



# ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

## Social Wellbeing is a right – A view from a Faculty

The finery of our Faculty is that it allows us to link up, to share, to immerse ourselves in the narratives of pain, of those who lie at the bottom of the heap.

This is a Faculty that converges the noblest of disciplines: from psychology to criminology, from gerontology to youth and community studies, from migration studies to disability, gender and queer studies, from social policy and social work to counselling and family studies.

It is a Faculty that hosts 100's of students offering almost 35 programmes. Is this enough? Of course not!

We are leading the setting up of a migration cluster, currently working on consolidating funds for our Research Observatory, setting up apps, developing new courses, organising CPD programmes for a number of agencies, collaborating with Faculties and Institutes, consolidating thousands of Euros for research, currently drafting 3 MoUs after having signed a second one in just 7 months and designing modern and fresh promotional material to reach out to potential students.

In other words, we are reaching out. Because a Faculty's greatest challenge lies in remaining relevant by responding to the sector and concomitantly leaving an indelible mark on the way social policy develops. In fact, that is why we have developed the Stakeholders Forum intended to converge the different partners we work with, NGOs, Commissions, Ministries.

If we are to keep moving forward we can only do so by engaging collectively towards the common social good with a deep sense of duty towards the promotion of human rights as described so eloquently in our Faculty's mission statement:

*The different fields of knowledge are multidisciplinary. They are animated by the same utilitarian spirit and led by the same values of solidarity, empathy, social justice, empowerment, inclusion, rehabilitation, prevention and positive intervention.*

*Our shared vision for this Faculty is to keep doing what we are doing best, that is to promote the social, political and community inter-domain development of our society through the disciplines that our Departments host and the 'cause' they champion.*

This is exactly what the Faculty is about. This is what my colleagues and myself are striving towards. Undoubtedly all scholars of are of repute having strong community links. We are well connected to international fora and with a sustained excellence in teaching and scholarship. But the topping on all of this is this desire to permeate our communities and through research and teaching produce a body of knowledge in the field of social wellbeing that should give added value to our community. Moreover, our Faculty needs to function as a vehicle towards flattening the walls that we have surrounded ourselves with and focus on social justice education

whilst instilling a critical sense in our students and communities.

The Faculty is there to accompany us on our journey in discovering the social truths that are sprouting around us and how we can influence the shaping of the policy and practice milieu. Our Faculty should be at the core of nonstop social change and a bastion and guardian of civil rights.

Nonetheless, social wellbeing does not grow on trees but needs to be instilled, implanted and inculcated in our society because social wellbeing is being taken over by standards rather than commanded by quality of life. That is why, it is imperative that the Faculty judiciously interprets the 'language' and symbols that encapsulate our communities so that we promote ethical reasoning and compassion.

We need to do this through our innovative research, our passion for teaching and our zeal to mentor students. The opportunity that the Alma Mater gives to us academics to develop intellectual leadership, independent thought, and critical analysis should lead us and our students towards sustaining scholarly freedom and ripen emergent future national leaders – but not only.

We need to be activists – not necessarily dangling to chimneys or strapping ourselves to trees but by using the power bestowed to us by society. We need to use this influence not only to sustain ourselves economically, not only to get wealthier but to bring about a transformation, to activate change, to condition policy and politics, strategy and vision.

That is why I believe that our presence in the community as a Faculty is wanting. We need to make sure that we become a key player in social and public policy design. The Faculty needs to lead and to show vigour when society either decides to dismiss or discusses with tameness and lack of empirical data the myriad social matters on the country's agenda – an agenda, that let's face it, is founded on populism and *Xarabankesque* debate, that is slobbering a dialectic of hate, of antagonism and of obstruction, rather than genuinely attempting at creating concord and respect.

Yes, a Faculty has to be proactive to ensure social change, to drive policy-making and decision-taking within a human rights discourse. The Faculty needs to be a focal point in this regard and provide the space to prompt a University and national wide debate and response.

That is why we need to be in sync with the grassroots. That is why we need stakeholders, activists and service providers to be involved statutorily in the design of our courses.

We need to reach out to the community by taking our research back to the community.

We need to find ways how to democratize our knowledge be-



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cause a Faculty should not only be measured by the number of students or by the amount of courses or by its voluminous research – but by its ability to develop a strong relationship with the social actors, practitioners, human service agencies, government entities, activists, non-traditional learners and NGOs.

The Faculty should be a playground of ideas – and an initiator of opinions, positions and viewpoints. But all of this needs to be governed by a deep-seated commitment towards social justice. Because social wellbeing is a right and like every other right we need to work hard to make right.

We are challenged nowadays more than ever to accept a neoliberal inspired agenda as if we all live in separate worlds and as if ignoring the collective interests is ok. That's wrong.

It's our ability to live together, to engage with each other, to be able to love and be loved, to respect and to be respected – that is OK. It is about sharing the wealth of our community, of knowing that I am part of this big jigsaw puzzle called community – that is OK.

We are not only here to treat but to give hope by accompanying. That is why this Faculty is so important in the grand scheme of things. We venture together because we are wired that way. We are intended to engage in this lovely experiment we call life. And what is life, with all the wealth and capital we might harvest, if not founded on the principles of social justice, of inclusion, of voice and control, centered around the 'human soul', around the wellbeing of the individual and concerns for an improved society.

### Courses being offered by the Faculty for Social Wellbeing

- Certificate in Community Access for Disabled People (*Part Time Evening*)
  - Postgraduate Certificate in Counselling Supervision (*Part Time Evening*)
  - Diploma in Community Access for Disabled People (*Part Time Evening*)
  - Higher Diploma in Gerontology and Geriatrics (*Part Time Evening*)
  - Higher Diploma in Psychology (*Full Time Day*)
  - Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) (*Full Time Day*)
  - Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Wellbeing Studies (*Full Time Day and Part Time Day*)
  - Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Criminology (*Full-time Malta and Part-time evening Gozo only*)
  - Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Criminology
  - Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Policy (*Full Time Day and Part Time Day*)
  - Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Work (*Full Time Day and Part Time Day*)
  - Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Youth and Community Studies (*Full Time Day*)
  - Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Youth and Community Studies (*Part Time Evening*)
  - Master of Arts in Transcultural Counselling (*Full Time Day*)
  - Master of Arts in Criminology (*Part Time Evening*)
  - Master in Probation Services (*Full Time Day*)
  - Master of Arts in Disability Studies (Preparatory Programme only) (*Part Time Day*)
  - Master in Family Studies (*Part Time Evening*)
  - Master of Gerontology and Geriatrics (*Full Time Day*)
  - Master of Psychology in Clinical Psychology (*Full Time Day*)
  - Master of Psychology in Counselling Psychology (*Full Time Day*)
  - Master of Psychology in Educational Psychology (*Full Time Day*)
  - Master of Psychology in Health Psychology (*Full Time Day*)
  - Master of Arts in Social Work (Preparatory Programme only) (*Part Time Day*)
  - Master of Arts in Youth Justice (*Part Time Evening*)
  - Master in Youth and Community Studies (*Part Time Evening*)
  - Master of Arts in Community Action and Development (*Part Time Evening*)
- Please visit our landing page for more details:  
<http://www.um.edu.mt/socialwellbeing/notices/courses>

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