

# Teachers never stop learning

MS MICHELLE ATTARD TONNA talks to us about her long interest in teacher learning and development.

**MY JOURNEY STARTED** in 1994, when I read for my first degree at the University of Malta, a Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree within the Faculty of Education. Together with a friend of mine, I researched how gender identity develops in primary school children.

A few years later, I read for a Diploma in Library and Information Studies. These studies were followed by a Master of Arts in Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies, when I researched the organisation of the teacher training scheme INSET (in-service education and training) in Malta. I interviewed teachers and ran focus groups to gauge their past experiences. After interviewing key stakeholders and policymakers, I concluded that teachers learn in very unique and individual ways. They have different learning methods and can be faced with constraints that may restrict their professional development. INSET provision needs to be sensitive to these needs.



The library at the University of Aberdeen.

Image courtesy of worldarchitecturenews.com

I am currently completing my Ph.D. studies at the University of Aberdeen on teacher training. I gathered data from teacher interviews and private online forums, then analysed it in an interpretive manner, generating my theory from the data itself. In this way, the text itself helped me construct meaning. The texts were also analysed in their social context.

My investigations strongly suggest that teachers' dispositions and perceptions

of professional learning impact on their degree of training. Teachers who eagerly pursue their career development thrive on collaborations and social interactions. Schools need to foster a positive environment to encourage these teachers to engage the company and support of their colleagues. ●

*For the author's experience as a mother and researcher, see page 12*

For a related project on astronomy, see our feature on page 14



Opposite page: Joseph Caruana in Christ Church Upper Library in Oxford. Above: Some of the observatories located atop Mauna Kea in Hawaii.