

# Gozo Students Issues

*Dr Michael Refalo*

The success of the Gozo Centre of the University of Malta is evident not only from the Seminars and Conferences that it has successfully organized over the years since its inauguration. It is assured also by the Courses organized there for students - not necessarily Gozitan ones, since some Maltese also attend.

If proof were needed that nobody has a monopoly over education, the B. A. and Diploma Courses organized during the 6 years since the opening of the Centre, is an ample one. It is not only young ambitious 18 year olds who want a University education - it is also the married woman, the established teacher, and the Government employee who has a secure job and does not require a University degree or diploma.

What makes these courses appealing? There are I think, two reasons why we would want to follow a University Course when this is not linked to first employment opportunities. The first is probably the most obvious - a University education and particularly the possibility of attaching a letter or two behind one's name gives the possibility of advancement in one's job. The second reason may not be as apparent, although, in theory, it should be the sole reason why one studies after reaching the age of 30. The desire for knowledge, the challenge which a University education gives are also motivating forces behind the efforts of the mature student to sit for periodical tests and to present four or five long essays per semester.

Whether the motivation behind the study is a better job and higher pay or whether it is the desire to open one's horizons through study, the University has the duty to cater for these needs. This is being achieved through the courses organized at the Gozo Centre.

There are, however, two aspects which should constitute the challenge for the Centre in the coming years. They affect respectively its external and internal image. The first, and perhaps most important aspect is that the Centre should be truly Gozitan. I do not mean Gozitan in the sense of being in any way differentiated from Malta. Gozo and the Gozitans are as much Malta and the Maltese as Valletta and its inhabitants. It should be Gozitan only in the sense that we should feel that the Centre is 'ours' and for this reason should feel the need to contribute to its success. This can be achieved through various ways. Indeed, this is already being done through the Seminars and Conferences being organized under the auspices of the Centre. But an effort has also to be made by us. We should not wait for the University itself or the Ministry for Gozo or any other public body to take the initiative. It is us - as individuals - who should be aware that 'ours' does not simply mean 'my house, my money' but that ours is also 'our Culture, our Education'. This can be achieved through various ways - a small yearly donation for the purchase of books for the Centre library, the organization of courses, seminars, lectures etc which are of direct interest and benefit to the business community and above all a continuous liaison between the Centre and the local business

community to ascertain how one can be of benefit to the other, together with an understanding that the general raising of educational standards, benefits not only the student but the whole of Malta, and thereby the business community itself. It is possibly the greatest challenge which the Centre can and should impose upon itself.

The second aspect is linked with the first in the sense that the problem which it raises can be solved through it. A serious attempt to make more books available to those attending the University courses as well as to anyone interested should be actively pursued. The library of the Centre needs not only more and more books but also a direct connection with the University Library so that books may be ordered and delivered without the need of crossing

over. It also needs some form of agreement with the Gozo Library as well as with the well-equipped Cathedral Library (Victoria) so that one's database is available to the others in order to give a better service to the user as well as to avoid duplication. Only in this way would it be possible, with limited resources, to make available more and more specialized books which may not be everyone's cup of tea but which certainly should be there just in case the thirst needs quenching.

This publication should be used as a tool through which the Gozo Centre with its staff and students reaches out towards the rest of the Gozitan community in order to disseminate the value of knowledge, which is the true key to progress.



The first BA Graduates from the University of Malta - Gozo Centre