

## *University Continuing Education In Malta<sup>1</sup>*

**Peter Mayo**

[peter.mayo@um.edu.mt](mailto:peter.mayo@um.edu.mt)

Peter Mayo is Associate Professor in the Department of Education Studies, University of Malta, and Co-ordinator of the Department's Adult Education Programme. He was the Founding Editor of the *Journal of Postcolonial Education* (James Nicholas Publishers) that he still co-edits. Professor Mayo is the author or co-author of over forty articles published in international refereed journals and as chapters in books. His books include *The National Museum of Fine Arts* (Midsea, 1997), *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education* (Zed Books 1999; to be published in German by Argument-Verlag), *Beyond Schooling. Adult Education in Malta* (co-edited with G. Baldacchino, Mireva, 1997) and *Gramsci and Education* (co-edited with C. Borg and J. A. Buttigieg, Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

### **Abstract:**

This paper traces some of the most important developments in the history of University Continuing Education (UCE) at the University of Malta. It relies on material derived from relevant University files and from interviews with people who were involved, as organisers, teachers or students, in different UCE projects. The paper identifies the forces that influenced the various developments in UCE, attaching importance to the significant roles played by trade unions (including the teachers' union), the Church, the academic body and different government administrations in this regard. The analysis, starting from the post-war period, targets UCE initiatives during the 60s and 70s and contemporary provision. The concluding part of the paper consists of an exploration of options for future policy in the area, where the focus is primarily on issues concerning student funding, status of evening degrees, access, distance education and the role of UCE in revitalizing the public sphere.

---

<sup>1</sup> Another version of this paper is being published in Osborne, M. J. and Thomas, E. J., (Eds.), (2003). *Lifelong Learning in a Changing Continent: continuing education in the universities of Europe*. Leicester: NIACE - forthcoming.

I am indebted to Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino, Dr Carmel Borg and Mr Marvin Formosa for feedback on an earlier draft. I should also like to thank the following persons for responding to queries about specific details/issues and, in the case of some of them, for providing taped interviews and making relevant documents available: Mr Charles Bonello, Mr Joseph Bonnici, Prof. Lino Briguglio, Mr Mario Camilleri, Prof. Saviour Chircop, Prof. Dominic Fenech, Prof. Henry Frendo, Prof. Albert Leone Ganado, Mr Gorg Mallia, Prof. Daniel Massa and Mr Joseph Zammit Mangion. Any remaining shortcomings are my responsibility. I should also like to thank the staff at the University of Malta's

## Introduction

The *University of Malta*, owes much of its origins to a Jesuit-run college, the *Collegium Melitense*, established at the time when the Order of St John ruled the island. This College was set up by direct papal intervention on 12 November 1592 (University of Malta, 2001: 8; Fiorini, 2001: 34). A 1578 Bull of Pope Gregory XIII, and other enactments which permitted the Jesuits to confer degrees in certain areas, allowed the College to act as a degree granting institution (University of Malta, 2001: 8; Fiorini, 2001: 37). After the Jesuits' expulsion from Malta in 1768, the Order's Portuguese Grand Master, Manoel Pinto, confiscated their lands and, through a 1769 decree, set up a 'Pubblica Universita` di Studi Generali' (University of Malta, 2001: 8) or 'Universitas Studiorum' (Fiorini, 2001: 51). The University was abolished during the two-year period of French occupation (University of Malta, 2001: 9; Testa, 2001: 63) but was re-established following the commencement of British rule and eventually, from 1937 onwards, officially became known as the Royal University of Malta. This title was retained until 1974 (University of Malta, 2001: 9) when Malta became a republic and the institution officially became the University of Malta.

There is no all-embracing structure for university continuing education (henceforth UCE), at the University of Malta, that allows for the co-ordination of the various initiatives involved. It would be fair to say that the model of UCE being provided is one of dispersal with different faculties, institutes and programmes within faculties being responsible for the planning and implementation of UCE initiatives. The term 'University Continuing Education' is itself hardly used at the University of Malta. In this specific context, the term will be applied to part-time (these would normally involve evening and weekend classes) and other courses targeting adults (at different levels: certificate, diploma and degree levels), distance education and extra-mural courses/lectures. The term will also be used when discussing adult access to university courses, including the mainstream ones.

---

Registry for their great cooperation and for making the necessary files available. I am also indebted to the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on the text.

## Extension Studies

At present, the University does not have anything similar to a University Extension Service Department or a Department of Extra-Mural Studies. In the *Draft University of Malta Strategic Development Plan 2002-2006*, however, and specifically in the actions concerning Goal 5 ('Increase in Student Numbers'), one comes across the idea of establishing "a Lifelong Education Unit. The purpose of this Unit was to coordinate part-time courses in a manner that attracts more adult students especially those in mid-career, and those seeking postgraduate qualifications." (University of Malta, 2002:14). There was a time, in the 1970s and early 1980s, when an Extension Studies Board was in place. This provided both short and longer courses in specific areas of interest, depending, to a large extent, on popular demand and availability of expertise.

The various minutes of the Extension Studies Board (henceforth ESB) meetings, indicate that several courses were held or planned. The minutes refer to courses in such areas as Supervisory Management for Industry, Supervisory Management for Nurses, Archaeology, Maltese Linguistics, Library Techniques, one-off lectures by Maltese and visiting foreign speakers on a variety of topics (these were sometimes in connection with A level syllabi) and longer courses such as the two-year certificate course in Social Work.<sup>2</sup> A letter to the University Council President, signed by the ESB Chairperson, highlighted the tasks for the ESB during the early eighties.<sup>3</sup> These include: "Popular education", defined as "raising the interest level and awareness of the general public"; "specialised courses" defined as "ad hoc courses for specialised groups to raise their level of competency and proficiency" and "enrichment courses." The notion of outreach was underlined: "The University should go out to the people and organise courses where it best suits the participant. This applies especially to Popular Education."<sup>4</sup> The work of this Board, however, faded away in the 1980s and there is hardly anything comparable currently in place.

---

<sup>2</sup> Red 6 in University Registry File Number 039/81/1. Minutes of the Extension Studies Board Meeting of Wednesday, 25 March, 1981.

<sup>3</sup> The new Chairperson at the time (November, 1982) was the former Director of Education, Dr Francis Chetcuti, who remained in this position for only a short period, given his untimely death in 1983.

<sup>4</sup> Red 20 in University Registry File Number 467/82. Letter by the then ESB Chairperson, Dr Francis Chetcuti, to University Council President, 18 November 1982.

### **Arts and Science Evening Degree Courses**

Several other initiatives in UCE have taken place at Malta's University over the years and it would be interesting to identify some of the forces that helped to shape such provision. In the post-war period, the majority of courses were dictated by recommendations made by foreign experts, mainly from Britain, regarding future developments of the University in accordance with the perceived development needs of the country.<sup>5</sup> Diploma and degree evening courses were, as a result, opened in the areas of education, commerce and administration, catering to the needs of the civil service, the economy and the public education sector (Zammit Mangion, 1992: 65-66). An evening course, leading to a B.Educ.degree, started in the late forties and ended in the early fifties. Provision of this type was not constant and Zammit Mangion (1992) pointed out that "these courses ran into problems with both the University and the Education Department and were not continued"(p.66).<sup>6</sup>

The teaching profession, through its main representative body, the Malta Union of Teachers (henceforth MUT), played a prominent part in later developments in UCE. The MUT was founded in 1919 and is thought to be the oldest Maltese trade union (certainly the first to be registered as a trade union) among those that are extant. It engaged in efforts to open the university's doors to its members, the majority of whom could not afford full-time attendance at Malta's highest institution of learning. A letter of 13 February, 1960, signed by the MUT's President, Alfred Buhagiar, addressed to the University's Vice Chancellor and Rector, refers to the expansion of education in Malta and to the need for programmes of continuing professional development for teachers within this context. He wrote "As you are aware, Education in Malta is expanding at all levels. This expansion creates with (it) the urgent need of

---

<sup>5</sup> I am indebted to Mr. Joseph Zammit Mangion, former Deputy Director of Education, for this information.

<sup>6</sup> Degrees in these areas were reintroduced much later, mainly on a full-time basis, although Commerce is now being offered, at degree level, on a part-time basis. Several evening diploma and Master's courses in Education are also being held and are therefore available to adults holding full-time employment. With regard to the domain of Education Studies, and more specifically Pedagogy, one ought to remark that it was a feature of university provision in Malta in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when the Rev. Paolo Pullicino combined his roles of Chief Inspector and Director of Primary Schools with that of Professor of Primary Methodology at the University of Malta (Zammit Mangion, 1992: 20; Camilleri, 2001: 107-108)

providing academic facilities for the members of my Union who may wish both to improve their standard of education as well as their prospects within the Education Department.”<sup>7</sup> The letter underlines the need for a “Teachers course” that “would supply a steady stream of graduate teachers in order to meet the requirements of Maltese education at all levels.”<sup>8</sup>

A series of meetings was held between a University delegation, consisting of six members of the Joint Faculties of Arts and of Science, and the MUT.<sup>9</sup> The idea of having evening degrees at the levels of B.A. General (this invites parallels with the Scottish ordinary/general degree), B.A. Honours, and B.Sc. was mooted. The B.A. Honours degree was introduced at the University of Malta in the mid-fifties. It was never offered as an evening degree course and has been available, for the most part, only on a full-time basis. The attempt to have it offered as an evening degree course in 1960 was quickly aborted. The ‘Notes of the Second informal meeting held on Friday 13 May, 1960’ between the two parties,<sup>10</sup> state that “...the B.A. (Hons.) course is a very concentrated course in a particular subject, in which the student will have to devote plenty of his time and energy (sic)...That it is advisable to explain to the intending applicants the full implications of a B.A. (Hons.) course, and to persuade them to follow the courses leading to a General degree... That no special concessions would be allowed to students registering for a B.A. (Hons.) course...” The ‘Report, submitted by the Delegation appointed by the Joint Faculties of Arts and of Science’, states explicitly “It is not advisable that candidates be encouraged to read for a B.A. (Hons.) and therefore no special provisions for such candidates need be made.”<sup>11</sup> This seems to have remained the policy for Arts and Science ever since. Here holders of general degrees are either allowed to proceed to an Honours course on a full-time basis, possibly through a Government scholarship, or else study part-time for an M.A. qualifying exam. In this latter case, the standard is equivalent to that of an Honours degree (though no such degree is conferred on the successful candidate), allowing students to proceed to a Master’s degree. People seeking an indirect route to an

---

<sup>7</sup> Reds 1 and 9 (the letter was reproduced in the MUT’s official organ, *the Teacher*, of March-April, 1960) in University Registry File, Number 337/59.

<sup>8</sup> Red 1 in University Registry File Number 337/59.

<sup>9</sup> Red 105 in University Registry File Number 337/59

<sup>10</sup> Red 16 in University Registry File Number 337/59.

<sup>11</sup> Red 22 in University Registry File Number 337/59.

Honours degree have the option of registering for the University of London's External degree.

The continuing professional needs of teachers seemed to be the prime motivation for negotiations between the Royal University of Malta and MUT, leading to the provision of evening courses at Bachelor's levels. The courses which were eventually opened that same year, however, were accessible to any members of the public holding the necessary qualifications judged to render them capable of pursuing a university course 'with profit'. On 23 November 1960 the B.A. (General) evening degree course was officially launched. On that day, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Professor Joseph Aquilina, officially addressed the "assembly of students" in what was the inaugural meeting, held at the Aula Magna of the University of Malta at its then Valletta premises.<sup>12</sup> B.Sc. courses started in January 1961 as indicated in a notice issued by the University to the press in the previous December.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike the B.A. (Gen.) degree that continued to be made available in the evening, often through MUT cooperation, the B.Sc. degree covering such science subjects as Physics was offered only once again in the evening (in the 80s). The B.Sc. degree in Mathematics and Computing (together with Logic) was offered three times. Very few people pursued the 1960s B.Sc. evening course in earnest. A report in October 1962, signed by the Dean of the Faculty of Science and addressed to the University Registrar, is revealing in this regard. It mentions that there were six candidates in the course, none of whom passed the September session of the B.Sc. (Part 1). In the opinion of the Dean, three of them had no chance of passing in January and the remaining three were thinking of registering on a full-time basis, two of whom having been the only ones eligible for the Government scholarship that would have allowed them to pursue full-time studies at the University, anyway.<sup>14</sup>

It can be argued that the need for the individual occupational mobility of teachers provided the impetus, in the 1960s, to render traditional degrees in the Arts accessible

---

<sup>12</sup> See *Times of Malta* report of the 25 November, 1960 which refers to 'University Evening Courses for Teachers' but which provoked a reply from the Office of the Registrar explaining that the course was not only for teachers but for anyone who satisfied the University entry requirements. See Red 40 in University Registry File Number 337/59.

<sup>13</sup> Red 48 in University Registry File, Number 337/59.

<sup>14</sup> Red 101 in University Registry File, Number 337/59.

to those who could not attend the University full-time. The MUT letter referred to the need for a “Teachers course.” It is not immediately clear what the MUT President meant by this term, especially given the way events unfolded. Was the Union calling for an evening course in traditional university degree subjects and developed specifically for teachers? This is the way things developed at the University with the evening courses frequented mainly, though not exclusively, by teachers. However, a closer look at the wording of the MUT’s February 1960 letter suggests that what the Union was calling for was a degree that re-established Education as a University area of specialization. This is borne out by an editorial in *The Teacher* published during the same period. This called on the Royal University of Malta to provide “a course leading to a Degree or Diploma in Education as is the practice in British and Continental Universities.”<sup>15</sup> If this were the case, the Union would have been calling for the sort of degree that would have helped give teaching its identity as a profession and would have therefore provided a decisive breakthrough in the quest for the collective occupational mobility of teachers. The Union had to wait for eighteen years to see its wish realized: only in 1978 was Education re-established as a University discipline in Malta.

The file concerning the negotiations between the University and the MUT in 1960 indicates that discussions immediately moved in the direction of having Arts and Science degree courses (with little success in the latter case) offered in the evening. This was preferred to a degree in Education made available to teachers and other full-time employees in the evening. Did the level of expertise available at University at the time condition this move? Could it have been possible that academics at the University considered Education to be not a discipline in its own right but simply an area that draws on a variety of established disciplines (Philosophy, Psychology, History, Sociology)?<sup>16</sup> This is an argument which continues to be made frequently in certain Maltese and international circles.

---

<sup>15</sup> Red 10 in University Registry File Number 337/59.

<sup>16</sup> I am indebted to Mr. Joseph Zammit Mangion, former Deputy-Director of Education and graduate of the B.Educ. evening programme, for this suggestion.

### University Religious Education for the Laity

The Malta Union of Teachers was therefore an important player in the development of UCE in the 1960s, and the programme it gave rise to (the B.A. General evening course) has continued to be popular ever since. The Church is the other major player in the development of UCE in the 1960s and beyond. This should not be surprising given that we are focusing on a country that has traditionally been predominantly Roman Catholic. The Church has been a major player in most social spheres in Malta. The University is no exception. After all, as indicated earlier, the Church helped shape this institution of higher learning in no small way.<sup>17</sup> The Church's major UCE initiative in the 1960s, which is still in evidence today, is that of organising evening courses for laypersons in Theology. The major force influencing this initiative was undoubtedly Vatican Council II. At its meeting in April 1967, the Faculty Board of Theology accepted in principle the idea of holding such a university course for laypersons. It was argued that "Vatican Council II exhorts and encourages laymen (sic) to take an active and responsible share in the life and work of the Church, especially in spreading and intensifying the kingdom of Christ in the world. Therefore let the laity strive skilfully to acquire a more profound grasp of revealed truth and insistently beg God the gift of wisdom. Lumen Gentium 35."(see Vatican Council II, 1964)<sup>18</sup>

The entry requirements for the three-year course,<sup>19</sup> leading to the *Diploma in Sacred Theology*, were to be similar to those for other evening university diploma courses. The diploma course in Public Administration is cited as an example in this context. The subjects covered in the Theology course were five in number, namely Biblical Theology, Systematic Theology, Moral Theology, Church History and Liturgy.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the Church's involvement at the University of Malta see Borg, (1995).

<sup>18</sup> Red 9, 'setting up of an Evening Course leading to a Diploma in Theological Studies for Laymen (sic)' in University Registry File Number 380/66. Constitutions cited in Red 9 (University Registry File Number 380/66) include The Church in the World (*Gaudium et Spes*), para. 62.

<sup>19</sup> Red 42, 'The Royal University of Malta. Regulations for the Diploma in Theology (S.Th.Dip.)' in University Registry File Number 380/66.

<sup>20</sup> Red 9 in University Registry File Number 380/66.



### **The 1978 Higher Education Reforms and UCE**

Both the B.A. and Theology diploma evening courses became firmly established areas of UCE. They provided many adults with opportunities of access to the University. These opportunities seemed to be severely jeopardised, however, by the sudden changes that occurred at the University of Malta through the 1978 higher education reforms introduced by the Labour Government headed by Prime Minister Dom Mintoff. These reforms, while leading to the institution of new faculties, such as those of Education and Management, led to the abolition of the Faculties of Arts, Science and Theology. They also led to the amalgamation of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (temporarily transformed into the New University) with the University of Malta.

Tertiary education became strictly utilitarian, i.e. tailored to the perceived needs of the economy (Wain 1987, 30-31). It looked as though the B.A. evening degree course, starting in 1977, was the last of its kind, thus seeming to bring to an end an aspect of UCE provision that dated back to 1960. As for the Theology diploma course, this no longer remained a University of Malta course since the 1978 reforms forced the Faculty of Theology to become entirely separate from University. The Faculty of Theology continued to provide accessible evening qualifications for the laity, upgrading its provision in this regard to degree level. Through its Institute of Religious Studies, the Faculty introduced, in academic year 1980-1981, a B.A. degree in Religious Studies with lectures held in the evening at the Catholic Institute, Floriana. This was a much sought after degree. It filled a void at the time, being the only B.A. evening degree available on the island in the early eighties (Pace, 1997: 46). Furthermore, the Church, as the sponsoring institution, had no problems in obtaining prestigious international recognition for the qualifications awarded. The diploma course was also retained and it nowadays leads to the *Diploma in Religious Studies*.

At the heart of the 1978 higher education reforms was a scheme that had direct relevance for UCE. A 'Worker-Student'<sup>21</sup> scheme had been introduced through which university students alternated five and a half months of work with five and a half months of study at University. They were provided with a basic wage throughout the year, paid monthly at the same rate during both the study and work phases, and during the one-month vacation period. This scheme also permitted salaried employees to attend university for day courses. They retained their salary while carrying out their studies under the '5 ½ study and 5 ½ month work' system. It was mainly people from the public sector and *parastatal* bodies (state-owned companies) who benefited from the 'Worker-Student' scheme since the private sector seemed very reluctant to sponsor its employees and other prospective 'worker-students.'

The abolition of the Arts and Science Faculties led some academic staff to leave the island in search of pastures new. Those who remained were offered the opportunity to join other faculties, notably the newly formed faculties. Around 1983, however, some staff, with the support of the Rector, reintroduced courses in the Arts and in Mathematics and Computing. These courses took place in the evening and were at diploma level. They allowed participants to progress from one level to another, leading to a single qualification. Three diploma levels were established, the final one being equivalent to a first degree. This form of UCE provided the means of circumventing the Government's policy regarding the University. The fact that such a development was allowed to occur suggests that the policy regarding the Arts and Sciences at University was not cast in stone and that there was room for negotiation. There might have been a variety of reasons for such a development, possibly a sense of unease, felt in influential political and government circles, regarding the way the Humanities and Sciences were being handled. There might also have been some concern that the University had a number of academic staff whose skills and expertise, if not used properly, would have deteriorated considerably over the years.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Act XX1-1978 (Act to amend the 1974 Education Act), *Government Gazette* No. 13,508, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1978.

<sup>22</sup> Taped interview with the Coordinator of the Diploma courses in languages, Professor Daniel Massa. Lecturers were also encouraged to teach courses or give lectures in programmes organised by the ESB. Some were reluctant to do so, probably in view of the dismantling of the Faculties of Arts and Science to which they had been attached. The then ESB Coordinator, Roger Vella Bonavita states, in a memo to Registrar, that "There is a considerable feeling in certain faculties against the Extension programme. This is only partly because of the upheavals in tertiary education in recent years." Red 28 in University Registry File Number 039/81.

The content of these courses suggests that there must have been a rethink of the way certain Arts courses, especially language courses, should be developed. The issue of 'relevance' was of concern and a number of diploma courses began to be characterised by the linking of the traditional areas of literature and linguistics with Communication Studies, which was perceived to be a growing area at the time.<sup>23</sup> It can be argued that UCE provided the vehicle for the introduction of Communication Studies at the University of Malta. Communication Studies was conceived of as an area that can cut across the traditional Arts disciplines. There was also a separate evening course, held in 1984, leading to a Diploma in Journalism.<sup>24</sup> Communication Studies eventually became an area in its own right and a Centre for Communication Technology was developed in the early nineties for this purpose.

### **Workers' Education at the University and Beyond**

The change in Government that occurred as a result of the 1987 General Election, won by the Nationalist Party, led to the re-establishment of the Faculties of Arts and Science and the reinstatement of the Faculty of Theology. It also coincided with the period in which the diploma evening courses were, as anticipated, finally upgraded to Bachelor's degree level. From then on, UCE has continued to include evening B.A. programmes in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Theology.<sup>25</sup> The new Government also introduced a stipend to be paid to students enrolled full-time at the University and brought to an end the Worker-student scheme that was at the heart of the 1978 reforms concerning full-time university education.

A number of institutes, encouraging multidisciplinary approaches to teaching and research, were set up in particular areas during and after this period. The Workers'

---

<sup>23</sup> Taped interview with Professor Daniel Massa, who was instrumental in developing the area of Communication Studies within the context of these diploma courses, having benefited from a Fulbright Research Fellowship at Michigan State University in the area. Efforts were made to establish cooperation agreements between the University of Malta and Michigan State University in this regard.

<sup>24</sup> University of Malta Guidelines for the Diploma in Journalism evening course, 1984.

<sup>25</sup> In the early nineties, we witnessed the emergence of diploma and B.A. evening programmes in *Youth Studies*, following the establishment of an entire programme in the area. Given that one has to wait for an entire five year B.A. General evening programme to be completed before one can contemplate launching another course, the B.A degrees in Youth Studies and Religious Studies are often the only two evening degree programmes available to prospective students holding a full-time job.

Participation Development Centre (WPDC), set up at the University of Malta in 1981, served as the prototype for these. This Centre celebrated its twentieth anniversary in the summer of 2001. It was established at a time when experiments in workers' participation, at the level of self-management, were being carried out in such enterprises as the Malta Drydocks, Melita Knitwear and Cargo Handling. Gerard Kester, a Dutch scholar from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, carried out studies on the participatory experiences at the above enterprises. The study (Kester 1980) provided a number of recommendations including the setting up of an agency, preferably located at the University, which would support these participatory experiences through monitoring, research and the provision of courses. The courses would provide the workers involved with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for them to exert greater control over their workplace and to participate effectively in the administration and management of the firms by whom they are employed. Furthermore, the General Workers' Union (GWU), through its General Secretary of the period, Mr George Agius, had argued in favour of the establishment of a Workers' Education Centre that was to counterbalance the presence of a Faculty of Management at the University of Malta. The Centre would fulfil this role by helping in the training of union officials, shop stewards and other workers' representatives.<sup>26</sup> Short courses for workers were initially organised through the University's ESB,<sup>27</sup> possibly in response to the fact that the Labour Government of the period was, in the words of one ESB Chairperson, "anxious to bring tertiary education to the workers."<sup>28</sup>

For a long period following its inception, the Centre devoted the bulk of its teaching and administrative resources to the provision of a two-year evening diploma course in *Labour Studies*, traditionally a key area within programmes of workers' education. The course title has recently been changed to that of *Social Studies (Industrial Relations)*, possibly in a bid by the Centre to broaden the agenda and render the

---

<sup>26</sup> Taped interviews with the GWU Secretary General of the period (1981), Mr. George Agius and with the first and founding WPDC Director, Professor Edward Zammit. See also Baldacchino & Mayo (1995) and Mayo (1997; 2002).

<sup>27</sup> Red 28 in University Registry File Number 039/81. It consists of a memo by the then ESB Co-ordinator, Roger Vella Bonavita to the University Registrar with copies to the Rector and Finance Officer. It mentions the "first of a series of foundation courses on 'The Maltese Worker at Work and in Society' in which "about 30 workers are participating".

<sup>28</sup> Red 4 in University Registry File Number 039/81/1. Minute 19 of the ESB Meeting of Wednesday 4 March 1981.

course more marketable. It remains to be seen whether this move will have a negative effect on the quality of workers' education at the University of Malta, given that Labour Studies has traditionally underlined the presence of a particular agenda in universities worldwide, namely a distinctly working class and labour agenda. (Mayo, 2002)

Research carried out in the early 1990s (Mayo, 1997) has shown that the participation of women has been low in the WPDC's Labour Studies courses over the years and those interviewed in the research, including several women participants, provided numerous reasons for this. Lack of publicity targeting homes, in a country where the majority of married women are home makers, was considered to be one major reason. In this context, the running of this course only in the evenings is another reason for low female participation.

Others pointed to the patriarchal nature of Maltese society, which was reflected in the structure of its institutions, including the Centre, and the male-centred content of the labour studies course itself (Mayo, 1997: 324-326). This situation provided cause for concern and several initiatives were taken to rectify it. These included affirmative action in the choice of applicants for the Labour Studies/Industrial Relations courses and the establishment of a *Women & Development* programme that started as a certificate course taking place during the day. This attracted mainly women who work as homemakers. The programme subsequently evolved into a very popular diploma course. As with all the other diploma courses offered by the WPDC, the course now leads to a *Diploma in Social Studies* with its focus on *Gender and Development*. This course has provided university access for women, some of whom develop the confidence later to enrol in mainstream degree programmes. The term 'gender,' in the diploma title, suggests that the course focuses on gender in all its dimensions, dealing with masculinities and femininities. This diploma course, however, has the merit of bringing women's issues to the fore. The WPDC strengthened its provision of UCE by organising one other diploma course in Social Studies. As with the *Industrial Relations* course, this diploma programme is provided on a part-time evening basis and focuses on *Occupational Health and Safety* (WPDC, 2001: 10-24).

It has been argued (Mayo, 1997; Mayo, 2002) that the Centre offers possibilities for working and educating for social change ‘in and against’ the state-sponsored university system. The contradictions that arise in this situation are many, including the need to conform to the regulations and procedures of an institution whose *modus operandi* might appear to be at odds with the philosophy of participation that the Centre strives to promote. The Centre might even have to employ lecturers to teach on its courses who might be the recognised experts in their particular field but who might not share the WPDC’s ideals. Their pedagogical approach might, as a result, undermine the very notion of participation that the Centre attempts to promote. On the positive side, the WPDC partly succeeds in avoiding the traditional approach to learning and research carried out at the University of Malta. It is one of the very few places at the University where Maltese is used as the language of instruction and where participants can write their assignments and project reports in the native language. The Centre also provides its participants, who would otherwise not be able to follow a full-time University course, with access to the resources of an institution funded out of public taxes. These resources include the University Library, which is probably the finest on the island. Most important of all, the Centre has promoted trade union issues, and more recently women’s issues, at an institution where, with some notable exceptions, they would otherwise largely be neglected.

### **The University of the Third Age**

The WPDC provides the potential for University outreach and is mentioned, in the 2002-2006 Draft Strategic Development Plan (University of Malta, 2002: 12), as one of the “units” intended to provide “extension courses” to workers. The Centre is erroneously presented in this document simply in “vocational/professional” terms. It engages in outreach work through its short courses and tripartite seminars, often carried out away from the University campus and in conjunction with the German Social Democrat Party-oriented Freidrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), the agency that provides most of the funding for these initiatives (the FES promotes initiatives in workers’ education, and specifically trade union education, in different parts of the world and has a number of regional offices for this purpose).

Other University agencies that emerged in the 1990s provide some form of university outreach. These include the University of the Third Age (U3E–Malta) that was set up in 1993 within what was then the University’s Institute of Gerontology. Its activities include lectures on a variety of topics, participatory projects and cultural visits to foreign countries. (Schembri 1997; Schembri & Agius 1997) Most of its activities take place in a central location (part of the old university building in Valletta), although there have been attempts to open branches in other parts of the two substantially inhabited islands (Malta and Gozo) forming the Maltese Archipelago. The choice of location in this regard can affect the social class composition of the participants. The U3E’s programmes have been the subject of a sophisticated analysis, involving empirical (both quantitative and qualitative) research, which draws on, among other sources, Pierre Bourdieu’s work, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*, and the writings of Paulo Freire (see Formosa 2000a). One of the major points of criticism made is that the U3E programmes are too academically oriented and that the entire project reflects a strong middle class cultural bias, what Bourdieu would call ‘*cultural arbitrary*’ (Formosa 2000a; Formosa 2000b). The middle-class orientation is reflected in the nature of the activities on offer and in the composition of the adult education clientele. As Formosa (2000a) and others have shown, however, this is typical of most Third Age Universities. There are other types of outreach activity carried out in programmes housed within the University’s faculties. One such programme is that concerning ‘Education in Prisons’, a programme, within the Faculty of Education, that led to an adult education project being carried out at the central state prison, the Corradino Correctional Facility.

### **UCE in Gozo**

One other important initiative that contributes to the continuing education of adults, was the introduction, in the late 80s, of a *maturity clause* that spares prospective adult learners the task of having to fulfil time-consuming university entry requirements. The other noteworthy initiative by the University of Malta in UCE is the setting up of a University centre in Gozo. This was established in 1992. It is intended to cater to the continuing education needs of Gozitans holding full-time employment in Gozo. They would encounter enormous logistical problems if they attempted to enrol in

UCE courses on the main campus at Msida.<sup>29</sup> This situation is similar to that faced by other inhabitants of islands having a structurally-induced peripheral relationship with the mainland or the main island/s within an archipelago. The success or otherwise of the UCE provision in Gozo depends to a large extent on the readiness of lecturers from the main campus to engage in part-time work, especially during the weekends. The rate of payment for part-time teaching at the University is hardly attractive (except for the short courses commissioned, on a commercial basis, through Malta University Services Ltd.<sup>30</sup>). As far as the Gozo courses are concerned, part-time teaching involves giving up the best part of the weekend and, in the case of lecturers from Malta, a certain amount of travelling and an overnight stay. For this reason, the Director of the University's Gozo Centre has had to provide a series of incentives to make teaching in Gozo more palatable to lecturers from the main campus.<sup>31</sup>

The Gozo Centre has been offering a variety of courses, ranging from Master's (M.Ed.) and first degree courses (B.A. General and B. Comm.) to diploma courses for which there is a demand. The Centre also interacts with other parts of the University that have the potential for providing UCE. These include the U3E that uses the Centre to provide courses in Gozo. The Centre's Director stated that the way forward for the Centre is not simply to replicate courses provided at the main campus but to develop its own niche areas and centres of excellence.<sup>32</sup> The idea of a University outreach centre in Gozo is an excellent one. Nevertheless, the University's Gozo

---

<sup>29</sup> See the survey among Gozitan teachers carried out by Simone Attard in 1996. She states that "57% of the students replied that it would involve a great deal of travelling; that is a half an hour trip by boat to the Maltese harbour and about an hour and a half bus trip to the University premises at Tal-Qroqq in Malta. This trip can be undertaken only when the weather is good, since the boat does not cross over when it is stormy." (Attard, 1996: 46).

<sup>30</sup> This University-owned commercial entity operates as a limited liability company. Its main objective is to "make the facilities and expertise of the University available on commercial terms to the community at large and to initiate and to promote technology transfer." (p.2) Among its several functions, including consultancy, technology transfer and special projects, testing and publishing, it runs the International School of English (one of the many schools in Malta in the area of teaching English as a Foreign language) (p.14). It also carries out other education and training courses in such areas as 'Management Development', 'Management of Information Systems', 'Health and Safety', 'Computer Systems and Applications', 'Advanced Manufacturing Technology', 'Quality Management', 'Professional Engineers Development', 'Accounting, Finance and Economics' and 'Marine Biology' (pp. 12-13). Source: *Malta University Services Ltd Company Profile*, MUS Ltd., University Campus, University of Malta,

Msida, MSD 06, Malta. See also *Training and Education. Setting the Agenda for Change. Programme 2001\*2002* (brochure), Training & Education Division, Malta University Services Ltd.

<sup>31</sup> Taped interview with the Director of the University of Malta's Gozo Centre, Professor Lino Briguglio.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



Centre is, in many ways, held hostage by the University's main campus on which it depends for qualified teaching personnel in the various areas for which there is a demand. On the other hand, it is virtually impossible for the Centre to cultivate its own expertise widely since the demand for full-time courses in specific areas is not sufficiently large or steady to justify employing full-time staff. There are likely to be only one or two areas where the Centre can develop domains of excellence not found on the main campus.

### **Options for the Future**

The foregoing overview of the University of Malta's UCE provision leads to a number of suggestions for future policies in the area. The first concerns the much discussed 'stipends system' which was introduced by the Nationalist Government in 1987 to replace the former wage linked to the 'Worker-Student' scheme. This system of funding clearly discriminates against students on the basis of age since those enrolled in full-time courses, who are over the age of 30, are excluded from the funding. This measure also fails to take into consideration the needs of people at different ages to continue their studies. The measure often adversely affects persons, usually women, who interrupt their studies because of family concerns, particularly caring for children in their early years. They often wish to return at a later age (often in their 30s) to take up further studies, including those that will enable them to rejoin the labour market (e.g. the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education course which allows them to take up teaching). Needless to say, single parents are the hardest hit in these circumstances. This situation alone provides a strong case for the introduction of means testing with regard to student funding.

Apart from funding, the issue of alternative entry qualifications also needs to be considered. The introduction of the 'maturity clause' is commendable. The University must, however, develop effective procedures for the proper evaluation of alternative qualifications (including alternative learning experiences). This would enable potential participants, who do not possess the formal entry qualifications, to gain proper recognition for what they have learnt through alternative routes. This recognition should provide them with access to the University's courses, including

evening courses. In short, the University requires expertise in the much-debated area of the *Accreditation of Prior Learning*.

With regard to honours degree courses, the traditional reluctance to make these degrees accessible to those who cannot afford to undertake full-time studies smacks of elitism. The University of London has, for years, been making its courses available to adult students either on a part-time/evening basis or through its external service. A good many Maltese (studying in Malta) have benefited from this latter opportunity, including some who are now established professors at the University of Malta. There seems to be no legitimate academic reason why courses at the honours degree level should not be made available to Maltese adult students as evening UCE courses.

As is the case with most adult education provision throughout Malta and Gozo, there is a constant need to take the issue of pedagogical approaches to adult learning seriously. Pedagogy in general is often taken for granted at the University. This situation, of course, is not unique to the University of Malta; it applies to many universities world-wide. The Quality Assurance Committee of the University of Malta has provided courses in a variety of areas, intended to help academic and other staff improve the quality of their teaching and research. Attendance is on a voluntary basis. As indicated throughout this chapter, some academic staff have to make the shift from teaching mainly youths (although there is now an increasing number of adult students) in the full-time daytime courses, to teaching widely experienced adults in the evenings and at weekends. It is important, therefore, that the concerns of adult course participants, calling for different pedagogical approaches, should be included in the programme of continuing professional development devised for university teaching staff by the Quality Assurance Committee.

With regard to the provision of the appropriate organizational structures for the provision of UCE, one approach which is often mentioned is that of investing in and developing the area of distance learning. In 1988, a Centre for Distance Learning was established as part of Malta's contribution to the 'Commonwealth of Learning,' which was intended to enable co-operation among Commonwealth countries in distance learning. The Centre never really took off and was eventually dismantled. Distance learning, however, continues to be mentioned as an area worth developing at the University. For example, the University's Draft Strategic Development Plan 2002-

2006, states that there will be “fresh attempts to develop Distance Education through radio, T.V. and E-Education coupled with on-campus learning for local and foreign students.” (University of Malta, 2002: 14) The University can avail itself of this medium to complement its existing UCE provision for those who cannot come to the main university campus on a full-time basis. The small-scale feature of the islands forming the Maltese archipelago makes it possible for the University to combine distance education with face-to-face teaching either at the main campus or at the Gozo centre. The setting up of a University radio station, *Campus Fm*, has been an important development since it can play a key role as far as distance education courses intended for Maltese and Gozitan participants are concerned. It is imperative, however, that the University invests sufficiently to provide the required nucleus of staff equipped with the skills needed to provide effective distance learning. This includes being able to write and prepare effective distance learning packages, including websites and other material.

With regard to adult education in its broader context, this already exists as one of the official programmes within the University’s Faculty of Education. Various courses in the area, at diploma and Master’s levels, and at the level of unit options in the B.Ed. (Hons.) course, are provided. A considerable research profile is also being developed in Adult Continuing Education through staff publications and student dissertations. There is, however, room for expansion to the level of a department in the area. Such a department would cater for the provision of formal qualifications in the field and also serve as the University’s extension wing, adding substantially to the institution’s UCE provision. The Faculty’s Adult Education programme can easily be merged with the Lifelong Education Unit, proposed in the draft Strategic Plan, to form such a department.

The proposed department can also stimulate and coordinate the initiatives of individuals in the field of university outreach. These initiatives are in keeping with the role of academic staff as public intellectuals who make the University resources, funded for the most part out of public taxes, available and accessible to those who would never dream of attending University. The University requires a coherent and coordinated policy in this regard. It should be a comprehensive policy that recognises the work of academic staff engaged in such initiatives as a valuable feature of

university work within a democracy. This should be a policy that provides the University with an ongoing steady programme of university outreach, possibly involving partnerships between university staff and other educators and community activists. Priority should be given to those localities that have traditionally and consistently been severely under-represented at the University of Malta (Baldacchino, 1999: 210). There are a number of interesting international developments in 'engaging the academy' in areas of popular education and community development. The University would do well to take notice of these.<sup>33</sup> Projects such as these would enable the University to engage with other partners in helping to revitalize the public sphere in an age in which public spaces are shrinking considerably, internationally, through increasing privatisation and commodification (Giroux 2001). Alas, this age has seen the ascendancy of Neo-liberalism resulting in the marketplace ideology and a technical rationality taking precedence over attempts to provide the tools for active citizenship in a participatory democracy. In a genuinely participatory democracy, people would be regarded as social actors rather than simply consumers/producers (Martin, 2001).

## References

- Attard, S. (1996). *The University's Programmes in Gozo – An Evaluation*, B.Ed (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.
- Baldacchino, G. & Mayo, P. (1995). Multifunctionalism, Volunteers and the School Culture. Adult learning in the Maltese Context. In: J.Knoll, ed. *International Yearbook of Adult Education*. Bochum: University of the Ruhr.
- Baldacchino, G., (1999). Recent Developments in Higher Education in Malta, *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies*. 4(2), pp. 205-214.
- Borg, C. (1995). *Hegemony as Educational Practice: Catholicism, Modernity and the Fate of the Progressive Historical Bloc in Malta – A Gramscian Analysis*. Ph.D. thesis, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.
- Camilleri, J.J. (2001). Paolo Pullicino's Educational Legacy. In R.G. Sultana, ed. *Yesterday's Schools. Readings in Maltese Educational History*. Malta : PEG.
- Fiorini, S. (2001). The *Collegium Melitense* and the *Universitas Studiorum* to 1798. In R.G. Sultana, ed. *Yesterday's Schools. Readings in Maltese Educational History*. Malta: PEG.
- Formosa, M. (2000a). *Education and Old Age: A Critical Analysis of Malta's University of the Third Age*. M.A. dissertation, University of Malta.

---

<sup>33</sup> These include the Popular Education Network coordinated by scholars at the University of Edinburgh and the New Approaches to Lifelong Learning Project coordinated by scholars at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto (website: [www.nall.ca](http://www.nall.ca)). See the following Website for various discussions on the theme: 'Popular education and the university: Encounters, missed encounters and oblivion'[online] available at [http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~daniel\\_schugurensky/upen/discussion.html](http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~daniel_schugurensky/upen/discussion.html)

- Formosa, M. (2000b). Older Adult Education in a Maltese University of the Third Age: a critical perspective. *Education and Aging*, 15, (3), pp. 315-338.
- Giroux, H. (2001). *Public Spaces/Private Lives. Beyond the Culture of Cynicism*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kester, G. (1980). *Transition to Workers' Self-Management. Its Dynamics in the Decolonizing Economy of Malta*. The Hague: Institute of Social Studies.
- Martin, I. (2001). Reconstructing the Agora: Towards an Alternative Politics of Lifelong Learning. *Concept*, 11, (1), pp. 4-8.
- Mayo, P. (1997). Workers' Education and Democracy. In G. Baldacchino & P. Mayo, eds. *Beyond Schooling. Adult Education in Malta*. Malta: Mireva.
- Mayo, P. (2003). "In and Against the State." Gramsci, A War of Position, and Adult Education. In T. Clayton, ed. *Rethinking Hegemony*. Melbourne: James Nicholas Publishers.
- Pace, P. (1997). Adult Education in the Maltese Church. In G. Baldacchino & P. Mayo, eds. *Beyond Schooling. Adult Education in Malta*. Malta: Mireva.
- Schembri, A.M. (1997). Programmes for the Education of the Elderly. In G. Baldacchino & P. Mayo eds. *Beyond Schooling. Adult Education in Malta*. Malta: Mireva.
- Schembri, A.M. & Agius, G. eds. (1997). *Educating the Elderly: A Right or Obligation?* Malta: University of the Third Age (Malta).
- Testa, C. (2001). Napoleon's Vision for Education in Malta. In R.G. Sultana, ed. *Yesterday's Schools. Readings in Maltese Educational History*. Malta: PEG.
- University of Malta (2001). *University of Malta Calendar 2001/2002*. Malta: University of Malta.
- University of Malta (2002). *University of Malta Strategic Development Plan 2002-2006*. Malta: University of Malta.
- Vatican Council II (1964). *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, Nov. 21, [online] available at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)
- Wain, K. (1987). Work/Education Relationships in Malta and the Concept of Lifelong Education. *Education (Malta)* 3(1), pp. 27-32.
- WPDC (2001). *Workers' Participation Development Centre. Biennial Report, 1999-2000*. Malta: University of Malta.
- Zammit Mangion, J. (1992). *Education in Malta*. Malta: Studia Editions.