

The Unemployed Labour Force aged 40 years and over in Malta

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Abstract:

This paper will analyze the perceptions of unemployed members of the labour force aged 40 years and over in Malta vis-à-vis their chances to find stable employment.

The paper shall include an overview of socio-economic development and social policy in Malta, and it shall present various sociological concepts in relation to the issue at stake, including post-Fordism; knowledge society; ageism; social capital; and discouragement. Through the theories of overdetermination and multiple identities, it shall be argued that ageing unemployed workers are a distinct non-homogenous social group

Malta is a micro-state member of the European Union (E.U.). Its recent membership in the E.U. (2004) with the consequent implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Strategy give the ideal setting for this analysis.

In view of this, this paper presents results of research conducted on a sample of 40+ unemployed workers undergoing a specialized E.U. co-sponsored training and employment scheme.

Therefore, by means of theory and research we attempt to present an analysis of the contemporary transitional situation as well as its social policy implications.

Keywords: Social Policy - Unemployment – Ageing Workers – Malta – European Union

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1 Introduction

This paper explores the perceptions related to chances of finding stable employment of the unemployed aged 40 years and over in Malta participating in an employment scheme - the Training and Employment Exposure Scheme (T.E.E.S.). This scheme was funded by the European Union (E.U.) and the Government of Malta. It was specifically designed for this particular age-cohort of registered unemployed workers in Malta and it was implemented between 2004 and 2006.

The paper shall include an overview of socio-economic development and social policy in Malta, and it shall present various sociological concepts in relation to the issue at stake, including post-Fordism; knowledge society; ageism; social capital; and discouragement. Through the theories of overdetermination and multiple identities, it shall be argued that ageing unemployed workers are a distinct non-homogenous social group.

A quantitative survey had been used to analyse the influence of various sociological variables on respondents' perceptions. Findings reveal that level of education and number of household breadwinners had a significant impact on responses, though not in a progressive manner.

2 A brief overview of Malta: Socio-Economic Development and Social Policy

2.1 Economic Development

The island..... has its own specific character, one marked by scale, late industrial - and educational - development, and its own particular history of dependency, an interplay and struggle between foreign and local power structures and hierarchies. (Sultana 1997, p.9)

Malta¹ obtained independence in 1964, following rule of over 150 years by the British. Prior to that Malta was ruled by others, including the Knights of St John, the Arabs, the Romans and the Phoenicians. Malta became a republic in 1974 and became free of the British military base in 1979, which had been phasing out some years before.

As from the 1960s, Malta witnessed great economic changes, including the expansion of industry and tourism. Thus Malta's economy has been transformed from one depending on expenditures of the British defence needs to one based on marketed exports of goods and services. (Briguglio, L. 1995) As Malta entered the new millenium, its economy became less dependent on manufacturing, and more on services². (Agius 2004, p.133)

¹ Malta has a population of around 400,000 and a land area of 316 km². Its population density is of 1,272 per sq. km – the 7th highest in the world. (United Nations 2004)

² “In 2000, about 23 per cent of the Maltese GDP at factor cost was contributed by the manufacturing sector, about 39 per cent by the market services sector, about 11 per cent by domestic property income, and about 22 per cent by the public sector. The remaining 5 per cent were contributed by construction, agriculture and fisheries.” (Government of Malta 2002, p.15)

In the meantime, whilst heavy state intervention characterised the Labour governments of the 1970s and the 1980s, the economy became increasingly liberalised, whereby consumption rates increased by hefty amounts under subsequent Nationalist governments.³ (Briguglio M. 2001, p.237)

The Maltese economy is one of the smallest in the world, yet in terms of income per capita, however, Malta is quite high by international comparisons (Government of Malta 2002, p.14). Malta's GDP per capita (PPP US\$) is of US\$ 19,189, the 36th highest amongst 177 countries. (United Nations Development Programme 2007)

2.2 Social Development

Like other societies with a capitalist economic framework, Malta is characterised by class inequalities, even though social mobility has increased, thus reflecting Malta's economic development. (Sultana 1994, Briguglio M. 2001 p.237) The recent liberalisation and privatisation drives have added hardships particularly on working class and lower-middle class groups, whereby recent surveys have highlighted that cost-of-living issues top the concerns of Maltese voters. (Debono 2007) Indeed, though post-materialist values gained influence during the 1990s, materialism and traditionalism consistently prevail as the dominant ideologies in Malta. (Abela 1994, 1996, 2000; Briguglio M. 2001, p.238) Thus, Anthony Giddens has explained the Maltese context as one characterised by a 'tangled web of tradition and modernity'. (Giddens 1994, p.xxviii)

³ Malta had Nationalist Governments during the 1960s, followed by Labour governments between 1971 and 1987 and Nationalist Governments from 1987 onwards, save for a 2-year Labour government between 1996 and 1998.

At the same time, when compared to other neighbouring countries, poverty in Malta is not widespread, even if there are a few disadvantaged groups⁴. (Abela 1998)

This could be related to the fact that the Maltese welfare system is universalistic in various aspects such as health and education, though neo-liberal measures have been creeping in during the recent years. At the same time Malta's welfare system model is very much influenced by Catholic values, thus considering the state to have a limited role in situations of family and community failure (Hill 1996, p.45). Similarly, Malta can also be defined as a 'late female mobilisation welfare state', as is the case with countries such as Greece, Ireland, Italy and Portugal (ibid.).

Malta's employment rate is amongst the lowest in the EU, being below 60%, as the case with other member states such as Italy, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania. (Eurostat 2007, p.132) 2005 figures reveal that Malta's employment rate is 53.9%. Only Poland's is lower⁵. (ibid. p.133) As regards unemployment, the Labour Force Survey shows an unemployment rate of around 8% during 2006. (National Statistics Office 2006) Registered unemployment rate has been hovering

⁴ According to the National Statistics Office (2005), The at risk of poverty rate stands at 15.5 per cent among females and 14.2 per cent amongst males. It also resulted that children and elderly people are the 2 highest categories at risk of poverty. Upon analyzing poverty by household type, it resulted that the poverty rate was highest among persons living in single parent households. This rate stood at 47.9 per cent for these persons. Most of the unemployed under the poverty line were male.

⁵ When Maltese employment rates are stratified according to gender and age, a clear disparity between male and female workers emerges. Indeed, 73.8% of males in Malta are employed, as against 33.7% of females – the latter being the lowest within the EU. Only 30.8% of older workers in Malta are employed. Only Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia have lower percentages than Malta in this regard. (ibid. p.135) On the other hand, Malta's unemployment rate is of 7.3%, which is lower than the EU average of 8.8%. (ibid. p.140)

around the 5% mark since the 2000. The registered unemployment rate of elderly workers (aged 45 and over) has hovered around 4% during the same period⁶. (National Statistics Office 2007)

The 2007 United Nations Development Programme shows that the HDI for Malta is 0.878, which gives Malta a rank of 34th out of 177 countries⁷. Malta's ranking puts it in the middle of the 70-country group having the highest human development. It is ahead of European countries Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia, Macedonia and Albania (United Nations Development Programme 2007).

2.3 Vulnerabilities and Challenges ahead

Malta's National Report for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 states that

An important characteristic of the Maltese economy is its degree of openness, since, like many other small economies, it depends heavily on foreign trade ... The Maltese Islands are poorly endowed with physical resources, and most raw materials and industrial supplies have to be imported. (Government of Malta 2002, p.15)

In this regard, Malta is one of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). SIDS face various constraints and vulnerabilities⁸. In the case of Malta, the main economic constraints arise from factors

⁶ Reference here is made to re-entrants into the labour market, and job losers who have been made redundant by their former employers. It is this category of workers which is of interest for the purposes of this paper, which bases its research on training of such workers.

⁷ The H.D.I. assesses the state of human development through life expectancy, adult literacy and school enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary level, along with income, based on the most recent reliable data from U.N. partners and other official sources.

⁸ The 'Vulnerability Index' shows that the economic success of many Small Island States often hides their underlying economic and environmental fragility. Thus, as a group, S.I.D.S. are more vulnerable than other groups of developing countries. (Briguglio L. 1995; United Nations 1997)

such as small territory size; high degree of economic openness; dependence on a very narrow range of exports; dependence on imports, in particular energy and industrial supplies; and insularity. In fact, Malta is given a high vulnerability score especially since its economy is highly exposed to factors outside its control. (ibid. p.17)

Taking all the above into consideration, one can conclude that amongst the social policy challenges that Malta faces the low female participation in employment and the enhancing the skills and educational level of the Maltese workforce⁹. (Deguara 2004, p.119) The latter shall be dealt with in this paper, with particular reference to ageing workers. This first requires sociological explanations of changing work contexts.

3 Changing work contexts and sociological concepts with particular reference to unemployed ageing workers

3.1 Post-Fordism and Knowledge-based Society

David Harvey comments how in Post-Fordist contexts, ‘workers, instead of acquiring a skill for life, can now look forward to at least one if not multiple bouts of deskilling and reskilling in a lifetime’. (Harvey 1990, p.230)

⁹ The challenge for the Maltese economy now is whether it is able to attract sustainable high value added investment. For this, Malta needs a highly skilled, well-educated and flexible workforce of men and women. This means that for its material infrastructure to improve and to benefit from any progress, Malta’s social infrastructure must be developed to the extent that it provides the basis for its entire population to be able to contribute to the country’s advancement. This also means that high quality education and training should become characteristic of the population, and women become more visible in the social and economic life of the country. (Agius 2004, p.134)

Giddens (1998) adds that the globalization of economic production, together with the spread of information technology, is altering the nature of the jobs most people do. A new type of economy – ‘a knowledge and service economy’ - has emerged, whereby most workers are employed in knowledge or service-based jobs. (ibid. 2007, p.22) In such an economy ideas, information, and forms of knowledge underpin innovation and economic growth.

3.2 Unemployment and Inequalities

Giddens holds that changing patterns of economic inequality have come about, whereby low skill level is an important factor that characterizes job precariousness. (ibid. p.74) Ageing workers whose skills do not match those demanded in the labour market can therefore be victims of such inequality. Their skills can no longer be marketable, and their trades may have been lost to countries offering cheaper labour. They can therefore take the role of a ‘reserve army of labour’. (Marx 1971)

3.3 Ageism¹⁰

Ageing workers may also be victims of ‘hegemonical ideological manoeuvres’ in the form of ageism. (Formosa 2000) Evidence of this in employers’ attitudes and practices towards older workers exists. (Platman and Tinker 1998, pp. 513-535) Thus, older employees are dismissed without justification; they are forced to retire on a non-contractual basis; and face maximum age limitations for initial employment, promotions, and training, with little or no basis of justification.

¹⁰ Here reference is made to ageism directed to older workers.

3.4 Social Capital

Social capital, which can be explained in terms of social networks can also explain the difficulties faced by ageing workers. (Alcock & Erskine 2003) During the Second International Conference of the Social Capital Foundation, Brent Shea commented how certain social inequalities persist in society, namely income, education, occupation and cultural capital. These factors in turn determine the degree of social capital, which in turn influences socio-economic status of the individual. (Shea 2005) Unemployment and ageism may therefore explain a lack of social capital since social exclusion increases.

3.5 Discouragement

In this paper discouragement shall be related to Katherine S. Newman's identification of 'any slip in occupational status' - loss of income, place in society, social status or prestige¹¹. (Newman 1988, p.23) Hence, falling into unemployment fits in this scenario. Factors affecting downward mobility range from market fluctuation, to public policy, merging, and post-industrialization. (ibid. p.30)

3.6 Discouragement and Family Factors

It can be argued that for ageing workers who have economically dependent family members – such as housewife (especially in view of Malta's low female participation rate in the labour market) or children, downward mobility and/or unemployment is/are more problematic and discouraging. Here

¹¹This is a broader perspective than, for example that of , van Ham et. al. (2001, p.10) who relate discouragement to workers who would *officially* given up the job-search completely.

one should note that most children in Malta keep living with parents till full adult age¹². (Rizzo 2004, pp.16-17)

Hence, persons aged 40 years and over may also be responsible for the care of the elderly. In this regard, David Cheal argues that ‘caring for ill or disabled parents is a responsibility that usually falls upon people who are considerably older’ (Cheal 2002, pp.94-95). This phenomenon features amongst Maltese families, within Malta’s Catholic welfare system.¹³

3.7 Unemployed ageing workers as a distinct non-homogenous social group

Notwithstanding that ageing workers are a distinct social group within the working class, a sociological analysis should take account of ‘subaltern segments’ - namely sub-divisions within the same group in terms of gender, ethnicity, and so forth. (Formosa 2000) In this regard, Marvin Formosa distinguishes between ‘some ageist policies (that) affect the lives of all older persons irrespective of class, social status, race, and gender, (and) certain policies affect subaltern segments or cohorts of older persons (in a much more negative) manner’. (ibid.)

Sociologists who delve in the field of identity politics make a case for the need of specialized strategies by sustaining that individuals are constituted as multiple identities. (Barker 2003, p.444)

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001) argue that the same individual can develop different

¹² The current knowledge-based society has delayed youngsters’ entrance into the labour market and their taking-up of commitments such as marriage and family. Youngsters may start their first stable employment later than in previous decades. (ibid.) Some young people may be delaying leaving home because of economic necessity, such as difficulties entering the housing market. (National Statistics Office 2003)

¹³ Most Maltese families have been described as local extended families since related nuclear families living in separate households still give mutual aid and support on a continuous basis. (Tabone 1995, pp. 43-44; Rizzo 2004, p.18)

identities in a very personal and individual way through the practise of citizenship. They comment how this affects the realm of work since ‘this also implies a cultural transformation. Work can no longer be the centre of our identity’. (ibid., p.34) This does not mean that work is not important, but that it is one possible aspect of one’s identity amongst others. This is why Laclau (1996) describes societies as characterised by ‘hybridization’ or ‘multiple selves’.

On the other hand, the Althusserian theoretical concept of ‘structure in dominance’ (1971) asserts that one factor is likely to be more influential than others in particular modes of production and social formations which are in turn characterised by relatively autonomous overdetermining factors. In the capitalist mode of production it is the economy itself which occupies the determinant place. (Althusser & Balibar 1997, p. 224)

4 Social Policy and Unemployed Ageing Workers

Following the above theoretical insights on Malta’s socio-economic development, changing work scenarios and ageing workers, this paper shall highlight strategies being undertaken in Malta to combat unemployment (especially of ageing workers).

In the first instance, it is important to note that an important by-product of Neo-Liberalism is the development of the concept of social exclusion ‘which was pushed to the forefront of the social policy agenda as a result of its adoption by the European Commission in the early 1990s to frame a series of

European Union funded initiatives'. (Novak 2001, p.189) Such initiatives have been extended to the current decade, during which Malta became a new EU member state¹⁴.

The Presidency Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council call for "Europe's education and training systems...to adapt both to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for an improved level and quality of employment."¹⁵ (EUROPA 2000)

Practices in work and unemployment in Malta are currently being oriented by such E.U. policies.¹⁶ As regards employment, the Commission of European Communities states that :

The employment rate in Malta is particularly low compared to EU15 average. The employment rate of older workers is particularly low. The employment rate of women is the lowest in the EU25: only a third of women of working age are in work. Unemployment has increased slightly over the last two years but remains below the E.U.15 average. (Commission of the European Communities 2004, p.29)

¹⁴ Here one must keep in mind that expenditure on social protection as % of G.D.P. in the E.U. in 2003 in Purchasing Power Standards per capita was of 2879 – the 7th from lowest and below the EU25 average of 6012. (Eurostat 2006, p.2) As regards the share of social protection expenditure in G.D.P., Malta's average varied from around 17% to around 19% between 1996 and 2003, the EU25 average ranging between around 27% and 28% between 2000 and 2003 (ibid. p.3). When it comes to unemployment benefits, Malta expended 6.7% of its social benefits expenditure on this in 2003, which is basically identical to the E.U.25 average of 6.6%. (ibid. p.6)

¹⁵ The E.U. Lisbon Summit was designed to mark a turning point for the European Union's enterprise and innovation policy. One of the main issues for the realization of the Lisbon Agenda involves achieving an employment rate of 70% for males and 60% for females. However, nearly halfway through the implementation period, many critics complained that not much progress had been made on achieving this ambitious goal. Indirectly, this also implies that the older labour force's employment rates have not improved so much as a result of the policies of the Lisbon Agenda. (EurActiv.com 2004)The Spring Council of 2005 proposed a revised Lisbon Strategy. It was decided that the future orientation of the strategy should focus on growth and jobs. Social inclusion in general, and enhanced participation of the 40+ labour force in particular, are two goals which feature in such a strategy.

¹⁶ E.U. member states were to produce National Reform Programmes for the period 2005-8.

Recommendations from the Commission in this regard include:

- Increasing adaptability of workers and enterprises;
- Attracting more people to the labour market and making work a real option for all;
- Investing more effectively in human capital and lifelong learning. (Commission of the European Communities 2004b, pp.29-30)

The *Malta Single Programming Document 2004 – 2006*¹⁷ shows how Malta must invest in its human resources which, in addition to its geographical location, make possible the strengthening of the country's economic competitiveness. (Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Directorate 2004, p.81)

As regards the above, Lino Briguglio and Nadia Farrugia state that

Malta, like other E.U. member states, has set goals in line with the Lisbon Agenda to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy by 2010. In light of this commitment, Malta has established a goal of increasing the overall employment rate to 57 per cent by 2010...This is particularly important for Malta given the underlying challenge that the Maltese economy is facing in the light of an aging population. (Briguglio L. & Farrugia N., 2006)

It follows that flexible and adjustable older workers are required, in line with the current post-Fordist scenario. To this end, in the *National Action Plan on Poverty and Social Exclusion Malta 2004 –*

¹⁷ The *Malta Single Programming Document 2004 - 2006* contains the strategy and priorities for action under Objective 1 of the E.U. Structural Funds for the years 2004 to 2006. (Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Directorate 2004)

2006, a number of social policy instruments and measures have been put forward. (Ministry of Education 2004b)

In line with the above, the *National Action Plan for Employment Malta 2004* highlights the following objectives in employment : full employment, quality and productivity at work, social cohesion, social inclusion, an employment strategy, targets such as improving levels of education and certification, and raising employment rates. (Ministry of Education 2004a, p.4)¹⁸

In Malta, the Employment and Training Corporation (E.T.C.) has introduced various schemes to help registered unemployed persons to find employment.¹⁹ For reasons explained earlier, the older labour force is particularly present in these categories. Of particular interest for this paper is the T.E.E.S. scheme²⁰, from which respondents of this paper's survey have been selected.

¹⁸Women and the workforce aged 55 years and over are the main targeted groups in the labour market. This N.A.P. objective aims to increase equality in the Maltese labour market. This is of great relevance to this paper which evaluates the first phase of TEES, which is a training strategy in Malta, based on the principles of the E.U. Lisbon Strategy, aimed at enhancing employment opportunities for unemployed workers aged 40 years and over. (Ministry of Education 2004a, p.4)

¹⁹These include Work Start Scheme; Employment Training Placement Scheme; Training and Employment Exposure Scheme; Active Youths Scheme; Job Experience Scheme. (Employment and Training Corporation, 2004a,b,c,d,e,f)

²⁰T.E.E.S. is an E.U.-co-funded scheme which aims to train or retrain 400 persons who have been seeking employment for over six months, and are aged 40 years and over. The project is divided into three phases. During the first six months, eligible persons are given training on Core Skills, particularly motivation and self-esteem raising practices. In Phase 2 intensive training is given on skills in demand in the labour market based on a market exercise conducted with employers to obtain vacancies and skills required. During the last phase participants are assigned with an employer for 22 weeks. This work exposure is aimed to pave the way for an offer of permanent employment by the employer at the end of the scheme. (Employment and Training Corporation 2004d)

5 Methodology and Data Analysis²¹

A questionnaire with a Likert 5-point scale²² was used on a representative sample of T.E.E.S. participants. A rating scale was used rather than a ranking scale because a rank is just an order of

²¹ The research was carried out in 2004-2006. The variables identified in the hypothesis of this study are :

- Age : The target population consists of people in the age-cohort falling between 40 years and retirement age, which in Malta was 61 years as to date of research. However, it is important to point out that as from 2007 the following changes in retirement age are applicable : Workers aged 56 or over in 2007 then the retirement age remains the same (61 for males and 60 for females - although females will be given the option to continue working to age 61 if they want). The retirement age for workers aged 45 years or under in 2007 will be 65. For those who, in 2007, are in between these ages there is a sliding scale : 52-55 year olds – retirement age is 65 years; 49-51 year olds – retirement age is 63 years; 46-48 year old – retirement age is 64 years. (Fairbairn 2006)
- Gender : male/female. For this study's purposes, there is no need to distinguish between biological sex and gender.
- Level of Education : measured on four levels - basic (reading and writing), primary school level, secondary school level, and tertiary (post-secondary school) level. It is important to mention that some members of the target population are registered as illiterate.
- Skills / Special Abilities :
 - i. *Social Skills and Competences* : described as those skills involving living and working with other people, in multicultural environments, where communication and teamwork are very important (e.g. cultural and sports activities).
 - ii. *Organizational Skills and Competences* : involving co-ordination and administration of people, projects and budgets, e.g. in voluntary work, cultural, family and domestic activities, and sports.
 - iii. *Technical Skills and Competences* : skills involving knowledge and use of I.T., machinery, equipment and so on.
 - iv. *Artistic Skills and Competences* : skills involved in music, design, writing and so on.
 - v. *Other Skills and Competences* : skills involved in competences not mentioned above. (European Communities 2003).
- Region of Residence : classified as follows - Gozo & Comino (est. 31,053 – 7.69%), Northern (est. 57,175 – 14.15%), Northern Harbour (est. 118,664 – 29.37%), South Eastern (est. 59,378 – 14.70%), Southern Harbour (est. 81,107 – 20.07%) and Western (est. 56,662 – 14.02%). (National Statistics Office 2006, p.27)
- Marital Status : single, married and separated. Further variations are found in particulars submitted to O.C., such as annulled, divorced and widow/er. However, for questionnaire purposes the former are deemed to be sufficient.
- Number of persons in household
- Number of household members earning a salary
- Type of participant : categories of type are 'measured' according to O.C.'s classification system, used by O.C. only for particular individuals (i.e. not all participants were linked to a type). The different possibilities are Registered Disabled Person (R.D.P.), Special Case (S.C.) – ex-prisoners or persons who had legal problems and Very Long-Term Unemployed. (V.L.T.U.)

²² 1 is the lowest rating, 5 is the highest.

preferences. On the other hand, ratings scores express the intensity of a preference better than just an order.²³ At the end of the research 104 filled-in questionnaires were in hand.²⁴

²³ Both English and Maltese language versions of the questionnaire were formulated and the questionnaire was organized in sections :

- Section A Socio-Demographic Data that do not undermine the anonymity of research participants, but that enable me to make correlations.
- Section B An evaluation of each part of the Core Skills Course on a 5 point-scale ranging from very good to very bad.
- Section C An evaluation of socio-psychological aspects of participating in the Core Skills Course on a 5 point-scale. An open-ended question whereby participants may add any other suggestions for the course's improvement was also included in this section.
- Section D An evaluation of socio-psychological aspects of the participant's experience and status as a registered unemployed undergoing T.E.E.S.. A 5 point-scale ranging from high impact to zero impact of possible consequences attached to this status was used in this section as well.
- Section E An open-ended question whereby the respondent is given the opportunity to add anything else.

²⁴ Sample response rates were as follows : 48 from Intake 1 (Intake 1 consisted of a total of 130 participants, yet some of these dropped-out (and were numerically replaced in Intakes 2 and 3) thus the final number of Intake 1 participants was 105 – therefore there was a response rate of approximately 46% (48 out of 105) from Intake 1); 25 from Intake 2 (out of 160 participants in Intake 2, out of which E.T.C. gave a sample of 25); 31 (out of 170 participants in Intake 3, out of which E.T.C. gave a sample of 31) from Intake 3. Since research participants of Intakes 2 and 3 were set and given by E.T.C., the percentage response rate for these two intakes was obviously 100%. The sample size (104 filled-in questionnaires) constitutes approximately one fourth of the whole population, since the total population of actual T.E.E.S. participants who completed Phase 1 (excluding drop-outs) is of 421 registered unemployed persons aged 40 years and over. (E.T.C. 2007)

5.1 Analysis Section B

Figure 1, Modules' Mean Ratings²⁵

Descriptive Statistics Comparing Mean Ratings of Different Modules of T.E.E.S.' Phase 1 - Core Skills Course

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean Rating of Module on Life Skills	3.7723	.66477
Mean Rating of Module on Job-Seeking Skills	3.7289	.74971
Mean Rating on Module on Work Ethics	3.8429	.73159
Mean Rating of Module on Environmental Issues	3.6970	.79535
Mean Rating of Module on Employment Law	3.7950	.79336
Mean Rating of Module on E.T.C. Services	3.7849	.67914
Mean Rating of Module on I.T. Awareness	3.7889	.81609
Mean Rating of Module on Health and Safety	4.2106	.68948

Friedman Test on Mean Ratings of Different Modules of T.E.E.S.' Phase 1 - Core Skills Course

Chi-Square	52.272
df	7
P-Value	.000

26

²⁵ For the purposes of data analysis and its sociological interpretation, ratings lower than 3 will be considered as showing feedback that is more on the negative side, whereas ratings equal to or higher than 3 will be considered as showing feedback that is more on the positive side. This is valid for all questions, except for those in Section A (Socio-Demographic Data) and the open-ended questions, namely C14 and E1.

²⁶ The Friedman Test is used to compare the mean ratings score across several related modules of the Core Skills Course. In this case :

H0 (Null Hypothesis) : All modules of the Core Skills Course are equally rated.

H1 (Alternative Hypothesis) : Some modules of the Core Skills Course are rated better than others.

The criterion to determine whether to accept H0 or H1 is the P-Value.

If the P-Value exceeds the level of significance (0.05), H0 is accepted.

If the P-Value is less than the level of significance H1 is accepted.

In this case, it is evident from the data analysis that the P-Value is less than the level of significance. It follows that H1 is accepted, meaning that some modules have been rated better than others.

Figure 2, Aspects' Mean Ratings

Descriptive Statistics Comparing Mean Ratings of the Different Aspects of the Different Modules of T.E.E.S.' Phase 1 - Core Skills Course

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean Rating of Course Content	3.9398	.62236
Mean Rating of Teaching Method	3.8590	.64162
Mean Rating of Trainer's Ability	4.0609	.66777
Mean Rating of Amount of Time	3.5500	.73608
Mean Rating of Individual Attention	3.9193	.70485
Mean Rating of Questions and Participation	4.0705	.68186
Mean Rating of Utility of Training for Employment	3.5937	.83395

Friedman Test on Mean Ratings of Different Aspects of Different Modules of T.E.E.S.' Phase 1 - Core Skills Course

Chi-Square	95.245
df	6
P-Value	.000

The mean rating for the Job-Seeking Skills Module (3.73) is not negative in itself. However, the fact that it is the second lowest rating is of concern considering that the purpose of T.E.E.S. is to re-integrate its participants in employment. (Figure 1) The amount of time and the utility of training for employment are rated relatively lower than other aspects. Findings also show that participants assessed trainers positively. (Figure 2) Though the ratings for utility of training to find employment are in themselves fair (Figure 3 below, mean rating of 3.61), when these are compared to other aspects of training, the utility of training for employment is rated as second worst aspect of the course. Figure 4 shows that, once again, the Health and Safety Module is best rated. As previously commented, this is not the case with the Job-Seeking Skills Module.

Figure 3, Aspects and Modules A

Descriptive Statistics of Different Modules from Different Aspects of T.E.E.S.' Phase 1 - Course Skills Course

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Course Content	Module on Life Skills	3.82	.837	.083	3.66	3.99
	Module on Job-Seeking Skills	3.62	.929	.094	3.43	3.81
	Module on Work Ethics	3.92	.815	.085	3.76	4.09
	Module on Environmental Issues	3.76	.937	.097	3.57	3.96
	Module on Employment Law	3.87	.959	.098	3.68	4.07
	Module on E.T.C. Services	3.81	.871	.090	3.63	3.99
	Module on I.T. Awareness	3.73	1.066	.108	3.52	3.95
	Module on Health and Safety	4.42	.765	.076	4.26	4.57
Teaching Method	Module on Life Skills	3.64	.886	.089	3.46	3.81
	Module on Job-Seeking Skills	3.66	.903	.094	3.47	3.84
	Module on Work Ethics	3.80	.864	.091	3.62	3.98
	Module on Environmental Issues	3.63	.922	.096	3.44	3.82
	Module on Employment Law	3.75	.963	.100	3.55	3.95
	Module on E.T.C. Services	3.80	.774	.080	3.64	3.96
	Module on I.T. Awareness	3.75	1.026	.105	3.54	3.96
	Module on Health and Safety	4.37	.777	.078	4.22	4.53
Trainer's Ability	Module on Life Skills	3.93	.856	.086	3.76	4.10
	Module on Job-Seeking Skills	3.83	.928	.096	3.64	4.02
	Module on Work Ethics	4.01	.868	.091	3.83	4.19
	Module on Environmental Issues	3.91	.934	.097	3.72	4.11
	Module on Employment Law	3.91	.991	.102	3.71	4.12
	Module on E.T.C. Services	3.90	.822	.085	3.73	4.07
	Module on I.T. Awareness	4.14	.833	.085	3.97	4.31
	Module on Health and Safety	4.49	.772	.077	4.34	4.64
Amount of Time	Module on Life Skills	3.52	.835	.083	3.35	3.69
	Module on Job-Seeking Skills	3.48	.923	.097	3.29	3.68
	Module on Work Ethics	3.70	.880	.093	3.52	3.88
	Module on Environmental Issues	3.45	.981	.103	3.25	3.65
	Module on Employment Law	3.56	.945	.098	3.37	3.76
	Module on E.T.C. Services	3.56	.866	.090	3.38	3.74
	Module on I.T. Awareness	3.20	1.166	.121	2.96	3.44
	Module on Health and Safety	3.68	1.072	.107	3.47	3.89
Individual Attention	Module on Life Skills	3.79	.929	.093	3.60	3.97
	Module on Job-Seeking Skills	3.85	.925	.096	3.66	4.04
	Module on Work Ethics	3.84	.898	.095	3.66	4.03
	Module on Environmental Issues	3.82	.983	.102	3.61	4.02
	Module on Employment Law	3.83	.935	.096	3.64	4.02
	Module on E.T.C. Services	3.82	.872	.090	3.64	4.00
	Module on I.T. Awareness	3.89	.994	.102	3.69	4.10
	Module on Health and Safety	4.10	.870	.087	3.93	4.27
Questions and Participation	Module on Life Skills	4.18	.787	.079	4.02	4.34
	Module on Job-Seeking Skills	4.05	.889	.092	3.87	4.24
	Module on Work Ethics	4.00	.835	.088	3.83	4.17
	Module on Environmental Issues	3.90	.950	.099	3.71	4.10
	Module on Employment Law	4.02	.880	.091	3.84	4.20
	Module on E.T.C. Services	3.95	.864	.090	3.77	4.12
	Module on I.T. Awareness	4.03	.962	.099	3.84	4.23
	Module on Health and Safety	4.27	.777	.078	4.12	4.42
Utility of Training for Employment	Module on Life Skills	3.46	.986	.100	3.26	3.66
	Module on Job-Seeking Skills	3.48	1.026	.108	3.27	3.70
	Module on Work Ethics	3.60	.981	.103	3.39	3.81
	Module on Environmental Issues	3.41	1.039	.108	3.20	3.63
	Module on Employment Law	3.62	1.059	.109	3.40	3.83
	Module on E.T.C. Services	3.66	.915	.095	3.47	3.84
	Module on I.T. Awareness	3.54	1.233	.127	3.29	3.80
	Module on Health and Safety	4.12	.966	.098	3.93	4.32

Kruskal-Wallis Test of Different Modules from Different Aspects of T.E.E.S.' Phase 1 - Core Skills Course

	Course Content	Teaching Method	Trainer's Ability	Amount of Time	Individual Attention	Questions and Participation	Utility of Training for Employment
Chi-Square	54.242	57.541	46.760	14.794	8.954	13.110	32.753
df	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
P-Value	.000	.000	.000	.039	.256	.069	.000

²⁷The Kruskal-Wallis Test was chosen since it compares the mean rating scores between several independent categories when the rating responses have a non-normal distribution. Since in some cases the P-Value is less than the level of significance, H1 is accepted, meaning that some modules' aspects have been rated better than others.

Figure 4, Aspects and Modules B

Descriptive Statistics of Different Aspects of Different Modules of T.E.E.S.' Phase 1 - Core Skills Course

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
					Module on Life Skills	Course Content
	Teaching Method	3.64	.886	.089	3.46	3.81
	Trainer's Ability	3.93	.856	.086	3.76	4.10
	Amount of Time	3.52	.835	.083	3.35	3.69
	Individual Attention	3.79	.929	.093	3.60	3.97
	Questions and Participation	4.18	.787	.079	4.02	4.34
	Utility for Employment	3.46	.986	.100	3.26	3.66
Module on Job-Seeking Skills	Course Content	3.62	.929	.094	3.43	3.81
	Teaching Method	3.66	.903	.094	3.47	3.84
	Trainer's Ability	3.83	.928	.096	3.64	4.02
	Amount of Time	3.48	.923	.097	3.29	3.68
	Individual Attention	3.85	.925	.096	3.66	4.04
	Questions and Participation	4.05	.889	.092	3.87	4.24
	Utility for Employment	3.48	1.026	.108	3.27	3.70
Module on Work Ethics	Course Content	3.92	.815	.085	3.76	4.09
	Teaching Method	3.80	.864	.091	3.62	3.98
	Trainer's Ability	4.01	.868	.091	3.83	4.19
	Amount of Time	3.70	.880	.093	3.52	3.88
	Individual Attention	3.84	.898	.095	3.66	4.03
	Questions and Participation	4.00	.835	.088	3.83	4.17
	Utility for Employment	3.60	.981	.103	3.39	3.81
Module on Environmental Issues	Course Content	3.76	.937	.097	3.57	3.96
	Teaching Method	3.63	.922	.096	3.44	3.82
	Trainer's Ability	3.91	.934	.097	3.72	4.11
	Amount of Time	3.45	.981	.103	3.25	3.65
	Individual Attention	3.82	.983	.102	3.61	4.02
	Questions and Participation	3.90	.950	.099	3.71	4.10
	Utility for Employment	3.41	1.039	.108	3.20	3.63
Module on Employment Law	Course Content	3.87	.959	.098	3.68	4.07
	Teaching Method	3.75	.963	.100	3.55	3.95
	Trainer's Ability	3.91	.991	.102	3.71	4.12
	Amount of Time	3.56	.945	.098	3.37	3.76
	Individual Attention	3.83	.935	.096	3.64	4.02
	Questions and Participation	4.02	.880	.091	3.84	4.20
	Utility for Employment	3.62	1.059	.109	3.40	3.83
Module on E.T.C. Services	Course Content	3.81	.871	.090	3.63	3.99
	Teaching Method	3.80	.774	.080	3.64	3.96
	Trainer's Ability	3.90	.822	.085	3.73	4.07
	Amount of Time	3.56	.866	.090	3.38	3.74
	Individual Attention	3.82	.872	.090	3.64	4.00
	Questions and Participation	3.95	.864	.090	3.77	4.12
	Utility for Employment	3.66	.915	.095	3.47	3.84
Module on I.T. Awareness	Course Content	3.73	1.066	.108	3.52	3.95
	Teaching Method	3.75	1.026	.105	3.54	3.96
	Trainer's Ability	4.14	.833	.085	3.97	4.31
	Amount of Time	3.20	1.166	.121	2.96	3.44
	Individual Attention	3.89	.994	.102	3.69	4.10
	Questions and Participation	4.03	.962	.099	3.84	4.23
	Utility for Employment	3.54	1.233	.127	3.29	3.80
Module on Health and Safety	Course Content	4.42	.765	.076	4.26	4.57
	Teaching Method	4.37	.777	.078	4.22	4.53
	Trainer's Ability	4.49	.772	.077	4.34	4.64
	Amount of Time	3.68	1.072	.107	3.47	3.89
	Individual Attention	4.10	.870	.087	3.93	4.27
	Questions and Participation	4.27	.777	.078	4.12	4.42
	Utility for Employment	4.12	.966	.098	3.93	4.32

Kruskal-Wallis Test of Different Aspects of Different Modules of T.E.E.S.' Phase 1 - Core Skills Course

	Module on Life Skills	Module on Job-Seeking Skills	Module on Work Ethics	Module on Environmental Issues	Module on Employment Law	Module on E.T.C. Services	Module on I.T. Awareness	Module on Health and Safety
Chi-Square	48.131	29.461	16.819	26.364	17.784	14.820	43.490	52.926
df	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
P-Value	.000	.000	.010	.000	.007	.022	.000	.000

5.2 Analysis Section C

The variables making a significant difference on questionnaire responses of this section were intake and level of education.²⁸

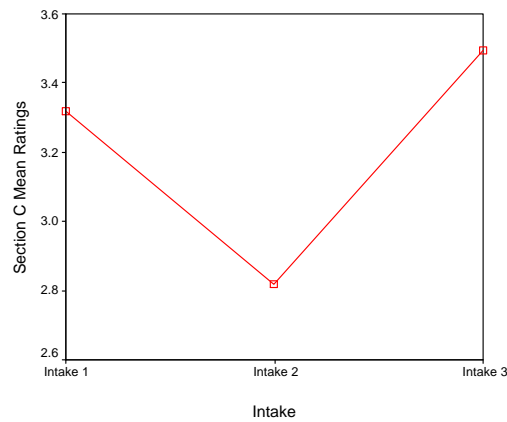
5.2.1. Intake

Figure 5, Section C - Data Findings by Intake

Section C Responses - Mean Ratings vis - a` - vis Intake

SECCMEAN

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Intake 1	3.3170	1.04181	.15037	3.0145	3.6195	.00	4.69
Intake 2	2.8200	.85798	.17160	2.4659	3.1742	.00	4.50
Intake 3	3.4939	.89865	.16140	3.1642	3.8235	.00	4.69



ANOVA

SECCMEAN

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.681	2	3.341	3.632	.030
Within Groups	92.906	101	.920		
Total	99.587	103			

²⁸ S.P.S.S. testing reveals that the variables of gender, age, region of residence, last employment category and marital status had no significant impact on ratings and responses of Section C.

Research participants of Intake 2 rated the experience of being an older unemployed T.E.E.S. participant more negatively.²⁹

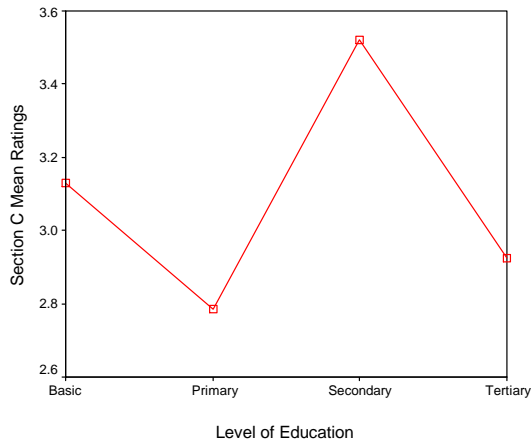
5.2.2. Education

Figure 6, Section C - Data Findings by Level of Education

Section C Responses - Mean Ratings vis-a`-vis Level of Education

SECCMEAN

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Basic	3.1287	.38811	.15844	2.7214	3.5360	2.69	3.85
Primary	2.7843	1.34166	.32540	2.0945	3.4741	.00	4.69
Secondary	3.5209	.72523	.09137	3.3382	3.7035	1.83	4.69
Tertiary	2.9255	.97332	.26013	2.3636	3.4875	.00	3.69



ANOVA

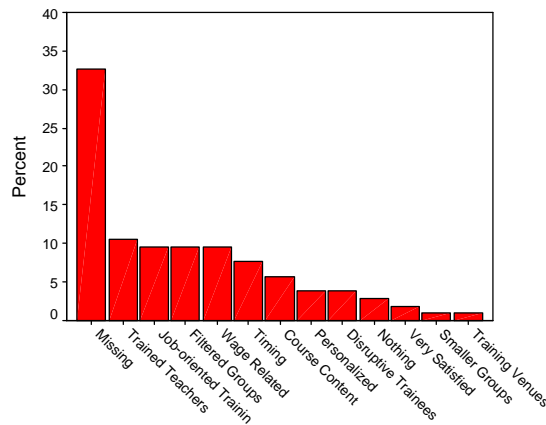
SECCMEAN

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.720	3	3.240	4.176	.008
Within Groups	74.479	96	.776		
Total	84.200	99			

²⁹ The P-Value of 0.03 shows that this discrepancy is significant. Due to the size of the sample from Intake 2, compared to the size of the actual population of Intake 2, the conclusions from this One Way ANOVA Test may be generalized. The One Way ANOVA Test is similar to the Kruskal-Wallis test used in previous sections. However the One Way ANOVA Test is used when the rating responses have a normal distribution. This was the case with ratings for sections C and D.

Figure 6 reveals a significant difference between research participants having different levels of education. All ratings fall in the region of “Quite good” yet those having a basic and secondary level of education rate their experience as T.E.E.S. participants and older unemployed persons less negatively. The means plot above shows that there is no progressive pattern.

Figure 7, Section C – Suggested Improvements



C14 : What do you think can be improved in the Training Course?

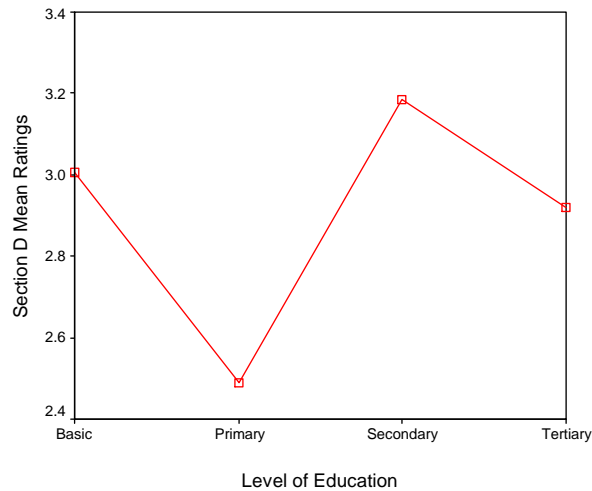
Despite the fairly positive ratings given as a whole, research participants expressed harsher views in the open-ended questions. Figure 7 above shows that whereas a high percentage of research participants chose to leave this space blank, the second highest percentage of participants commented on the need for more trained teachers. The need for more job-oriented training also features amongst one of the relatively most popular comments. This is crucial considering the aims of T.E.E.S. Only a few research participants’ expressed that they were very satisfied with the training.

5.3 Analysis Section D

The variables making a significant difference on questionnaire responses of this section were the level of education (as for Section C responses), and the number of breadwinners in the household.³⁰

5.3.1 Level of Education

Figure 8, Section D - Data Findings by Level of Education



ANOVA

SECDMEAN

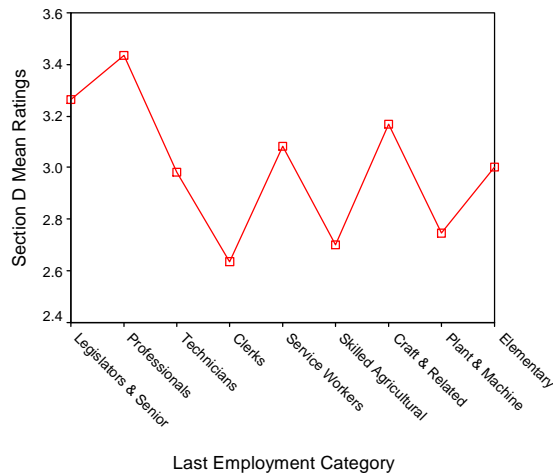
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.636	3	2.212	4.351	.006
Within Groups	48.803	96	.508		
Total	55.439	99			

³⁰ S.P.S.S. testing reveals that the variables of gender, age, region of residence, last employment category and marital status had no significant impact on ratings and responses of Section D.

Similar to responses for Section C, those having a basic level of education and a secondary level of education give more positive ratings, falling in the region of “Quite good”.³¹

31

Figure 9, Section D - Data Findings by Last Employment Category



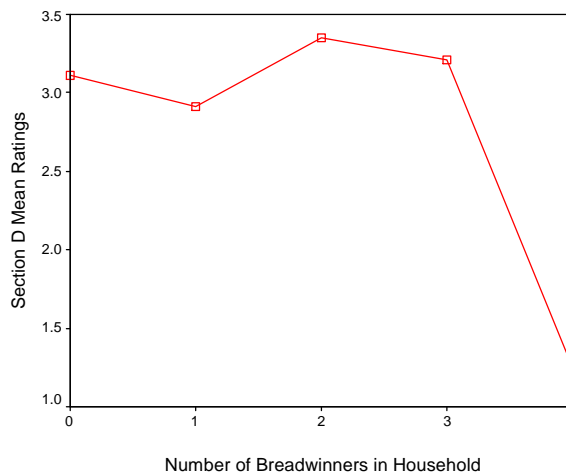
ANOVA

SECDMEAN					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.278	8	.535	.974	.461
Within Groups	47.752	87	.549		
Total	52.030	95			

A basic level of education might be associated to elementary and manual forms of employment, prior to unemployment. Therefore it could be assumed that the same progressive trend for the variable of education features for the variable of last employment category. Nevertheless, the One Way ANOVA test shows no significant difference in the mean ratings of participants from different occupational backgrounds (P-Value 0.461 – Figure 9). Figure 9 also reveals that those previously employed in elementary and manual forms of employment, on average, rate Section D just in the region of 3, with particularly lower ratings for those previously employed in the field of agriculture, plant and machinery, and clerical jobs. The latter expressed the most negative ratings. On the other hand, those coming from professional and high-up posts (generally associated with higher levels of education) tend to rate their relationships with family, friends and public authorities in a more positive manner, since their mean ratings for Section D questions are higher than 3. This might show that those having a higher education and previously employed as professionals or seniors manifest more trust in relationships with family, friends and public authorities. This will be discussed further in the next section.

5.3.2 Number of Breadwinners

Figure 10, Section D - Data Findings by Number of Breadwinners



ANOVA

SECDMEAN					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.054	4	2.264	4.811	.001
Within Groups	41.875	89	.471		
Total	50.929	93			

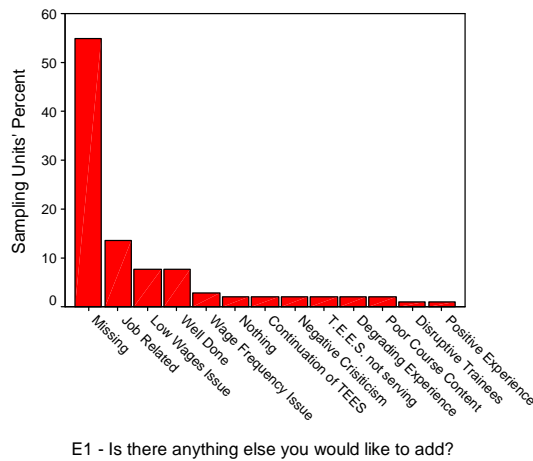
The number of breadwinners in the family significantly affects the mean ratings of Section D (P-Value 0.001). The most pessimistic mean ratings (1.25) were given by those having four breadwinners (these are only a minority – Figure 12 – Section 6.2).³² Nevertheless, those research participants coming from

³² This might show that the higher the income per family, the higher the expectations. It could also indicate a deeper sense of frustration for the older unemployed of having four household members contributing to the family’s welfare, without being able to make his / her contribution.

families having three breadwinners rated Section D more positively. Thus Figure 10 shows that there is no progressive trend.

5.4 Analysis Section E

Figure 11, Question E1 – Open-Ended



Once again, despite the average fair ratings of the course, a considerable number of research participants used the open-ended question to criticize the job-orientation of the course.³³

³³ This is very important considering the fact that the purpose of T.E.E.S. is to re-integrate the older unemployed worker in employment. Very few research participants commented on what a positive experience T.E.E.S. Core Skills Course has been, however, a number expressed positive criticism for the course (“Well Done” category).

6 Discussion

6.1 Work - Value and Motivation

Findings reveal that contemporary Maltese society features a 40+ labour force whose values of work and motivation for work are job and wage oriented.

6.1.1 Job Orientation

The mean ratings for utility of T.E.E.S. Core Skills Course to find employment (3.59 - Figure 2 – Section 5.1), and for the Job-Seeking Skills Module (3.73 – Figure 1 – Section 5.1), show that some aspects of T.E.E.S. Phase 1 ought to be reconsidered given that the module and aspects of the Core Skills Course directly related to employment (the chief objective of T.E.E.S.) were not best-rated.

Moreover, although a considerable number of respondents left the open-ended questions blank³⁴, amongst those who answered them, there is a pronounced trend to express harsher views and a higher degree of negativity. Responses include :

Fil-fehma tiegħi għandu jkun hemm iżjed taħrig prattiku fuq il-postijiet tax-xogħol milli teorija.³⁵

Thus, overall, T.E.E.S. participants pointed out that T.E.E.S. Phase 1 could have been more job-oriented.

³⁴ Approximately 32.50% did not answer question C14 and approximately 55% did not answer question E1. (Figure 7 - Section 5.2.2 and Figure 11 - Section 5.4)

³⁵ *In my opinion there should be more on-the-job training rather than theory.*

Having said this, a small number of T.E.E.S. participants responded to the open-ended questions by expressing positive comments about the course and gratitude for finding employment.

6.1.2 Wage Orientation

One of the most recurring concerns amongst respondents is their monthly salary.

Jien nixtieq insib xogħol li jkolli paga tajba ... Tista tghidli kif nista ngħaddi b'Lm48.48c fil-gimġha. Ma naħsibx hu!³⁶

Thus, in this study, rather than at the value within work itself, respondents are pointing at its use value, as it were, in an instrumentalist way, a means to sustain consumption. In this regard, sociologists have argued that work in contemporary society is a means to an end (Ransome 2005, p.28) whereby the acts of consumption have bred a 'work and spend culture'. (Cross 1993, p.5)

³⁶ I wish to find well paid employment...Can I cope with Lm48.48c (€112.93) a week? I don't think so!

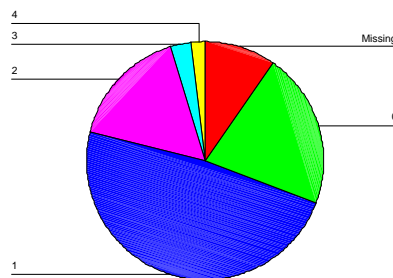
Findings also show that one of the burdens of unemployment derives from the consequent inability to fully participate in a society which is predominantly consumerist. Findings in fact reveal very low mean ratings amongst all research participants coming from different educational backgrounds to question D3, namely Question D3 : “I feel financially stable and without need of financial assistance.”³⁷

6.2 Training and Retraining in Contemporary Society

The negativity expressed in research participants’ ratings reflects loop-holes of this particular training scheme and contemporary local economy.³⁸ The sociological implication behind this view is that retraining and updating one’s skills have to be differentiated. Retraining implies expecting a middle-aged or older person to change field completely. This is unrealistic and it might also be perceived as

³⁷ Findings show that a considerable percentage of research participants come from households of 7 and 8 persons. (Brown 2007, p.140) The financial pressure is further evident considering that, as seen in Figure 12 below, the majority of research participants come from a family of only one breadwinner.

Figure 12, Research Participants – Number of Breadwinners



³⁸ For instance, responses included criticism of the timing allocated for the I.T. Awareness module and the attitude of subject facilitators towards participants.

offensive to the worker who has dedicated ten or twenty years of his/her life to a particular skill or a particular field. This perspective on retraining also shows how in deconstructing an official discourse - which in this case is the contemporary trend of considering retraining as one of the best solutions to the problem of unemployment - one uncovers latent conflicting interests and reactions.³⁹

6.3 The 40+ Labour Force : Distinct yet Non-Homogeneous

6.3.1 Gender

Based on the principles of the Lisbon Strategy, the *National Action Plan for Employment Malta 2004* points at females and persons aged 55 years and over as targeted social groups for increased levels of employment. This seems to imply that age and gender are discriminating variables in the labour market. (Ministry of Education 2004a) One could easily extrapolate that in conjunction the two variables increase the level of inequality.⁴⁰ Yet findings prove that this correlation is spurious within the context of 40+ unemployed on training in Malta, since the One Way ANOVA Test results do not exhibit more negative ratings for females. It can be argued that ‘gendered ageism’ is not necessarily linked to older age. This view has secured support from a study by Duncan and Loretto (2004, pp. 95-

³⁹ Other issues and vested interests might alight the negative assessment of the utility and value of training – such as political and anti-bureaucratic interests or an attitude of idleness or apathy. Having said this, the ineffectiveness of lifelong learning might not be a consequence of the individual’s reluctance or lack of enthusiasm but also a consequence of loop-holes in the implementation.

⁴⁰ In fact this has been argued in studies of ‘gendered ageism’ to describe the situation where the accumulation of negative treatment and missed opportunities may result in greater inequality with increased age. (Itzin & Philipson 1995; Browne 1998.)

114) who found self-reported evidence of ‘gendered ageism’ by both older and younger cohorts of women.⁴¹

6.3.2 Region of Residence

Findings are in line with *Report IV* of the International Labour Conference (International Labour Office 2003), reviewed in the theoretical chapter, since it argues for the need of training for disadvantaged social groups, yet it does not recognize regional residence as one of the variables which might create a distinct disadvantaged social group.

The lack of regional differences manifested in the findings implies that 40+ unemployment is not a uni-located or bounded issue, but one which affects Maltese society as a whole. In other words, the problem of 40+ unemployment (which, at the end of the day, is also related to economy) and its corollaries are so powerful that they override otherwise-important socio-geographical factors.

⁴¹ In fact younger women might be negatively discriminated by employers on the assumption that a young female employee is more likely to request paternal leave or a career break. In this regard, David Cheal argues that

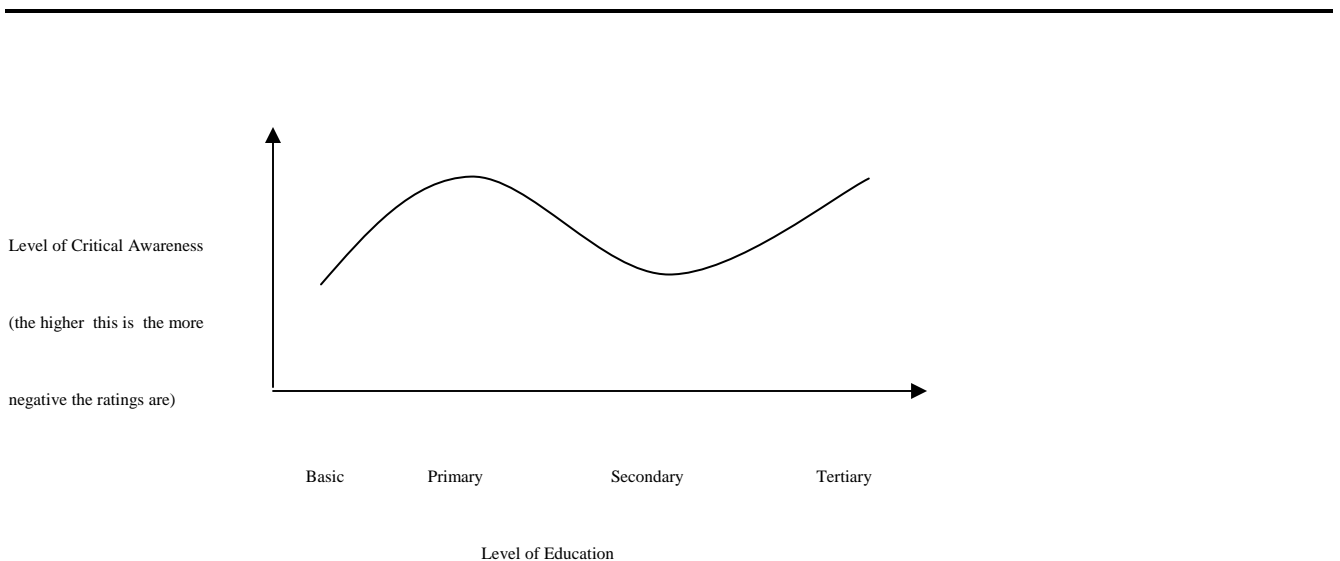
“It used to be the case that many women left the labour force when they had their first child, and then returned to paid employment only when their youngest child was old enough...Nevertheless, it remains the case that even now women do not participate in the labour force on exactly the same basis as men.” (Cheal 2002, p.114)

In fact, with reference to Malta, A.M. Abela discusses how “After a few years of marriage, married women take leave from their full-time employment whereas others take a few months’ maternity leave or shift to a part-time job in order to take better care of the family.” (Abela 2000, p. 111)

6.3.3 Level of Education

Findings witness the emergence of ‘the knowledge economy’ (Barker 2003, Castells 2000, Giddens 1998) they show that a high level of education results in higher awareness of critical situations. There is also a serious loss of status involved, which, however, is not to say that persons with lower levels of education do not feel the bite of unemployment.

Figure 13. Level of Education and Level of Critical Awareness



Nevertheless, the relationship between respondents’ perceptions and their level of education is not a simple progressive relationship. Hence, the 40+ unemployed in Malta cannot be considered as a homogenous group : different educational levels yield to different perceptions. This is why postmarxist Laclau (1996) describes societies as characterised by ‘hybridization’ and says that it is very difficult to refer to a single level as the one on which the basic identity of social agents is constituted. Similarly Bauman comments how very rarely can an identity be secured simply through the job performed. (Bauman 1998, p.27)

6.3.4 Marital Status and Family Size

Findings show that among the 40+ unemployed on training in Malta the separated, divorced or annulled person is not necessarily an anomic and/or unsatisfied member of society. Thus, from Althusser's perspective, this study shows how some variables, such as gender, region of residence and, in this case, marital status, are overruled by the variable of unemployment, which is also related to the "structure in dominance", i.e. the economy. (Althusser 1977, pp. 205-6)

6.3.5 Household Income

There is no progressive trend between the number of breadwinners in the household and the ratings about the Core Skills Course and the social reality of being a 40+ unemployed person undergoing training. Nevertheless, statistical tests' results show that the difference between ratings is significant. In fact, those participants belonging to households of four breadwinners express a pronounced negativity. (Figure 10 – Section 5.3.2)

Therefore, the presence of breadwinners at home does not imply that the 40+ unemployed person is being financially assisted by them.⁴² Alternatively, the breadwinner might not wish to assist the jobseeker, or else despite this wish, the earned salary is not enough. Hence, the relevance of agency and interaction. Moreover, having breadwinners within the home environment might increase the frustration for the jobseeker making him/her feel more helpless and unable to contribute. The

⁴² In this regard, David Cheal argues that in some cases of male unemployment, "Some men clearly resist changing their (breadwinner) role in the family, even under desperate financial circumstances." (Cheal 2002, p. 117)

jobseeker might even feel isolated since other family members are busy out of the house and perhaps they have little time to interact with him/her.

6.4 The 40+ Labour Force and the Welfare System

Most responses to the open-ended questions of Sections C and D (Figure 7 – Section 5.2.2 and Figure 11 – Section 5.4) revolve around the need for more abundant social benefits.⁴³ This study sheds light on a number of issues concerning the 40+ labour force's role in the welfare system :

- i. The demographic shift towards an aging population⁴⁴ “will restrict the supply of labour...(and) will consequently make a higher demand on...the welfare state, which will...challenge the sustainability of the public welfare system.” (Cutajar & Deguara 2004, p.171) This calls for welfare and policy programmes aimed at an increased longevity of the

⁴³ The above interpretation seems to be undermined by the mean rating for Question D5, namely, “I receive financial support from public authorities (ETC, government departments, social services etc)” is 3.07 thus middle-way between “Yes a lot” and “Not at all”. (Brown 2007, p.163) Nevertheless, this result reflects participants' evaluation of the fact that they receive financial support, rather than satisfaction with the amount received.

⁴⁴ Soon, more than half of the European population will be over 40. Already 22% of the population is older than 60 and this is expected to rise to 36% in 2050, as life expectancy increases and birth rates remain low, at around 1.5 children per woman. This demographic evolution is increasingly weighing down on Europe's economy as the costs of pensions and healthcare swell and the workforce dwindles. (EurActiv.com 2007) Particularly in Malta, the population aged 55-64 years makes up 12.5% of the population, whereas the population aged 55 years and over is aged 15.8%. (Central Office of Statistics 1996) The Maltese population (not including foreign residents) is projected to increase between 1995 and 2010 due to the projected increase in birth rates and fall in death rates. Nevertheless it is then expected to decrease from 2015 to 2025 due to a decrease in birth rates and a stabilization in death rates. (The Times of Malta 2006)

labour force's skills and its contribution to welfare funds.⁴⁵

- ii. In Malta, the role of the 40+ worker in the welfare system is currently in a transitional phase between Welfare State and Welfare Society. (Abela 2000) As to date in Malta, the government still spends a considerable amount on welfare.⁴⁶ Thus, it would be fairer to speak of a Maltese welfare system as characterized by parallel streams of governmental and non-governmental benefits, yet still with a strong state sector.

- iii. The 40+ unemployed person is one of the social actors who might be critically affected by the liberalisation of welfare provision. Currently one of the reasons to do away with unsustainable levels of state expenditure is the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty.⁴⁷

In this case, the unavailability of resources is hard to live up to especially since welfare

⁴⁵ This does not infer that the 40+ unemployed labour force is willing to contribute to the welfare system. Outlook Co-op categorized 429 jobseekers (12.11%) aged 40 years and over as very long-term unemployed. (Data from E.T.C. and Outlook Co-op) This shows that there are a number of members of the 40+ labour force who end up going through a vicious cycle of cyclical unemployment or long-term unemployment. In this regard, Murray (1984) proposes the elimination of public welfare for the non-disabled of working age, save for short-term unemployment insurance programme and a residue of highly discretionary local schemes. Conversely, the E.U. Lisbon Agenda proposes investment in training, lifelong education and abundantly funded integration and employment schemes such as T.E.E.S., amongst other strategies. (Commission of the European Communities 2004)

⁴⁶ For example, during 2007, Government expenditure on social security benefits is expected to be Lm243,300,000 (approximately €567,000,000), which is more than the approved estimate of 2006 (Lm227,600,000 – approximately €530,000,000), and both 2007 and 2006 figures are higher than the Lm220,830,400 (approximately €515,000,000) actual expenditure of 2005. (Ministry of Finance (Budget Office Malta) 2006, p.262)

⁴⁷ A criterion of this treaty is that the deficit should not exceed 3%. In past years, Malta's deficit was higher, climbing to 9.59% in 2003 ((Ministry of Finance 2004, Appendix 'B' p.5). Since then, however, the deficit has decreased to 2.68% in 2006 (Ministry of Finance 2007, p.21), thus abiding with the Maastricht criteria, as recently commented by the European Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner, Joachim Almunia. (Alumnia 2007). In fact Malta shall be reverting to the Euro currency as from 1st January 2008.

society practices described by A.M. Abela (2000) are relatively something new and so the prevailing mentality might still be to expect state support.⁴⁸

6.5 Long-Term Unemployment

Findings show that, overall, T.E.E.S. participants deem T.E.E.S. Core Skills Course as being successful to reduce the risks of the ‘Queuing Phenomenon’ (Sexton & O’Connell 1996), of long-term and of permanent unemployment – at least for its participants.⁴⁹ In fact, 54.57% of participants found employment through the scheme. (E.T.C. 2007 and Figure 15)

Moreover, T.E.E.S. is also fulfilling the predicaments of E.S.F. and the Integra Stand when it comes to updating the 40+ unemployed skills and knowledge, as well as bringing closer the employer to the jobseeker whilst re-connecting the latter to the world of work.

Nevertheless, this does not imply that the T.E.E.S. participant or the 40+ worker, is or considers himself / herself to be on a par with the rest of the labour force when it comes to employment opportunities, as discussed in the next section.

⁴⁸ Citizens are not the only ones to blame for expecting this, since this mentality is also the yield of politicians’ constant harping about the need for the state to provide.

⁴⁹ T.E.E.S. participants may be less likely to be prone to pessimism about long-term unemployment due to the fact itself that they are participants of this scheme. Thus findings are to be seen in the light of this ‘promise’ of employment, despite the not so positive (though not negative in itself) feedback about the utility of the training scheme to find employment, when compared to other aspects of the Core Skills Course, as discussed above.

6.6 Discouraged Workers?

6.6.1 'The discouraged worker effect' and the 40+ Labour Force

M. van Ham et. al. mention discrimination and high unemployment among factors prompting 'the discouraged worker effect'. (van Ham et. al. 2001, p.10) Based on findings, this study proposes the following re-working of M. van Ham et. al.'s thesis :

- i. In the case of the 40+ labour force, age discrimination comes in, thus compromising the relevance that educational qualifications should have in the level employability of a person, particularly if there is a certain degree of unemployment in society.

- ii. Moreover, 'the discouraged worker' effect is not necessarily the domain of those who gave up the job search, but, as in case of T.E.E.S. participants', *those who are still looking for a job and whose occupational and social status has suffered the blow* described by Newman in her explanation of downward mobility.

6.6.2 'The discouraged worker effect' and social capital

'The discouraged worker effect' is a reality experienced by a considerable number of unemployed 40+ labour force in Malta due to their lack of social capital and educational baggage.

It follows that social capital does not only involve having social networks. Social capital is

the set of trust, institutions, social norms, social networks, and organizations that shape the interactions of actors within a society and are an asset for the individual and collective production of well-being. (Sabatini (ed.) 2001)

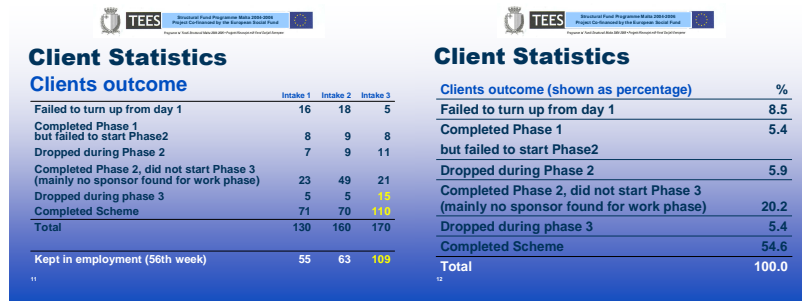
The individual who is one-to-one with one or more of these social factors enjoys a degree of stability and social wealth that are more likely to give him/her an advantaged status.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ The disadvantaged position of the T.E.E.S. participant in the Maltese labour market might be confirmed by the awareness (self-fulfilling prophecy) s/he has of possible obstacles encountered in the job-search, such as ageism, lack of updated skills and knowledge, and mandatory retirement. In this assessment however one has to keep in mind that if social participants might influence the outcome of social situations, the opposite can happen too. Also, if self-fulfilling prophecy has a role in the creation of 'the discouraged worker effect' and the disadvantaged occupational status of the T.E.E.S. participant in Malta, this does not rule out the external social origins of these phenomena since self-fulfilling prophecy has external social roots (self-fulfilling prophecy is developed in the process of social interaction with wider society).

Nevertheless, the importance and status of the sociological concepts discussed, such as social capital, knowledge-based society, social integration, and so forth, is not to go beyond the level of analytical tools that help to understand social situations. In no way they suggest reification, i.e. that the entire social reality of 40+ unemployed members of the Maltese labour force emanates from these concepts.

6.6.3 The efficiency of T.E.E.S. Core Skills Course against ‘the discouraged worker effect’⁵¹

Figure 14, T.E.E.S. Client Statistics



(E.T.C. 2007)

⁵¹ The following is some information from E.T.C. on the regulations concerning the aftermath of those who do not complete T.E.E.S. successfully. Drop-outs are struck off from the unemployment register. Re-registration is possible on the condition of no unemployment benefit for 6 months (Part 2). T.E.E.S. participants who complete Phase 2 but do not have a sponsor (an employer) are terminated from the scheme, since the requirement for T.E.E.S. Phase 3 participation is having a sponsor. These are eligible to register on Part 1 (unemployed on benefits) as from the following day. T.E.E.S. participants who complete T.E.E.S. but are not kept in employment after the 52nd week are allowed to re-register again on Part 1 (i.e. on unemployment benefit). (E.T.C. 2007)

Figure 15, T.E.E.S. Participants Outcomes⁵²



(E.T.C. 2007)

As seen above, 36 participants out of 460 participants (7.83%) were *officially*⁵³ discouraged workers as understood by van Ham et. al. (2001, p.10), in the sense that they had *officially* given up the job-search completely.⁵⁴

Thus in this section it was shown that less than 10% of the unemployed 40+ labour force in Malta are ‘discouraged workers’ as in giving-up the job-search completely. The rest who are still on the job-search occasionally manifest symptoms of discouragement in terms of finding employment.

⁵² Figure 15 gives details of all T.E.E.S. 460 participants’ outcome after the completion of T.E.E.S. Phase 3. Out of the 161 participants who did not find gainful employment, 39 were not registering (at the time of E.T.C.’s research, i.e. January 2007), out of which 1 participant deceased and 2 participants remained struck off (i.e. they dropped from the scheme and did not re-register on Part 2 (i.e. without unemployment benefit). This means that at the time of E.T.C.’s research, i.e. January 2007, 36 former T.E.E.S. participants could register but were not doing so.

⁵³ It can be argued that these workers might be participating in black market economy yet first of all, data on this is unavailable, and secondly, if they are doing so, they are still ‘discouraged workers’ in terms of the official labour market.

⁵⁴ E.T.C. could not provide socio-demographical data of these participants at the time of this research. Such information would supplement these research findings in showing that there are certain categories of the 40+ unemployed in Malta who are more prone to ‘the discouraged worker effect’ in terms of giving up the job-search. In turn, this could further help in the design and implementation of preventive measures.

These conclusions are particularly valid for certain categories of this social group, as will be synthesized in the conclusion.

7 Conclusion

This paper has analysed the perceptions of 40+ unemployed workers in relation to their chances of finding stable employment further to participation in an official EU and Malta Government targeted employment scheme.

Findings show that the unemployed 40+ labour force in Malta participating in a targeted employment scheme is a distinct heterogeneous social group.

Members of the 40+ unemployed labour force in Malta are prone to pessimism and tend to feel disadvantaged in finding employment. Discouragement is high amongst the minority and occasional amongst the vast majority.

Perceptions tend to be particularly pessimistic amongst those having a primary and tertiary level of education, those coming from families of four breadwinners, and participants of a particular intake of the employment scheme in question. This reveals the influence of factors related to structure and agency respectively, factors which are not uni-directional and can be therefore explained in terms of *overdetermination* and *multiple identities*. .

In other words, there are both *universal* and *particular* characteristics amongst ageing workers in Malta, thus requiring social policy measures which are universal in scope yet particular in relation to specific needs.

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