RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

COUNTRY FOCUS: MALTA

Sans Frontiers Europe

604/605, St. Joseph High Road, Hamrun, Malta

Tel: +356 27 822 764

info@sansfrontierseurope.com

http://www.sansfrontierseurope.com/

Sans Frontiers Europe circulated the Survey through its Online Network System to 1000 Teachers and received feedback from the Primary and Secondary Level.

The main outcomes are the following:

1)What challenges/difficulties amongst the students have you encountered when you've started teaching a new class/group with a foreign background?

All respondents acknowledged the fact that many students from different nationalities

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are attending Maltese state schools, including students from UK, Italy, France, Serbia, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Syria, Turkey, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, South America and Asia. One teacher from St. Paul's Bay Primary School said that the school hosts students from 43 different countries.

The main difficulty faced by the teachers was the **language** - It was pointed out that there were over 600 migrant students who could not communicate in English or Maltese in State schools and the number is not decreasing. In the primary school, most of the migrant children do not have the literacy levels expected to be able to cope effectively and tend to struggle with the work presented. it is expected that the children master Maltese and English to be able to follow the work presented to them in schools. Other problems mentioned **included low level of education, lack of skills** as well as lack of knowledge of the different cultures which make it difficult for the students to adjust in the classroom.

2) Do these challenges alter over time when the student's progress? If so, in what ways?

In relation to literacy, in most state primary schools, complementary education and literacy support teachers are asked to support the language acquisition of such learners so as to facilitate their social, cultural and educational integration. In the secondary sector some of these learners are provided with programmes in Maltese and English as additional languages or assigned to a Core Competences Support Programme. However, support is still lacking and most of the respondents feel that that challenges do not alter. Most of the respondents confirmed the need to change their approach in the classroom in order to effectively deal with the presence of Migrant students in their classrooms including the 1. Use of visual aids; 2. Production of bi-lingual hand-outs for students; 3. Upgrading in Revisiting time- and curriculum management; 4. Immediate translation of sentences spoken in Maltese; 5. Revising topics, particularly when the student is new to the class.

3)Are the challenges/difficulties different depending on sex, ethnicity, culture, religion, and/or educational background? If so, in what ways

Most of the respondents pointed out that the challenges are mainly linked with the different levels of education. Although most of the respondents have a positive general outlook on multicultural education and are more culturally relevant as educators, the level of assimilationist tendencies is excessive. It was pointed out that an inadequate number of teachers are willing to adapt their pedagogy to suit cultural diversity in

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classrooms, which they attribute to syllabi that are too focused, rigid and extensive. Some of the respondents also noted that a large number of local teachers have not received any academic training, nor pursued any further professional development in this regard.

4)Have you found a working strategy/method for finding a common ground when teaching students who face different kinds of challenges/have different difficulties in the same class/learning situation? If so, what strategy?

Professional training is to be provided to the teachers to work in a multicultural environment. It is not enough to ask teachers and others working in the school context to be aware of their own cultural perceptions and how such perceptions may influence their classroom interactions. There can be no tolerance for racist and Islamophobia or practice in a context that aspires to provide a quality education for all. Teachers should be equipped with skills and tools to be able to know, understand and tackle cultural and religious differences; Identify and avoid social exclusion, bullying and other threatening behaviour; make effective use of code-switching; Respondent also pointed about the important of the exchange programmes for teachers for the purposes of sharing best practices;

5)After how long can you detect signs of acceptance, adaptation and/or assimilation (if any) amongst the students?

All of the respondents said that there is no set time frame within which they can detect such signs.

6) Does the degree of adaptation differ depending on sex, ethnicity, culture, religion, and/or educational background? If so, could you give some examples?

Respondents pointed out that it is mainly the education background that can lead to a change in the adaptation process. However, most of the respondents noted once again that most educational institutions are not fully prepared to implement multicultural education in their classrooms. Multicultural education requires a staff that is not only diverse, but also culturally competent. Educators must be aware, responsive and embracing of the diverse beliefs, perspectives and experiences. They must also be willing and ready to address issues of controversy. These issues include, but are not limited to, racism, sexism and religious intolerance.

7)Have you noticed any differences in degrees of integration between teaching a single cultural class/group and a multicultural class/group? If so, what differences?

Once again respondents referred to fact that many students from different nationalities are attending Maltese state schools and classes are diverse and multicultural, not singular. However most of the respondents said that the challenges and the differences are the same and relate more to the education background, the language acquisition and the knowledge (or lack) of the different cultures.

8)Have you detected any topics that are difficult to teach/talk about in a multicultural class/group? If so, what topics?

Religion can be a challenging topic to discuss in the classrooms.

9)Are there situations where students end up in heated debates and can't seem to be able to regain focus? If so, does the degree of intensity differ between single cultural classes and multicultural classes? Could you give an example?

All of the respondents said that they did not experience any such problems, however some pointed out that there were incidents of resistance linked to Islamophobia in their respective schools towards non-Catholic students.

10)If you end up in such a "trap", have you found a strategy/"trick" to get out of the "trap" and get the class back on track? If so, what strategy/"trick"?

All of the respondents said that it is very important to communicate with all the students about being all valued members of the school and the school community as a strategy to get the class back on track. Students are more likely to engage in learning when they feel accepted and valued by their teachers and peers. One respondent stressed about the importance of enriching social studies lessons by including

Most of the respondents also spoke about the importance of the organization of group activities in the classroom so as to provide opportunities for students to establish positive interpersonal relations with everyone in the classroom.

11)Are there any areas in teaching a multicultural class you feel you struggle more with than other areas? If so, what areas?

Most teachers referred to the problem linked with religion and the fact that they are not equipped to deal with religious diversity in their classrooms. Students who are not Roman Catholic and do not participate in religion lessons and other activities that revolve around Roman Catholicism, for example celebrating Mass and the First Holy Communion are perceived as 'problematic as a group'. Most of the respondents were unsure as to how to deal with religious diversity – in particular Islam – in the classroom, and approach the subject and issues that arise with a sense of trepidation.

12)Would you like to be able to get support, tips and/or concrete exercises online designed for specific teaching situations? If so, in what format would you prefer it (for instance chat, searchable databank, videos etcetera)?

Digital literacy plays a central role in people's lives and can equip individuals with the abilities and knowledge to be able to participate actively in the classroom. Indeed, in Malta learning through digital modes, even from the first and early years, has been receiving a great deal of attention and digital literacy is one of the cross-curricular themes identified in the National Curriculum Framework. The Framework makes it clear that the integration of digital literacies in the Maltese curriculum can only be successful if educators themselves are proficient in their use. In view of this it was pointed out that an online support system for the implementation of one-one technologies set up on a nationwide basis would assist the teachers. Also capacity building activities for teachers in eLearning through Continuing Professional Development should be held regularly.

13) Does the teachers/educators background (ethnic, cultural etcetera) affect the dynamics, perception, influence and reception regarding challenges and integration in the class/learning situation? If so, could you give an example?

It is very important that the teacher is open to their students and puts forth the effort needed to get to know the students inside and outside of class. Openness will create communication in the class, which will ultimately develop into a classroom that is learning, understanding, and culturally fluent.