

Migration Studies at University Gozo Centre

For the first time 'Migration Studies' was offered as a credit course as part of the B.A. programme in Gozo. This course, organised and given by Professor H. Frendo and Professor Maurice Cauchi, consisted of a series of lectures/ discussions on various aspects of migration and settlement. An integral part of the course was the presentation of a project prepared by the students on an aspect of migration which involved field studies relating to the chosen topic. In most instances this was based on analysis of a questionnaire prepared by the students.

The following is a brief summary of some of the projects presented:

Maltese Migration and Overseas Settlement: by Ms Caroline Camilleri Rolls. In this study, Ms Camilleri Rolls examined the experiences of six cases of Nadur returnees, mostly from the UK. She concludes that "emigration has brought about changes in the way of life, beliefs and values of persons involved, directly and indirectly." She also emphasised that "The persons who seem most affected however... are the children of the returned migrant." But in spite of problems, and difficulties of initial adjustment, the author herself states "I too consider myself lucky to have had the experience of two completely different cultures"

Joseph Cini dealt with the problem of "**Understanding Migrant Settlement through the experiences of returnees on the island of Gozo**," this time through examining seven cases of returned migrants from Zebbug. These had left the villages as young persons and spent up to 20 years overseas. It is interesting to note that "they experienced culture shock" when they came back, which, however, was of short duration, because "they soon felt that they

were once again accepted by the community and therefore integrated in our society."

Ms Maria Hilda Grech also tackled the problem of returned migrants, this time through analysis of **returned migrants from Ghajnsielem**. She emphasises the problems that migrants tend to encounter. One aspect that came out of this report related to problems associated with mixed marriages. Even in a small survey of this nature, there were a number of emigrants who returned to settle to their homeland without their foreign-born spouse, who preferred to stay home, often with their children.

One issue of particular importance is the effect of the migration upheaval on the schooling of children of returned migrants. Ms Pauline Vella produced a report on "**Aspects of schooling, readjustment, education and learning among children of returned migrants**." Many of them missed their friends and the way of life overseas and expressed the desire to go back. Many found it difficult to catch up with local children particularly in Maltese, but also in other topics because of the inordinate emphasis on book knowledge that is the standard practice in Malta. Many were put in a class below the one they had been attending overseas, thus having to mix with children one year younger than themselves. She asks: "once you get a child here and s/he experiences the culture shock, how long does it take for it to heal, if it does at all?"

Another study relating to returned children experiences was that by Ms Maria Gauci: "**Aspects of Schooling, Readjustment, Education and Learning among children of returned Migrants or Foreigners living in Gozo**". In this study, Ms Gauci Culture

interviewed several Heads of schools in Gozo in order to get their point of view. The number of returned children in schools is not high, and currently does not exceed 1% of the school population, and is, moreover, on the decline. Currently there are 33 children from 6 different countries attending schools in Gozo. Although the Heads stated that children are placed according to age, this is contradicted by actual practice (as stated earlier). There are no specific programmes to help these children integrate. The only policy in existence for expatriate students concerns the Junior Lyceum entrance examination where a special paper in Maltese is available (but the highest grade obtainable in this subject is a "C"). They can also sit for Religion and Social Studies subjects in the English language.

Another study by Ms Simone Cini concentrated on **female returnees**. Their reaction on coming back to Gozo was rather negative and often resulted in depression. ("I cried a lot"). Interesting also to note, that they all thought that their children experienced less pressure at school when they lived overseas. "This clearly shows that our stressful educational system is having a negative effect on our children" she concludes, confirming the study by Ms Vella (mentioned above). Interesting also were the responses to the question : 'Are you a different person now?', ie. having had the experience of migration. The answers indicated that the migration experience helped them become "more independent", "more outgoing", "helped me overcome my fear of changes of life". Ms Cini concludes that "going abroad seems to have affected all the respondents in a positive way in some way or other."

Mr Joseph Cutajar's topic related to: **"Overview of general statistical data and trends, including comparative analysis /insights of data for Gozo town**

and villages." In this study he analysed the migration trends from the various localities in Gozo between 1955 (the first year that separate data for Gozo were kept) and 1971. The proportion of migrants who left these shores was up to 5.2% per annum (Għajnsielem, 1965) of the local population. In the period under review, there were a total of 8886 migrants from Gozo of whom 5955 (67%) emigrated to Australia. Mr Cutajar also emphasises the marked sex-ratio imbalance in emigrants: the majority of migrants were males. Nadur was the village from where most migrants originated, particularly to Canada, UK and USA.

Finally, Mr George Borg took as his project a **"Compilation of a Bibliography of books, pamphlets, articles, newspapers, Official Reports on Maltese Migration and Overseas Settlement which are available at the Gozo Public Library"**. The purpose of this exercise was "to list and annotate the works on Maltese emigration, at the Gozo Public Library." It is a useful compilation of material available in our library. He has also listed those books which are available at the Gozo Public library and which include in the text a bibliography on Maltese emigration. This compilation will greatly facilitate the work of researchers wishing to familiarise themselves with this topic.

It is the impression of all the students that the course was a very useful and stimulating one. The projects themselves, while necessarily not comprehensive, give nonetheless a broad overview of migration movements, and highlight in particular issues relating to returned migration.