreditation by IOSH (March 2022)

The Bachelor (Hons) in Occupational Health and Safety was re-accredited by The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH). IOSH is the world's Chartered body and largest membership organisation for health and safety professionals.



A New Contract with Eurofound (March 2022)



Since 2003, the Centre for Labour Studies has provided regular research reports on the Maltese labour market to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). This is a tripartite EU agency based in Dublin. The CLS won a tender to continue representing Malta in Eurofound's Network of European Correspondents which runs until 2026. This contract provides the CLS with a valuable European platform and revenue stream.

Dealing with Addiction Difficulties from an HR Perspective

(May 2022)

Prof Manwel Debono was invited as a speaker in a national conference called "Ix-xoghol... u l-Addiction?" organised by OASI Foundation, Malta. The presentation tackled topics relating to how HR professionals should deal with addiction issues at places of work.

Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave in Malta (22nd June 2022)

Dr Anna Borg was invited to participate in a panel discussion on maternity, paternity and parental leave in Malta. The event, which was held in Valletta, was organised by Moviment Graffiti.

Erasmus Academic in Malta (June 2022)

The CLS hosted Dr Ing Lucie Kocurkova, an academic from the VSB Technical University of Ostrava, Czech Republic, where she specialises in occupational safety. Dr Ing Kocurkova travelled to Malta via the Erasmus mobility arrangement. During her stay, the health and safety programmes offered by the two universities were discussed, as was a possible future collaboration between the two universities.

The CLS Open a LinkedIn Page (August 2022)

In an effort to improve the CLS' visibility and maintain contact with CLS students and alumni, the CLS opened a LinkedIn page. The CLS already operates a Facebook page, which has over 1,000 followers.

Periodic Programme Review (September 2022)

Between May and September 2022, under the direction of the Quality Support Unit at the UM, the CLS undertook a Periodic Programme Review (PPR) of its four courses. Self-evaluation documents on each course were compiled by the Centre and were discussed during a stakeholders' committee meeting held in June. Commendations and recommendations for each course emerged from this process, and the CLS developed an action plan in order to further improve each course.



New Member of Staff (September 2022)

The CLS welcomed a new member of staff, Alessia Zahra, who joins the CLS administrative team. Alessia, who holds a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics, replaces Caroline Chetcuti who contributed to the administrative operation of the CLS, and who mainly focused on the Bachelor (Hons) in Occupational Health and Safety programme. The CLS thanks Caroline for her efforts and wishes her well in her future endeavours.

Opening of New Courses (October 2022)

Following a sustained marketing campaign, both the Bachelor (Hons) in Occupational Health and Safety and the Bachelor (Hons) in Work and Human Resources opened once again in 2022. To mark the occasion, a special opening lecture followed by a reception was organised for each course.



Promotion to Associate Professor (October 2022)

Manwel Debono was promoted to Associate Professor. Prof Debono has worked as an academic at the CLS since 2003 and also served as a Director of the CLS between 2009 and 2014. During his time at the CLS, he has contributed substantially to lecturing, the development of its courses, research efforts and other outreach activities.

The Transposition of the Work Life Balance Directive

(October 2022)

Dr Anna Borg gave a presentation to the Social Affairs Committee members in Parliament on the transposition of the EU directive on Work-Life balance and its impact on women and men in Malta.

Appointment to Erasmus+ Advisory Board (October 2022)

Dr Luke Fiorini was appointed to the advisory board of an Erasmus+ project entitled OSH Digit. The project aims to create digital tools relevant to occupational safety and health education.

COVID-19 Impact on the Employment Conditions of Women, Youth, People with Disabilities, and Atypical Workers

(October 2022)

Prof Manwel Debono together with Ms Christine Garzia carried out two training seminars for trade union members as part of the project commissioned by the General Workers' Union (GWU), forming part of an initiative called "Trade Unions for a Fair Recovery - Strengthening the role of trade unions in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 crisis", launched by the European Trade Union Confederation, Malta, October 2022. The seminars included the presentation of results from a survey and discussions of how trade unions can improve the working conditions of workers in Malta.

Representativeness in Malta (October 2022)

Dr Luke Fiorini provided a presentation on ‘Representativeness in Malta’ at a two-day meeting on representativeness studies by Eurofound, held in Bucharest, Romania. Representativeness studies primarily deal with the degree to which trade unions and employer associations represent workers in specific sectors.

Session Held with Minister Responsible for the OHSA

(8th December 2022)

The Centre for Labour Studies hosted the Minister responsible for the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA), Hon Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi for a session entitled “Occupational Health and Safety in Malta: The Way Forward”. The session consisted of a candid discussion between the Minister and students reading for a Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons). Topics discussed included the regulation and management of specific sectors such as construction, the growth and regulation of the profession of health and safety in Malta, and emerging issues such as mental health at work.



Bachelor (Hons) in Occupational Health and Safety Students

Visits to Industry (2021 – 2022)

Conducting visits within workplaces is a key consideration in order to enhance the knowledge of students of the degree in occupational health and safety. During 2021 and 2022, students of various cohorts carried out a number of visits, although the number of visits was restricted by the COVID-19 pandemic. These included visits for first-year students to the Palumbo Superyacht facility and to Farsons. Visits for other cohorts included those to KIA motors, De La Rue and Attard and Co. The students also carried out practical session within UM laboratories and sites.

Involvement in Work Participation Europe Network (2021 – 2022)

Dr Luke Fiorini is a member of the Work Participation Europe (WPE) Network, by the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), Brussels, Belgium, where he represents Malta. Dr Fiorini attended biannual meetings during 2021 and 2022, three of which were carried out remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, whilst one was carried out physically in Paris.

Centre for Labour Studies Board Meetings (2021 – 2022)

The Centre for Labour Studies held several board meetings throughout 2021 and 2022. The date and location for each board meeting are listed below.

Chair Prof Godfrey Baldacchino

Thursday 20 May 2021 at 10 am virtually via Zoom

Chair Prof Tanya Sammut Bonnici

Wednesday 6 October 2021 at 9 am Council Room

Wednesday 19 January 2022 at 10 am virtually via Zoom

Monday 4 April 2022 at 10 am virtually via Zoom

Thursday 7 July 2022 at 10 am Faculty of Law Boardroom

Tuesday 4 October 2022 at 10:30 am Council Room

Financial Statements (2021-2022)



General Expenses

CLSSUPP-01

	Year 2021	Year 2022
Salaries Academic Staff	181,741.02	209,023.54
Salaries Support Staff	68,750.53	74,304.59
Operational Expenses	2,784.56	910.26
Total	253,276.11	284,238.39

BREAKDOWN OF OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURE

	Year 2021	Year 2022
Computer Accessories	-	-
Other Equipment - Non Fixed Asset	229.00	-
Stationery	696.64	-
Printing	802.50	-
Courier	-	61.34
Books	-	-
Other Professional Fees	-	-
Advertising	-	300.00
Hospitality	-	-

Meeting Catering	-	106.49
Course Other Expenses	-	-
Transport	-	-
General Expenses	319.42	285.43
Internal Ordering - IT Services	70.00	-
Internal Ordering - Communications Office	-	-
Internal Ordering - Printing Unit	192.50	157.00
Internal Ordering - Conference Unit	474.50	-
Computer Equipment	-	-
Total	2,784.56	910.26

External Expenses

Breakdown of External Expenditure	Year 2021	Year 2022
Advertising	-	100.00
Books	1,575.00	-
Computer Accessories	-	-
Computer Upgrades	-	-
Departmental Funds	-	-
Employee Travel	-	-
Fixtures and Fittings - Non Fixed Asset	-	-
Hospitality	45.50	176.95
Internal Ordering - IT Services - Sale of Software	-	-
Meeting Catering	-	-
Other Professional Fees	-	-
Patents and Trademarks	-	-
Printing	-	-
Subcontracting	- 3,751.58	-
Third Party Accommodation	-	-
Total	- 2,131.08	276.95

Eurofound Contract

	Year 2021	Year 2022*
Income	€44,033.73	€24,940.88
Expenditure	Year 2021	Year 2022
Support Basic Salary	€19,145.00	€16,445.00
Support Others (Extra/Occasional Salaries)	€6,834.95	€10,896.44
Professional Fees	€1,105.00	€60.95
Travel	-	-
Remaining Total	€16,948.78	-€2,461.51

**Accounts for Year 2022 are based on income from two different contracts; one that ended in February 2022, and the other that commenced in March 2022.*



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