

## Chapter 4: Effective International and Multicultural Practices in Schools and Society

---

# Effective **International** and **Multicultural** Practices in Schools and Society

Dr Anita Seguna



Nations worldwide have been challenged, positively and negatively, by globalisation and its effects. The educational sphere has been likewise impacted. Initially, governments turned to higher educational institutions to ensure that future generations were being prepared for the reality within the 21st century. To counteract globalisation trends, the educational sphere was forced to review its aims and functions. Knight (2003) ascertains that through internationalisation, globalisation is addressed, and this is evident at the national, sector, and institution levels through "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" (2).

Internationalisation, however, does not affect only higher educational institutions, but as proclaimed by multiple researchers in the field (Maxwell et al. 2018; Yemini 2012; Pevzner et al. 2019; Seguna 2019), through normative and empirical evidence, internationalisation also manifests itself in school and general education. Seguna (2019) ascertains that "Internationalisation within schools, therefore, serves the purpose of preparing the learners to become knowledgeable, internationalised learners within the globalised world." (57)

One of the effects of globalisation is mobility and migration. Schools have been racially, culturally, ethnically, linguistically, and religiously transformed, making them more diverse than ever before. This has resulted in "a wide and growing ethnic, cultural, social-class, and linguistic gap between many of the nation's teachers and their students. Teachers are faced with both the challenges and opportunities of dealing with diversity creatively and constructively in their classrooms and schools." (Banks and McGee Banks 2016: xvii).

Seguna (2019), in her research on *Internationalisation in Secondary Schools in Malta*, discloses that schools are finding ways of fusing their core beliefs and the 21st century exigencies and responding to the pressures being placed upon them. Notwithstanding this awareness and the efforts individual educational institutions and entities are engaging in, educational authorities and school leaders need to ensure that all stakeholders are better equipped to cope with this



## Chapter 4: Effective International and Multicultural Practices in Schools and Society

---

changing diverse reality.

International research has unearthed a plethora of good practices which educational institutions are embedding within their organisations. Schools need to ensure the inculcation of global awareness, competences and 21st century skills which lead learners to improve their: "character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking. These competences [need to] encompass compassion, empathy, socio-emotional learning, entrepreneurialism, and related skills required for high functioning in a complex universe." (Fullan, Quinn and McEachen 2018:16) Schools have introduced environmental education, as well as European and global education citizenship into their programmes of study. Educational concepts such as International Baccalaureate and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and partaking in international assessments such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS are also examples of how educational institutions are internationalising their practices.

Similarly to how international educational institutions have been affected, the Maltese scenario is no different. An analysis of national statistics demonstrates that since Malta's accession to the EU, the international population has more than doubled, reaching a culmination of 14% in 2018 (Eurostat 2020). According to Eurostat (2020), the international population in Malta is at 67,145. Contrary to popular belief, the international population is mainly made up of EU nationals (57.4% i.e. 38,563) while 42.6% (28,582) constitute non-EU nationals. The National Statistics Office (NSO 2018) also claims that in 2018, 9.7% of the whole student population within all three Maltese school sectors amounted to approximately 9,000 students.

National policies have only started to be written and this leaves educators and educational institutions fending for themselves. However, local research is demonstrating that schools, non-governmental organisations, and individual staff members have been counteracting the prevalent struggles. Local researchers, amongst which are the five authors who have contributed within this section of the journal, have provided a current snapshot of what is taking place within schools. Through their findings they have provided exemplars

of good practices and recommendations for local authorities, educational institutions, and staff members.

**Darmanin's** paper *Expanding Borders* seeks to question whether cultural intelligence and different cultures affect leadership styles. She questions whether leaders shape culture or are shaped by it and seeks to understand whether one's leadership would need to be adapted due to the various cultures within primary schools.

**Radu and De Vita**, through their paper *Addressing Societal Polarisation in Maltese Schools through Experimental Laboratories*, discuss ARMOUR, a project which has sought the opinions of various stakeholders on societal polarization and violent extremism. They also investigate whether these stakeholders have access to resources to mitigate these aspects.

**Wright's** paper *The Facing the Challenge of Preparing Maltese Schools and Students for a Multicultural Society: An Opportunity to Redefine Identity in the Light of "Otherness"*, examines multiculturalism seminars aimed at Year 10 students which offer them an opportunity to discuss, share and reflect on multiculturalism and the experiences of people coming from diverse cultures.

These papers share a common outcome. They demonstrate that migration has changed the schools' landscape, but different schools and organisations have been forward-looking in their approach. Both Radu and De Vita and Wright disclose the unfounded fear within schools which is often the fruit of both religious and political beliefs and ideologies, peer pressures, negative attitudes and stereotypes stemming from incorrect information, false information from social media and family influences. A lack of teacher training and re-training on topics such as inter- and multiculturalism, radicalization and polarization is also evident.

Findings from these papers have produced four overarching recommendations. Firstly, the importance of the state and educational authorities to focus on encouraging diversity, integration, interculturalism and the empowerment of

## Chapter 4: Effective International and Multicultural Practices in Schools and Society

---

stakeholders. Authorities should also expect higher educational institutions to train and re-train the teaching personnel in how to adapt to interculturalism and diversity. Secondly, it is necessary for school leaders to be culturally intelligent, learn how to use this intelligence and utilise empowering and transformational leadership styles to create a positive climate and learning community within schools. Thirdly, the individual efforts of the teaching staff and learning support educators is crucial and needs to be supported to ensure the academic integration and support for local students and international learners. Finally, schools need to provide an enriching environment which gives a voice to all learners, irrespective of race and culture. In addition, learning programmes should develop the learners' language skills, while the schools' curricular and extra-curricular programmes should teach the learners critical thinking, anger management, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution. These skills are essential to cultivate active citizenship. Schools also need to ensure that the learners form positive relationships and socialisation should be enhanced, possibly through sports. Finally, the role of parents to aid the integration process should also be cultivated.

The local context would therefore benefit from developing the teachers' skills and competences and bringing about an awareness of intercultural benefits for all stakeholders. This response to local and national needs would also help contribute towards the international sphere. As advocated by Seguna (2019), "when schools discover the 'formula' which helps them to bring about school improvement and effectiveness, schools readily invest in it" (57). It is therefore hoped that similar research as that provided by researchers for this symposium continues to be taken on and educators will be inspired to continue working towards ensuring diversity and integration.

---

## References

Banks, J. A., and McGee Banks, C.A. (eds). (2016). *Multicultural Education Issues and Perspectives* (9th ed.), USA: John Wiley and Sons. Inc.

Eurostat 'Dataset – Population on 1 January by age group, sex and citizenship' [migr\_pop1ctz], accessed February 11, 2020, [https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_pop1ctz&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_pop1ctz&lang=en).

Fullan, M., Quinn, J., and McEachen, J. (2018). *Deep Learning: Engage the World Change the World*. UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Knight, J. (2003). 'Updated Internationalization Definition', *International Higher Education*, 33: 2–3.

Maxwell, C., Deppe, U., Krüger, H.H., and Helsper, W. (eds). (2018) *Elite Education and Internationalisation. From the Early Years to Higher Education*, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan

National Statistics Office (2018b) *Statistics on pre–primary, primary and secondary formal education*. Retrieved from: [https://nso.gov.mt/en/publicatons/Publications\\_by\\_Unit/Documents/C4\\_Education\\_and\\_Information\\_Society\\_Statistics/Statistics\\_on\\_Preprimary,%20primary%20and%20Secondary%20Formal%20Education.pdf](https://nso.gov.mt/en/publicatons/Publications_by_Unit/Documents/C4_Education_and_Information_Society_Statistics/Statistics_on_Preprimary,%20primary%20and%20Secondary%20Formal%20Education.pdf)

Pevzner, M., Rakhkochkine, A., Shirin, A., and Shaydorova, N. (2019) 'Internationalization of Schools in Russia Policy', *Futures in Education* 0 (0): 1–17.

Seguna, A. (2019) *Internationalisation in Secondary schools in Malta*, Malta: Midsea Books Ltd.

Yemini, M. (2012) 'Internationalisation Assessment in Schools: theoretical contributions and practice implications', *Journal of Research in International Education*, 11: 152–164. DOI:10.1177/1475240912452205.