

# Adult Literacy Programmes in Żejtun

*Charles Mifsud & Josephine Milton*

“Enhanced literacy skills provide such job-seekers with increased opportunities in the labour market”



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### Rationale

In September 2000 the ETC, in conjunction with the Paulo Freire Institute in Żejtun and the Literacy Unit, launched a pilot literacy and basic skills programme for adults seeking employment. The rationale behind the programme is that enhanced literacy skills provide such job-seekers with increased opportunities in the labour market. Other identified benefits are enhanced self-esteem and socialisation within the community and the labour market.

### Recruitment of Participants

At the end of Summer 2000, a personalised letter was issued by the ETC to persons on its unemployment list residing in Żejtun, Fgura, Birzebugia, Tarxien, Zabbar and Paola. This catchment area was identified in view of the fact that the training centre was going to be housed within the premises of the Paulo Freire Institute in Żejtun. The prospective participants were informed about the Programme and its objectives. The Programme was to be offered free of charge and was to admit participants on a voluntary basis in order to ensure adequate levels of motivation.

All those persons who expressed an

interest by contacting the Paulo Freire Institute were called in for an informal interview. Space restrictions and availability of tutors allowed the organisers to accept two groups of eight participants each to follow the Programme. Selection was carried out by the project team on the basis of the basis of a **Checklist for the Selection of Participants**. Consideration was given to the level of motivation and commitment demonstrated by the applicant. It transpired that all the participants were males, between the ages of sixteen and fifty-five. A number of them had work experience while others had in fact never been gainfully employed.

### The tutors

The co-ordination team consists of the director of the Paulo Freire Institute, a youth/social worker seconded to the Institute, a representative of the ETC, and two representatives from the Literacy Unit of the University, one of whom is acting as the academic co-ordinator. The personnel from the Paulo Freire Institute and the academic co-ordinator from the Literacy Unit are on-site for most of the time during the Programme to provide support in tutoring, logistical, social welfare and pastoral matters.

The team of tutors consists of:

- 3 core tutors engaged by the University, one of whom is the academic co-ordinator
- 6 volunteer tutors including a retired head

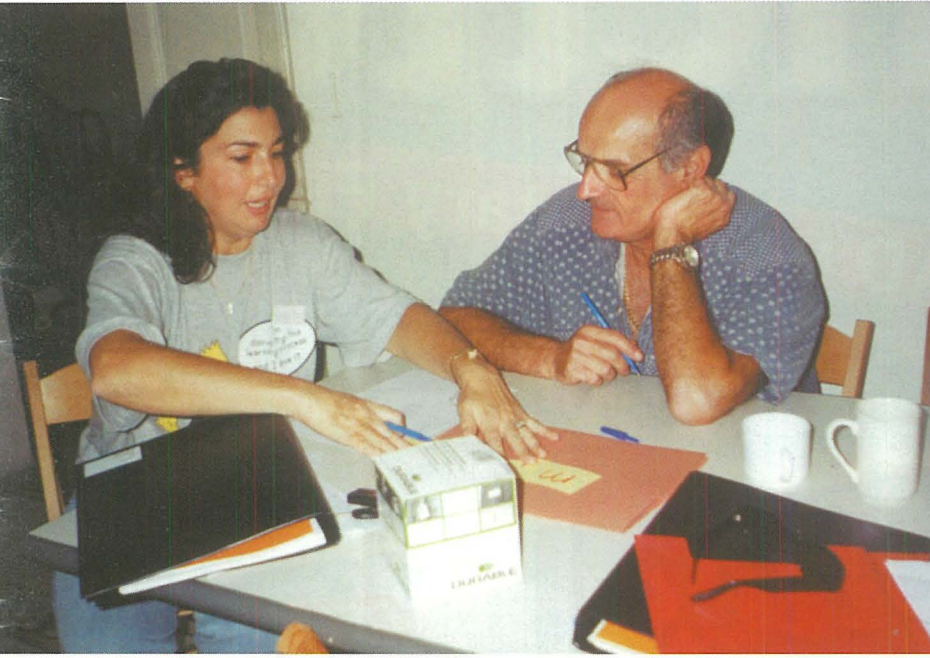


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of school and teachers and a nurse - 7 volunteer university students who are working on the Programme to fulfil their extra-curricular credit requirement

The availability of such a team of tutors is crucial to the success of the Programme. In this way the course can be of very **high quality** with much of the tutoring taking place on a **one-to-one basis**. This situation allows the tutors



the opportunity to respond immediately and effectively to individual needs.

## The Programme

The first programme has extended over a period of six months, from November 2000 to April 2001. In October the necessary preparations in terms of the design of relevant syllabuses, materials, identification of tutors and participants were made. The course consists of three two-hourly sessions per week for each group. The intention was from the outset to provide a high quality, intensive course on a mainly individual basis.

Following the administration of the **Kwestjonarju għall-Parteċipanti Adulti** the literacy and basic skills needs of each participant were identified. This enabled the project team to design an individual programme for each participant based on the general syllabus devised by one of the core tutors engaged by the Literacy Unit.

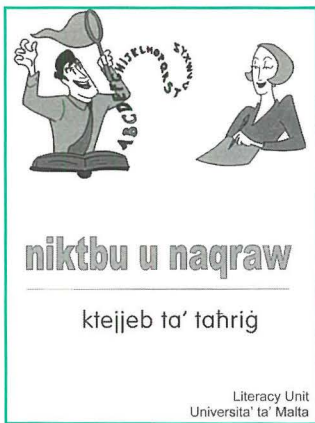


photos: Literacy Unit

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The project team sought to design and adapt local materials suited to the specific needs of the local participants



A heightened sense of belonging and community was experienced by all the players in this Programme

Besides commercial material available from agencies like the UK-based Basic Skills Agency, the project team sought also to design and adapt local materials suited to the specific needs of the local participants. This consists of forms of application, newspaper materials, information and promotional brochures, etc.

## On-going evaluation

In order to monitor progress, ensure continuity and promote on-going evaluation a personal file was established for each participant. A **Learner's Progress Sheet and Description of Lessons** is compiled by each tutor after each session and placed in the personal file of the participant concerned. This provides a brief description of each session, the skills acquired or learnt by the participant, the difficulties encountered by the participant and recommendations for further action. Before the start of each session each tutor consults the personal file of his/her student in order to ensure continuity with previous sessions.

Sessions range from training in basic literacy and phonic skills to practical tasks like applying for a job, preparing for an interview and sending Christmas cards.

A series of planning and evaluation sessions, including a day seminar, for tutors have been held. During these sessions the programmes and progress of individual participants were reviewed and the development of materials and logistical issues were discussed.

One important aspect throughout has been the heightened sense of belonging and community experienced by all the players in this Programme. Levels of interaction amongst participants and tutors have been high. Some of the participants have brought in cakes they have baked themselves on their birthdays to share with fellow participants and tutors.

Up to now this has been an intensive educational experience not only for the participants but for all those involved in the Literacy for Employment Programme.

## KORS TA' VERU

Waqt li id-dar kont qiegħed,  
Ircvejt ittra mill-E. T. C.,  
Biex f'dar Paulo Freire niltaqgħu,  
Ha nitkellmu f'tit flimkien.

F'dar Paulo Freire Itqajna,  
Hawn ġejna mhux bil-fors.  
"Biex titghallmu xi haġa,  
Għalikom ha naghmlu kors."

Għal dan il-kors bdejna mmorru,  
Studenti Itqajna tmienja,  
Mario, Karmenu, Joe u Kevin,  
William, Mose', Clayton u Jiena.

Kien is-sitta ta' Novembru,  
Meta bdejna dan il-kors.  
Kien hemm min beda jifraħ,  
Kien hemm min ha xi xokk.

Biex dan il-kors jintgħamel,  
Xogħol ha hafna minn kulhadd,  
Minn ta' I-E.T.C. u Fr.Edgar,  
Ma' l-Universita' organizzat.

Fr.Edgar id-dar imexxi,  
Dan huwa patri Ġizwita,  
U li ġew jgħallmuna kollha,  
Minn Josephine huma mmexxija.

Josephine bix-xogħol mgħobbija,  
Dejjem għandha xi mpenn,  
Meta ma tkunx tista' tiġi,  
Thalli kollox f'idejn Dorianne.

Għall-kors konna niltaqgħu,  
It-Tnejn, l-Erbgha, u l-Ġimgħa  
U biex niktbu xi naqra,  
Kien ikollna hafna biża'.

Għall-ewwel konna nistħu,  
Speċjalment mill-imgħallmin,  
Ma domniex b'din il-misthija,  
Għax malajr drajna 'l xulxin.

Meta sew lil xulxin drajna,  
Hadna f'tit tal-kunfidenza,  
Bil-kuraġġ konna mmorru,  
Allavolja bl-influenza.

Għall-ewwel konna mhawdin,  
Kif sa niġu mqassmin,  
Għax studenti konna tmienja,  
Għaxra kienu l-imgħallmin.

Meta bdejna biex nitgħallmu,  
Konna bdejna bl-alfabett,  
Kien hemm min fehem sew mill-ewwel  
Kien hemm min ma tghallem xejn.

L-ghalliema kollha tajba,  
Bħal Dorianne, Victor u Debbie,  
Bjanca, Ruth u anki Anna,  
U dawk kollha li nsejt insemmi.

Kien hemm min ha l-kunfidenza,  
Kien hemm min baqa' f'tit misthi,  
Sakemm drajna naqra sewwa,  
Ġieli hadna xi ġrokk wiski.

Illum itgħallimna sewwa,  
U nehhejna l-misthija,  
Bdejna aktar ma' xulxin naqdbu,  
Nitkellmu aktar bla tbatija.

Ġieli għidna anki storja,  
Waqt li konna qegħdin niktbu,  
Kien hemm min johroġ b'xi wahda,  
Konna kollha nibdew nidhku.

B'dan il-kors tghallimna hafna,  
Kien hemm min itgħallem f'tit,  
Imma xorta nistgħu ngħidu,  
Li minnu hareġ hafna ġid.

"L-ghalliema kollha kontu ġentili,  
u kemm xtaqna bqajna magħkom!  
Tat-tagħlim li għallimtuna,  
f'isem shabi niringrazzjakom."

Jiena ktibt din il-poeżija,  
Ktibtha kif f'qalbi hassejt,  
Għax li ma kienx il-kors għalija,  
Kieku għadni ma naf xejn.

Carmelo Spagnol  
28.03.2001

A POEM WRITTEN BY ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMME AT ŻEJTUN



photo: Literacy Unit