

R. Debona

THEMES IN EDUCATION

A MALTESE READER

THEMES IN EDUCATION
A Maltese Reader

edited by
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with an introduction by
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To my parents

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Mary Darmanin is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education where she teaches Sociology of Education. She is a graduate of the Universities of Malta, Essex and Wales, College of Cardiff where she was registered as a Commonwealth Academic Staff Scholar. Her Ph.D. thesis is the first Maltese classroom ethnography to be researched at this level and parts of it have been published in an edited collection (Lawn 1985) and in the *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Her research on educational policy-making will appear in the first volume of *International Studies in the Sociology of Education* (1991) of which she is now one of the international editors. A study of the labour market of schooling with reference to Maltese girls' curriculum choice will appear in a special volume of the journal *Gender and Education* (1991).

Charles Farrugia, professor and Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta, has headed the Faculty since it was established in 1978. He lectures in the undergraduate and post-graduate courses and coordinates the diploma course in Education Administration and Management. He studied in Malta, Montreal and London obtaining a Ph.D. from the University of London. He co-authored the book *The Multi-functional Administrator* published by the Commonwealth Secretariat; edited *The Maltese Education System: A Look to the Future* published by UNESCO and is currently editing *A National Curriculum for Malta* to be published by the University of Malta and the F.I.S. His research interests are in the development of professionalism in teaching and educational development in small states.

Joseph Fenech is a senior lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies, in the Faculty of Education. He holds degrees from the University of London and the University of Malta. He trained as a teacher and for nearly twenty years taught in both Primary and Secondary schools before joining the Faculty of Education in 1981. His research interests are in the curriculum field and is at present engaged in writing a historical-ethnographic account of the Maltese primary curriculum.

Joseph Grixti read English at the University of Oxford, taught in several schools, and was Commonwealth Universities Academic Staff scholar at the Bristol University School of Education, where he completed a Ph.D. in psychology and cultural studies. He has published several essays in international academic journals on a range of topics including popular fiction, the scientific investigation of the effects of mass media violence, adolescent psychology, and the cognitive aspects of childhood and adult fears. He was involved in teacher training at the University of Malta, and is now teaching in Australia at the Queensland University of Technology. His book *The Terrors of Uncertainty* was published by Methuen in 1989.

Paul H. Hirst recently retired from the post of Professor of Education at Cambridge University. One of the leading pioneers in the early years of the philosophy of education, his most famous book is *Knowledge and the Curriculum* which appeared in 1974. He collaborated with R.S.Peters in a number of joint publications, and is author of numerous articles.

Charles L. Mifsud lectures in the development of language and literacy at the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta. He has carried out research work in early bilingual development and in communicative competence in the classroom situation at the University of Cambridge. His current research interests are the effects of teacher education on the teaching practice of intending language teachers. Charles Mifsud is also an active member of the

International Association of the Teachers of English as a Foreign Language.

Joseph Mifsud carried out his studies at the University of Malta and the University of Padova from where he obtained his doctorate. He lectures in the Department of Primary Education at the University of Malta, and is currently carrying out doctoral research in primary curriculum at Queen's University, Belfast. Other areas of interest are pedagogy, and the teaching of students with special needs. He has recently been chosen to represent the Mediterranean region on the editorial board of *Support for Learning*.

Ronald G. Sultana is a lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education, where he teaches sociology. He carried out his studies at the University of Malta and the University of Reading (U.K.) and obtained his doctorate from Waikato University (New Zealand). He was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Stanford University (U.S.A.) in 1990. Ronald Sultana is the executive editor of the Faculty journal, *Education*, and has published widely in a number of international journals including the *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *The British Journal of Education and Work*, *Qualitative Studies in Education*, and *Research Papers in Education*.

Frank Ventura is a senior lecturer in science education and head of the Department of Science and Technology in Education in the Faculty of Education. He first qualified as a teacher and then furthered his studies in science at the University of Malta and in education at the University of Reading (U.K.). He taught for ten years in both primary and secondary state schools before moving to teacher education in 1977. He has published scientific and educational articles both locally and abroad, and has recently coordinated a UNESCO project (1990-91) which produced a teacher's manual on the incorporation of Environmental Education into primary school curricula.

Kenneth Wain is a professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta where he teaches philosophy. He is involved in teacher education, and is head of the Department of Educational Studies. Before he joined the Faculty he qualified as a teacher and taught for fifteen years in state primary and secondary schools. He is the editor of *Lifelong Education and Participation*, (University of Malta Press, 1984), and the author of *Philosophy of Lifelong Education*, (Croom Helm, 1987), and of *The Maltese National Curriculum: A Critical Evaluation* (Mireva Publications, 1991). He has also published various articles in different scholarly journals including *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *Educational Theory*, and the *International Journal of Lifelong Education*.

FOREWORD

This collection of readings is the result of a collaborative effort on the part of staff lecturing in different disciplines in the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. The impetus behind the book was the need, felt by students and Faculty staff alike, to develop readings that could be used in a professional teacher-training course and which, while referring to key issues and themes in the theory and practice of education, were situated in a Maltese context, reflected Maltese data, and confronted Maltese concerns. The papers are therefore meant to help readers, be these students or seasoned teachers, to reflect critically on their experience in schools and to move from 'common-sense' attitudes and judgements to 'good sense'. Unexamined biases and prejudices, classroom behaviour and repertoires of actions and reactions that have fossilized and which with time have clouded the vision of possible alternatives, are challenged by the arguments as well as empirical evidence presented in this book.

The contributions that these papers make are certainly not to be regarded as engaging theory alone. Rather, they address the kinds of practical concerns that teachers face day in day out in their classrooms, be these issues of motivation, the use of discipline or of assessment - to mention but three of the topics addressed in this book. These themes and others are, however, problematized. In other words, the philosophical, sociological and psychological implications of particular practical actions in schools and classrooms are examined not only - or mainly - with a view to improve efficiency, but also to arrive towards a state of educational practice which is guided by concerns for fairness, justice, equity, and by the hope of establishing in Maltese schools and classrooms

the kinds of structures and learning processes and relations that encourage the formation of active citizens in a democratic society.

The papers in this collection are necessarily diverse, not only because they reflect the research interests of the Faculty staff, but also because they were in the main written specifically with student-teachers in mind. The sequence in which the papers appear is therefore not arbitrary: rather, it is guided by a basic pedagogical principle whereby readers are invited to engage firstly in articles which are non-technical in nature, but which encourage critical reflection on educational practice generally. The papers on 'Motivation' by myself, 'Discipline' by Kenneth Wain, and 'Classroom Decision-Making' by Joseph Fenech fall under this category. As the book progresses, it is assumed that the reader has become more attuned to the demands of the article genre, and hence the papers become increasingly engaged in higher levels of theorizing and more abstract principles of a general nature drawing on the foundational disciplines of philosophy, sociology and psychology. Thus, Charles L. Mifsud's paper on 'Language in the Classroom', Charles Farrugia's article on 'Schools and their Curricula', and Joseph Grixti's and Joseph Mifsud's papers on assessment in education make a number of points which, while practical in nature, relate this classroom practice to wider socio-cultural issues. The last four articles in the book introduce readers to educational theory which is more firmly grounded in Maltese data and which demand skills in the appraisal and the critical interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data. Mary Darmanin's and Frank Ventura's papers address the relationship between gender and subject choice while those of myself and Mary Darmanin look closely at the influence of social class on educational achievement in Malta. In planning the sequence of the book in this manner, it is hoped that not only the content but also the process would enhance the possibility of learning.

There are a number of institutions and people who helped make the publication of this book possible and whom I would therefore like to mention. The University of Malta provided a much-needed grant to the authors, thus funding part of the research costs that were entailed. All of these papers were specifically written for this book, with the exception of Joseph Grixti's article which had previously appeared in another collection of readings put together

by Charles Farrugia and entitled 'Education in Malta: A look to the future' (1988). Thanks are due to the author and to Unesco for granting us permission to reprint that paper with a few alterations. A special word of thanks goes to Paul H. Hirst who not only encouraged this project from the start, but also accepted to fit into his very busy schedule the reading of all the papers and the writing of suggestions for improvement. He also wrote the introduction to this volume, setting out the rationale behind the course for which these articles are specifically aimed while providing a brief history of the development of the various approaches to teacher-training in Britain.

Themes in Education: A Maltese Reader is perhaps the first publication to be grounded firmly in Maltese data, and is therefore bound to have wide readership, appealing not only to Maltese readers, but also to those involved in the comparative study of educational systems, as well as to those who have a personal commitment to education in general. It is earnestly hoped that this book will provide readers the practical and theoretical guidance necessary in their search for improved educational practice.

Ronald G. Sultana

