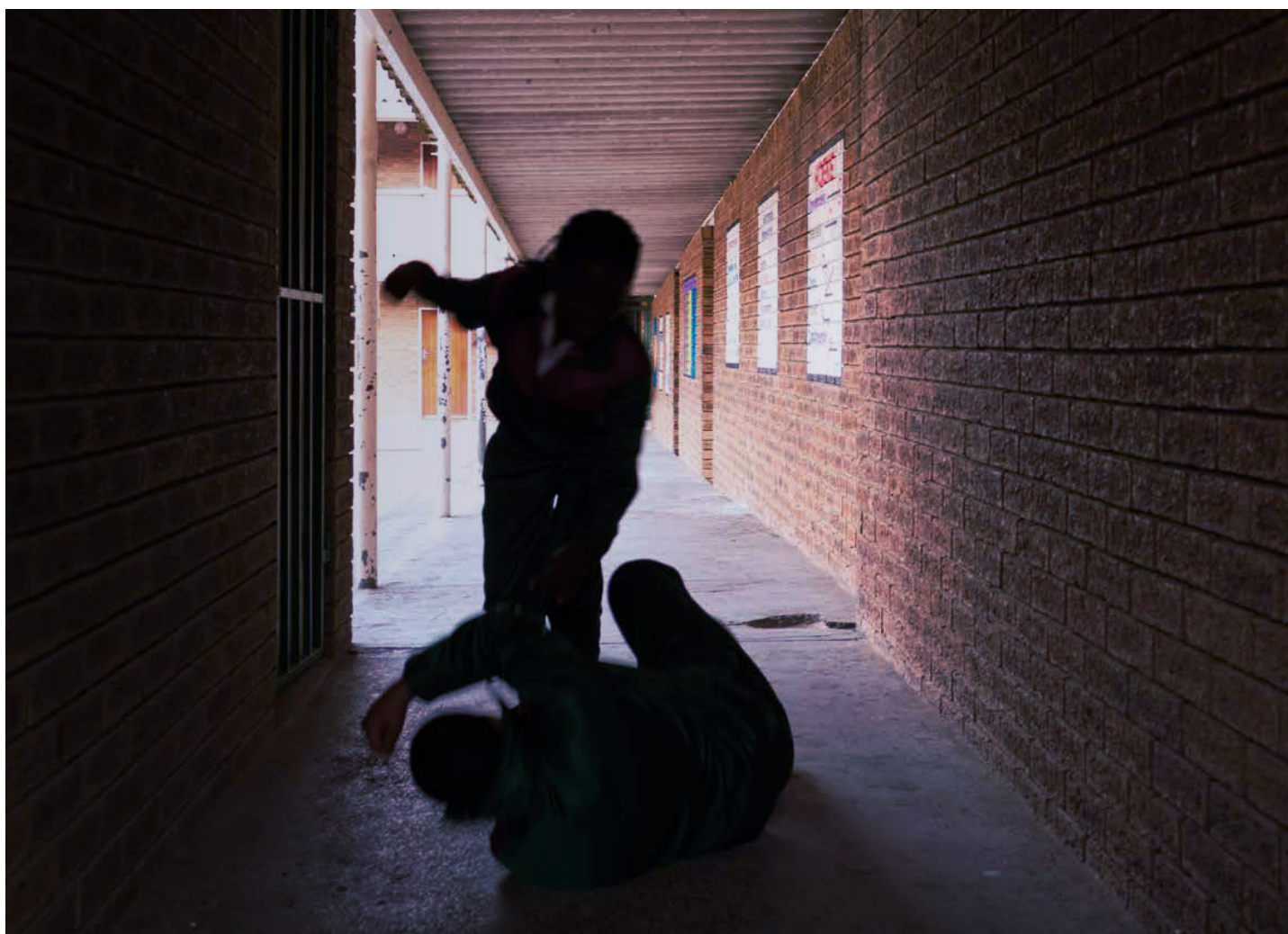


MCAST LINK

Issue 48 // Q1 2019





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MCAST

Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology

MCAST LINK

Issue 47 // Q4 2018



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Editorial

Welcome to the Spring issue of our magazine MCASTlink. This edition introduces the six new MCAST Deputy Principals and their important roles within the new restructuring of the College.

For the first time the MCAST Student Council – its members, their roles and the aim and vision of the Council are presented in this publication. The six members are also featured on the front cover of this edition. We augur that this hard-working team keeps us the good work and energy for the benefit of all MCAST students.

Hon. Minister Evarist Bartolo was exclusively interviewed for this magazine. His thoughts and vision on the future of MCAST and Vocational Education and Training, the importance of real-life education, the future of blockchain on education, the new MCAST Strategic Plan, the My Journal programme and the fourth-industrial revolution are all revealed in the interview.

The launching of the new Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme is an important milestone for MCAST. Students now have the opportunity to enhance their studies with life-enriching experiences that add value to their holistic knowledge base and help them become active and employable citizens that contribute to Malta's dynamic democratic society and economy.

Our MCAST students keep making us proud. This edition focuses on Creative Arts student Marco Parascandalo who has set up his own fashion-design company, designing, creating and producing his own original streetwear under the brand name PARASCANDALO. His creativity, uniqueness and style are to be admired. Once again this issue includes the Erasmus + exchange programmes that members of staff and students participated in throughout the past months. Their enriching experiences of study and work in EU countries are found inside. Another interesting foreign experience is Mr Laurence Zerafa's voluntary work programme in Tanzania, Africa and the adventures and travels along the way.

The newly set-up MCAST Grievance Office led by Mr Anthony Saliba, aims to enhance and promote an authentic and fair MCAST community spirit. All cases are handled in a strictly confidentiality matter. Further details can be found inside this issue.

We hope you find MCASTlink interesting and informative, keeping you abreast with the latest news and events taking place in our College.

We wish you a very Happy Easter that is filled with plenty of love and happiness.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL AND CEO

PROF. JOACHIM JAMES CALLEJA



Making MCAST the First Choice

The new structural developments at the College are bearing fruit. Six new Deputy Principals have taken up their job with qualified commitment. They have been entrusted with the task of taking the College to the next level of excellence through new insights, processes and procedures engaging as many staff members and stakeholders as possible. The areas that they are covering will serve to give students, lecturers, management and those engaged in vocational education and training ownership of the College's ethos and its objectives. The six new Deputy Principals will cover the areas of learning and support services, administration, the Institutes' environment, the Registry, as well as research and innovation. Our overall aim is to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and timely response, care for our students and staff members and quality in the provision of learning, teaching and work-based activities. The new area of research and innovation aims at widening the research culture at MCAST to as many lecturing staff as possible. We need a research mind-set at MCAST that provides for new knowledge, works towards solving real-work problems, enters a cycle of learning, translating into new teaching; moves into a continuous process of collaborating and disseminating findings, solutions and new understandings with key partners and stakeholders, and allows MCAST to assist Malta in achieving its national 2% of GDP devoted to research target. The 450-odd academic staff will be allowed to carry out research through a collective agreement clause that replaces some of the teaching contact hours with research contact hours. MCAST has already piloted this concept and immediately reaped benefits in EU-funded research projects amounting to around €2.9m for the period 2018-2020 in projects such as H2020, Interreg and Fusion. Now we require senior researchers in each of the six institutes, to steer this new

culture interacting with stakeholders and striving for research initiatives, projects and grants.

At the heart of these restructuring processes lies the new strategic plan for the College. The Comprehensive Spending Review exercise in mid-2018 highlighted critical weakness which, if left unattended, risks weakening the vocational pipeline of workers in the Maltese economy for more generations. In August 2018, MCAST kicked off a strategic exercise to hone its achievements, assess its weaknesses and redirect resources towards making the College a truly vocational and professional hub in Malta covering all qualifications in the Malta Qualifications Framework.

Now that the consultation process is about to end, we are pleased to note that hundreds of students, staff members and stakeholders have contributed to identifying measures to rethink the way courses are designed and delivered, the way the financial resources are managed internally, the inadequate data collection leading to uninformed decisions, structural reforms which need to be undertaken, measures to curb poor staff management and workload allocation, and room for improvement in work-based learning. These factors are at the heart of the College management and the service it gives to Malta. If we are getting these wrong, the College will lose its impact on society, industry and the well-being of learners and workers. The MCAST strategic plan 2019-2021 will be formally launched in the coming weeks. The implementation of the strategic plan will influence and be reflected in all the decisions, direction and actions taken by the College in the next three years.

Earlier this year a new Corporate Social Responsibility unit has been launched with the aim of engaging more students in community work while they study. It is our ambition that each MCAST student would have the opportunity to contribute to society by giving a helping hand to sports clubs and associations, non-governmental organisations, Local Councils, charitable institutions, religious societies and others who play an important role in the life of our citizens. Mr Laurence Zerafa, our Librarian, who will be retiring soon, is a shining example of voluntary work. His account in this edition should serve as an example for similar initiatives that students and staff members should take in Malta and abroad.

With the support of policy-makers, staff and students MCAST is building a new spirit for a fresh era in Malta's vocational education and training. The employers'

encouraging feedback of MCAST's learners' knowledge, skills and competences provides an excellent platform on which to build a more learner/community-oriented body of knowledge that can have a sustained encouraging impact on the quality of life of our citizens. The articles in this edition illustrate that vocational education and training is a multifaceted way of learning without dead ends. The new Master programmes launched are evidence of the high level of engagement that MCAST students and lecturing staff will be having with industry and the world of employment. Coupled with the developments in the curriculum and the quality assurance departments, the College's life is unfolding in ways that would certainly attract the attention of those leaving school this summer and employers wishing to engage with MCAST's apprenticeship programmes.

The reports from the six institutes also show that everywhere across the College the learning environment is changing and providing new opportunities for students and lecturing staff to participate in new experiences in vocational education and training. With Malta's booming economy and growth, every opportunity should be taken to bring the world of education and training closer to that of employment. As soon as the main hall is fully refurbished we will launch a structured dialogue between industry and the College community in the form of Industry on Campus meetings. The aim is to invite leading entrepreneurs to take us through their plans in the workplace and draw our attention to innovation and change of our training programmes. With the increase in the participation of ERASMUS+ projects and mobility, MCAST is investing in the internationalisation of its programmes and initiatives and providing a hub for interaction with other similar institutions across Europe and beyond.

Our challenge in the coming months will be in our outreach department to attract more learners to MCAST and to retain those who have already made MCAST their first choice.

INTERVIEW WITH

EVARIST BARTOLO

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT



Vocational education is an integral part of the national policy to address skill gaps in the Maltese labour market. How do you see MCAST's role addressing this challenge?

The ultimate test of education is preparing our young people for the real world, for a democratic life and meaningful employment. Along with degree and diploma certificates, these institutions provide students with a critical attitude to be able to solve problems by taking an active part as citizens in society. The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology is a learning institution at all levels of the Malta Qualifications Framework, including higher education. It developed as the labour market changed over the years and it is warranting qualifications in all aspects of employment. Basic, technical and professional skills determine a person's employability and ability to learn throughout life. It is for this reason that this

vocational college has been an important player in Malta's extraordinary economic and social growth.

I am pleased to note that in autumn last year MCAST launched for consultation a strategic plan to take the College forward for the next three years. It identified the need to strengthen quality and relevance, work-based learning, the image and esteem of vocational and professional education and training as well as providing incentives for the development of sustainable innovation across the College. A vocational and professional college that focuses on quality and relevance pledges a focused approach, concentrating primarily on work-based learning, particularly apprenticeship programmes. Moving towards apprenticeship degrees is the next step that MCAST will take in the coming years. This will inevitably uplift the image of vocational and professional education and training among learners and workers as well as employers and other stakeholders.

Over the years MCAST has become the road to employment. With this development in higher vocational education, the College will remain Malta's gateway to professional employability, responding to the demands of today's and tomorrow's labour market

How do you see MCAST and vocational education and training in five years' time?

Today we talk about vocational education as if it is one type of education which is somehow independent from academic education. I think vocational education should be integrated throughout, rather than channeled separately. In some areas, this is already happening. Rather than academic or vocational education, we ought to aspire to good quality education - one that engages young people, builds on their creativity and which stimulates them through learning towards becoming better people. As Pope Francis says: in a good education we need to educate minds, hearts and hands.

The pilot project, Blockcerts Pilot Project, has been extended to a nation-wide project which will see all educational institutions issue certificates through blockchain. Can you please elaborate on this?

I think new technologies such as blockchain have the capability to solve problems that in the past we did not have the tools to solve. Through Blockcerts we are delivering academic credentials in a simple and efficient manner.

Many people find out that you do not really make any use of your certificate, until you do. Then it is a hassle to find out where you have put it, and if years have passed you might even have to go back to the institution through a whole bureaucratic process to re-issue it. This simplifies all this because it is on the blockchain and you do not need a physical copy of your certificate, but the technology guarantees authenticity to third parties.

Partnership agreements has been signed between MEDE and the hotel industry and agribusiness organisations to combine learning in schools with out-of-school practical training (in the industry) for students in secondary schools so as to ensure a hands-on learning experience. Why was this done and are there plans for this to happen in other industries?

I often use a phrase that raises a few eyebrows in the audience when I say it: We need to pollute education with real life. Education that is cut off from real life is a sick education. Historically, education is insular and puts up barriers. I think the more it integrates with real life the more it is relevant and engaging. This is why linking with society and the economy is so important, because it removes the barrier between education and the real world and provides real-life interaction with the elements that education is trying to provide to young people.

What is being done with regards to resources for students with learning difficulties both in primary and secondary schools and most specifically in VET?

Students with learning difficulties are provided with the same level of support in VET as with all other subjects. In the designing of the new laboratories for the VET subjects, care was taken so that all resources are accessible to all students. LSEs support students on the same level as other subjects. But we need to move on from the culture of dependence to the culture of self reliance, resilience and solidarity.

VET subjects provide a learning opportunity to all students, catering for the different learning styles and learning abilities of the students. The students' work is certified by MATSEC at MQF Levels 3, 2 and 1 according to the level reached. VET subjects are taught and assessed at different levels, in a similar manner to all the other subjects.

SEC vocational subjects have been introduced at secondary level. What are the results so far and how do you see the sector developing in the coming years?

We are seeing excellent results and great feedback in the SEC vocational subjects that have been introduced until now. The real yardstick will be following the My Journey, and those will not be due until May 2022. But from what we are seeing on the ground there is more engagement and interest by students once you present them with different options and ways to learn. This is natural.

Each one of us has a particular way that we prefer to learn, so it is obvious that vocational and applied learning will be ideal for a particular group of people. Having said this, we are improving the quality throughout. Our

complete focus is equity, making sure the level, standard, quality and investment is equal throughout. Consolidating more traditional subjects is a priority as well - languages, science, IT and other options are still very important.

From September 2019, you will continue replacing the current secondary school model with quality education for all students through the My Journey reform. What are your aspirations following this reform?

It is a very simple one: making sure we provide each and every child with an engaging, stimulating and interesting educational experience. Once you have those variables, the learning process is so much easier. One size fits all means that it fits no one. We need to personalise education to try and reach as many students as possible. Easier said than done but we must commit ourselves to this difficult and challenging mission.

The electronic gaming sector is a key part of the Maltese economy. How is VET collaborating with this industry?

The electronic gaming sector is an important partner to the education sector. Besides being a key element in the Maltese economy, it should also be an essential companion to the education process at all stages. Learning should be enjoyable. The gamification of learning is being explored in STEM subjects and in Literacy across primary and secondary schools. Some teachers are familiar with Kahoot, Minecraft, Seppo and use Brainpop which is available on the tablets in Years 4, 5 and 6. The experience of using these tools has been encouraging. Training for teachers in the use of these tools has been taking place in the last few months.

VET is also an area of opportunity for collaboration with the electronic gaming sector. This collaboration has not yet started but is on the cards. The gaming sector is also keen to encourage the further learning of foreign languages in schools. A lot of work is being done to develop the syllabi of the foreign languages to modernize them for today's needs.

What are the implications of the fourth industrial revolution on education in general and specifically on vocational education?

Today a lot of people are looking at careers in esports, blockchain, artificial intelligence and iGaming. But these areas were never taught in school. This trend will continue. So how do you prepare young people for a world that does not exist? Despite not sounding true, it is possible. The most important objective of education today is learning how to learn throughout life. We have to equip young people with soft skills to make sure they build up skills and values that will help them deal with new challenges and new revolutions in society and in their line of work. In the past you used to graduate from an institution and never look back, with a complete focus on your career. Today, it is different. Continuous training is a necessity in many industries and this is something that will continue to take place. Our job as educators is to provide different channels and opportunities to make sure we provide the right framework to be delivered efficiently.

You have been in your current role for a number of years. What have been the biggest challenges you have had so far and what would you identify as your key achievements?

The one goal that I would like to reach as Education Minister is a very short and simple one: to provide an education system that reaches every student. It sounds easy, but it is not. There are many factors and barriers to this, and a lot of them are not related to education or schools. However, every child and young person that the education system loses, means that the country has lost potential. It means that after years and years of trying, we were not able to build something that extrapolates the creativity, talent and beauty that is in every person. The external factors that impede this are many, but I think we have made inroads there. I am sometimes criticised that we have tried to do too much, and sometimes I am criticised that we have done too little. The biggest challenge in education is to hurry slowly. If you rush you create lots of problems. If you move too slowly you create other big problems. But I am confident the foundation we have laid out over the past years will continue to gather momentum. The approach to look at young people and rather than question why they would not change and behave, actually change the experience yourself to suit their needs, is something that is slowly changing. I hope it continues to do so.

EfVET Annual Conferences: Each time a milestone for VET Providers in Europe and beyond

by Prof. Joachim James Calleja



The European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EfVET) is a unique European-wide professional association which has been created by and for providers of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in all European countries. Its mission is to champion and enrich technical and vocational education and training through transnational co-operation by building a pan-European network of institutions.



27 countries



1,500
VET providers



25,000,000
Students



750,000
Teachers

As President of the European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Principal/CEO of MCAST, I invite members of staff to join EfVET as individual members. MCAST is already an institutional member of this large organization for European VET providers.

A milestone in the annual calendar of EfVET is the Conference organized in the last week of October. This event has become a distinguished feature for Vocational Education and Training professionals in Europe and beyond, and as a matter of fact is gathering more than 200 delegates in each edition. This year the thematic theme will be “Robots, Human Capital and Digital Learning – Managing transition and inclusion” and will take place between the 23rd to 26th of October 2019, Ponta Delgada – Azores (Portugal).

EfVET Conference is an excellent opportunity for members and non-members to discuss challenging VET topics with key policy makers, stakeholders and VET professionals. This event is highly interactive, providing a network platform where delegates could meet other country fellows, key policymakers and shareholders, and find new partnerships opportunities. Even more, it is a collaboration and an engagement space to exchange views with the business and SMEs community.

In my view EfVET conferences spearhead VET reform across the thousands of schools and colleges and act as catalysts for more training providers to join this formidable group of practitioners that play such a unique role in VET. We have the privilege of making VET of walking the talking and the ambition of setting the European agenda on VET by VET providers.

The Conference challenges its members by presenting

the reality outside its traditional confines of the educational discourse that has taken place over the last twenty years.

This Conference will explore what roadmap vocational education leaders, managers and practitioners must design to enable them to lead, manage and practice education and training that matches as close as possible the world of work dominated by technological developments.

Every year, the EfVET Conference is bringing together delegates from many EU members states and beyond (for instance from USA or Hong Kong), providing an opportunity to explore key issues facing VET and HVET in Europe; sharing good practices and creating new trans-national collaborative partnerships with a view to transferring innovation and excellence in VET and in the context of ET2020.

EfVET senior delegate Annette Kay (EfVET Member Zealand Business College, Denmark) said “EfVET Conferences gives you the opportunity to meet reliable new partners for projects and also for mobility exchanges of students and teachers. Even more, we still keep the partnerships from the very the beginning (10 years ago) that we met thanks to EfVET”.

Previous editions have focused on different VET relevant topics such as: “Rethinking VET for Inclusive Excellence” (Como 2018), “The Future of Jobs” (Thessaloniki 2017) or “Quality in Action: Putting the learner at the forefront of everything we do” (Valencia 2016).

All the information about EfVET Conferences can be found in EfVET official web portal www.efvet.org



MCAST NEW

Deputy Principals



Dr **Mario Cardona**

Mario Cardona is Deputy Principal for Technology and Applied Sciences – VPET at MCAST. He has had a varied career in education and training. He graduated with a B.Ed.(Hons.) in History and Early and Middle Years from the University of Malta. After six years teaching History and other subjects in a Church Secondary school he decided to have a career break and get back to full-time study. He obtained a scholarship from the Italian government through the Istituto Italiano di Cultura and after two years at Roma Tre University he obtained a Laurea in Scienze dell'Educazione, with a focus on adult education and training. The research focused on how subsequent Maltese governments in the aftermath of the second World War, right up to the 1990s, invested heavily in the their human resources to ensure a better quality of life for their citizens.

After a very fruitful experience in industry as a Human Resource Development Manager in an Italian owned, export oriented factory, he decided to move back into formal education. He taught primary classes for three years and then moved into adult education. He worked largely in parent education programmes, with initiatives located primarily in the Cottonera area. He later joined the Valletta state primary school as assistant head. In this

period, he carried out research for the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice in the area of poverty, the inclusion of migrants and the challenges facing the education system with regards to equity. Three publications ensued in this productive period.

He then moved to the Ministry for Education and Employment where he worked first as Education Officer and then as Director of Lifelong Learning. Here he was responsible for the state provision of adult education services, helping in the re-engineering of these services to peg all the courses offered to the Malta Qualifications Framework. The same process was also started in the schools of visual and performing arts, particularly the Malta School of Music, the Malta School of Drama and the Malta School of Art.

On the research side he focused on the controversial educator Don Lorenzo Milani. Dr Cardona was all taken up by the radical views of this educator who in Paulo Freire's terms, committed "cultural suicide" by renouncing his family's high economic status, dedicating himself to his working-class parishioners in post-war Italy. Mario sought to read all the writings and publications by Milani which he could lay his hands on. Particularly, he was impressed by Milani's Lettera a una professoressa, which he helped to publish in Maltese and in English together with Professor Carmel Borg and Professor Sandro Caruana.

Mario pursued further studies in adult and community education, obtaining first an M.Ed. from the University of Malta with an action research project focused on community development, and a PhD from the University of Edinburgh with a research study focusing on adult learning within two Maltese rural cooperatives. In July 2017 Mario joined MCAST as Head of the Technical College. His main focus was the reorganisation of Level 4 courses at IET, in response to industry feedback.

Mario carries out voluntary work in a rural cooperative at Manikata which he helped set up in 2007. He is also involved in the day-to-day running of a community-based music school at Qormi. He enjoys contact with nature, reading novels and poetry, as well as doing manual work.



Dr **Tatjana Chircop**

Dr Tatjana Chircop is Deputy Principal Arts and Social Sciences. She has been involved in both formal and non-formal education since 1988. At a young age she became a professional musician with the Manoel Theatre Orchestra and the National Orchestra and taught violin and piano at the Johann Strauss School of Music and also furthered her studies at the Conservatoire National de Region, Lyon after having won the Bice Mizzi Vassallo Competition.

Later Tatjana focused on a career in education and fulfilled roles of learning support assistant at St Albert the

Great College and a community development worker with Aġenzija Appoġġ. In 2007 she joined MCAST as a lecturer and later moved into management within the same college, having been appointed Director of the Institute of Community Services, Head of the Foundation College and recently Deputy Principal for Arts and Social Sciences. Dr Chircop is in possession of a BA Hons in English (University of London), a BA Hons in Youth and Community Studies (University of Malta), a MA in Youth and Community Studies (Brunel University), a Master in Intercultural Eco-Management (Università Ca Foscari), a Post-Graduate Certificate in Vocational and Educational and Training (MCAST) and a PhD (Brunel University). Her doctoral research focuses on how young Maltese women make meaning out of the music they listen to in their everyday lives and how they incorporate this meaning into everyday discourses and identities. Through the research, she explores the consumption of global and local cultural forms of music as leisure and the incorporation or resistance of these cultural forms in identity formation processes. She also analyses ways in which social and cultural capitals are processed in the social and cultural power struggle to form cultural hierarchies.



Dr **Ing Alex Rizzo**

Dr Ing Alex Rizzo is Deputy Principal Research and Innovation at MCAST. His main expertise is in vocational education and training (VET), grounded theory research on organizational behaviour, and integrated water resources management.

He was previously Head of the University College, at MCAST. Prior to this he had set up and managed the MCAST Institute of Applied Sciences. Alex's previous engagements have included that of Deputy Chairman at the Malta Water Services Corporation (WSC), and he has taken on various engineering and management roles within the water sector over 15 years. Alex presently heads a number of research and skilling projects relating to the efficient use of water, as well as in grounded theory research on organizational behaviour. Alex is a Fellow and Chartered Member of the Institution of Engineering and Technology, the Chartered Management Institute and the Chartered Institution for Water and Environmental Management.

Alex is an avid kayaker, having practised the sport for over thirty years, participating in canoe polo, waveskiing, surfskiing, whitewater kayaking and seakayaking.



Mr **Ronald Curmi**

Ronald Curmi is Deputy Principal - Registrar at MCAST. His career started as an electronics technician after obtaining his Fellenberg Diploma in Industrial Electronics in 1993. After finishing his apprenticeship he worked for a further two years in the manufacturing industry focusing mainly on maintenance and servicing of power electrical and electronic equipment. In 1996 he shifted to the consumer electronics sector where he gradually progressed to managerial grades and directorship while expanding his experience to the then fast developing computer hardware and software industry and the emerging market of computer networks.

His teaching career started in 1995 at the Fellenberg Training Centre for Industrial Electronics where he lectured Power Electronics on part-time basis and continued lecturing various subjects related to the field of Electrical, Electronics and computer systems and networks until 2014.

He joined the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology in 2001 as Deputy Director of the Institute of Electronics Engineering (subsequently incorporating the Technical Institute Electrical Department in 2004 to become the MCAST Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineering), now the Institute of Engineering and Transport.

Ronald obtained his Master's Degree in Business Administration from the University of Leicester in 2011 and was appointed Registrar at MCAST in May 2013. He has since contributed to the introduction of several new systems and services for the benefit of MCAST students.

Ronald has also led and participated in various projects linked to vocational education and training focusing particularly on engineering education research and the attractiveness of engineering courses to the younger generations. He has very much at heart the concepts of quality assurance and assessment methodologies and has been an active member and chairperson of various trade testing boards between 2003 and 2016. In 2007 Ronald was also appointed Quality Manager of the MCAST Aviation Maintenance Training Centre where MCAST has been a leading contributor in supporting the growth of this important sector of the Maltese economy.

Ronald and his wife have four children. Naturally they all lead a very busy life but they all cherish little moments together as finding the right work-life balance is not always the easiest of tasks.

Ronald would also like to find more time for research where his interests focus mainly on Engineering Education and Quality Assurance. Despite the little time, he enjoys performing more hands-on tasks like drawing and painting, furniture-making and electronics circuit design and construction. He loves every type of sport and regrets no longer practising athletics, football, basketball and volleyball as he did in the past. He is an avid Ferrari and Juventus fan and has been loyal to these teams since his childhood.

He looks forward to contribute further to MCAST's growth towards the College establishing itself as the foremost Vocational Education Institution in the Euro-Mediterranean region.



Dr **Nadia Maria Vassallo**

Nadia Maria Vassallo is Deputy Principal – Curriculum and Student Affairs with a wider remit that includes the Curriculum Department; the Quality Assurance Department; the Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning Department; the Student Careers, Outreach and Intake Department; Wellbeing Support Services; and the Centre for Professional Development.

Nadia started her career in 1995 as a casual teacher in a Trade School for Boys. In 1997 she enrolled for B.Ed. studies and graduated in 2001. Afterwards she taught in a Church School for nine years. It was in this ambient that she experienced the impact of specific learning difficulties and general literacy challenges amongst students which led her to pursue a Master's Degree in Literacy and Language within the education sector and later undertake a Post Graduate Diploma in Literacy and Specialist Dyslexia Teaching. Nadia is also an associate member of the British Dyslexia Association. In her chosen field Nadia had a number of literacy interventions with students who were encountering literacy difficulties and for five years she led a voluntary afterschool programme for students and parents in the school where she taught.

In 2010 she moved to MCAST as a Senior Lecturer

within the Learning Support Unit, and in 2013 Nadia was appointed Foundation Programmes Co-ordinator, whilst also joining the Vocational Teacher Training Unit where she delivered Sociology in Education and Psychology modules.

Nadia completed her doctoral studies in Literacy and Language in Education in 2014, from the University of Sheffield. Her areas of studies have focused on literacy and policy in education in particular within a Vocational Institution setting. In 2014, Nadia was appointed Deputy Director for the Learning Support Unit and Key Skills and from 2015 she was Director of Curriculum managing the Curriculum Department which includes the Curriculum Office, the Learning Support Unit, the Inclusive Education Unit and the Key Skills Unit. Together with her team, Nadia has worked successfully on a number of Erasmus+ projects in collaboration with international partners.

Nadia expresses her appreciation for Robert, her spouse of 28 years, and how he has been a tremendous support and encouragement every step of the way which led to her impressive achievements both academically and career wise. The couple are proud parents of three children Rebecca 27, Roberta 25 and Petra 23.

Both Nadia and Robert love to do voluntary work and serve on the committee of ALAS (Assoċjazzjoni Lajċi Agostinjani Spinelljani) and for seven years they have served as a Leading Couple within the Cana Movement. She has also served as an executive member of the Malta Dyslexia Association.

Nadia enjoys travel, loves Formula One and football, and she is also a keen follower of Lewis Hamilton, Inter and the German national team.

Her words of wisdom to all of us – 'Never go against your principles and values.' She strongly believes that one's values are a guiding light to do what is right within the realm of integrity.



Mr **Philip Vella**

Mr. Philip Vella is Deputy Principal Administration. He has attended St. Aloysius College and followed his studies in the commerce/accounts sector. He achieved a Diploma in Teaching Physical Education, a Bachelor Degree in Social Work with practice placements at St. Bernard's Residential Home in Ireland, and Hospice (Malta) movement, and a Master's Degree in Health and Social Care Management. His dissertation focused on 'Corporate Social Responsibility and SMEs'. Philip has worked in various areas with vulnerable individuals, young people and their families on a psycho-social level.

He has worked at Caritas Malta as a social worker, and he has accompanied various groups for voluntary work in

Kenya and Albania.

Philip started to lecture at MCAST at Level 5 and Level 6 in Health and Social Care subjects and delivered MCAST part time courses in Emotional Intelligence and Relationships and in Conflict Resolution. He worked as a Deputy Director at the Institute of Business and Commerce, as Deputy Director PM at the Institute of Community Services, and concurrently as Director of the Institute of Community Services.

All of these experiences have bolstered his philosophy that the crux of any company/organisation's success lies purely in understanding and investing in human capital which can encourage to shape a vision of academic VET success for all students.

SUCCESS ENTREPRENEURIAL STORY

The PARASCANDALO Brand

Marco Parascandalo has gone from strength to strength since establishing his brand in 2014. The PARASCANDALO brand has become synonymous with cool, cutting-edge garments which are sure to make the wearer stand out from the crowd. PARASCANDALO imbues his rebellious style with local messages reflective of Maltese culture, politics and environmental issues to dramatic effect. Not one to shy away from controversy, Marco's slogan T-shirts, bearing their now instantly recognisable slang terms, have opened the door to a new, young market of stylish buyers. Using a variety of materials and textures, the PARASCANDALO brand produces everything from T-shirts to ready-to-wear one-off pieces and statement accessories.

Marco was enrolled at the MCAST Institute for the Creative Arts and read for a Diploma in Art and Design. In 2016, Marco moved his studio to MCAST Entrepreneurship Centre (MEC) at KBIC Corradino. Thanks to this Centre, Marco has taken part in the MFCC Malta Trade Fair and

Kwalità Malta. Marco has also participated in the Malta Fashion Week since 2014 where he has consistently wowed audiences with his pieces whilst working with some of the best photographers, models and hair and make-up people in the industry. His large following has not only won him countless invitations as a guest on different local television programmes but he has also been an active contributing designer to the local modelling programme "Venere" on several occasions. On one occasion "Venere" was filmed entirely at MCAST's football pitch. His most recent work for television was showcased on the "X Factor Malta" where he produced several outfits for specific singers every week.

Eventually, after much hard work from Marco's end and professional mentorship from the MCAST Entrepreneurship Centre, Marco is running his fashion studio full time at MEC Corradino. Marco is one of the five tenants who run their separate companies at MEC.



Interview with the MCAST Student Council



The role of the MCAST Student Council (Kunsill Studenti MCAST) is to promote the College interests and to enhance the involvement of the students in the affairs of the College.

The main aims of the MCAST Student Council are

- To represent the student requests and opinions to MCAST administration
- To improve the communication and relationship between students, management and administration
- To organise events and activities
- To support management and administration in the development of the College
- To keep the students informed and updated on the College's general matters
- To provide students with opportunities to hold discussions and consultations about matters that are of interest to them.

Why did you join the MCAST Student Council?

We have all become part of MCAST Student Council as we like to help and be there for students. We believe that students need to be represented and be heard and we are here to be their voice.

What is your opinion of your College?

MCAST offers great opportunities to students and the variety of courses offered at different levels gives students a wide spectrum of options to choose from. The College is state-of-the-art, well-equipped, and boasts its own gym, sports facilities, canteen, Student House, besides modern classrooms and laboratories.

The College also provides an extensive support system both on an academic level and also on a psychological, emotional and mental health level.

We are confident that the structural changes and the three year strategic plan will bring out great changes to the College.

Is the MCAST Student Council involved in international exchange programmes?

For the past three years, the MCAST Student Council has offered students internship opportunities. Students have had the opportunity to visit Brussels on several occasions through the help of MEP Dr. Miriam Dalli. We are happy with the student turnout and will continue to provide this service to the students.

What initiatives has the MCAST Student Council been involved in so far?

Throughout the years the MCAST Student Council has been very active and organised several events, campaigns as well as talks and discussions. Such examples include the Blue Noise Campaign, the Organ Donation Campaign "Heroes", the Blood Donation Campaign, besides others. We were also involved in several awareness talks on drug use, alcohol, stress, time-management besides others. Special thanks goes to the Youth Hub Aġenzija Żgħażaġh for their commitment, dedication and involving the Council in such talks.



The MCAST Student Council consists of nine members, who are elected by the students. Each member has the role to represent a different MCAST institute.

President

The President is responsible for delegating and sharing different responsibilities within the executive committee and for ensuring that the statute is followed at all times. He/she must also ensure that rules are being followed and that issues are brought to the attention of management. Any decision taken by any member of the Council must pass through him/her. The President coordinates the members and sees that the tasks assigned are carried out in the proper way.

Vice-President

The duties of the Vice-President are to assist the President at all times with the help of the Secretary General. If the President is absent, responsibility of the coordination of any meetings will fall under his/her responsibility. He/she also assists in financial and public relations matters.

Secretary General

The Secretary General is responsible for taking the minutes of any meeting the Council holds. He/she also prepares the administrative report and presents it at the AGM.

Public Relations Officer:

The Public Relations Officer takes care of all the marketing of the Council as well as social media groups and platforms. With the help of the President, he/she prepares a strategy that enables the Council to hold events and promote them with the relevant stakeholders.

Cashier

The Cashier is responsible for the financial aspects of the Student Council. He/she must prepare the financial report and present it at the AGM.

Educational Commissioner

The Educational Commissioner is responsible for creating educational campaigns on campus.

Social Policy Commissioner

The Social Policy Commissioner takes care of other active student organisations on campus. He/she guides and helps students who wish to form a new organisation within campus.

Cultural and Events Commissioner

The role of the Cultural and Events Commissioner is to create multiple events throughout the year and ensure a good turnout. With the help of the KSM members, he/she must make students aware of such campaigns and events created by the Council.

Liaison Officer

Elected by the KSM members, the Liaison Officer acts as the link between MCAST Student Council members and the satellite institutes.

Master in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0

...in preparation for Industry 4.0 reality

By Dr Nadia Maria Vassallo
Deputy Principal Curriculum and Student Affairs

We are in the wake of the fourth industrial revolution and the students attending MCAST and other vocational institutions and contexts need to be prepared for this reality. Future workers need to be well-versed with emerging technologies and the values associated with them. In other words it is no longer enough to know about or how to use technology, but it is becoming crucial knowing what technology should be used, knowing when and where to use it, and the implications that this technology will have on society. Therefore reflective and interdisciplinary approaches are imperative. Current and future students need to be challenged with complex situations to develop creativity, critical thinking and complex problem solving.

This cannot be achieved unless educators reinvent themselves and go through a culture change and this is precisely what our programme aims to do. Participants on the MCAST MVEAR 4.0 will embark on a journey that will take them through practices, processes and research that will prepare them to prepare themselves and eventually their students for this Industry 4.0 reality.

The Masters in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0 aims to link the two seemingly distinct disciplines of teaching and research within the context of vocational education in Further and Higher Education by providing a synergistic and holistic model

of academic practice. The study journey takes the participants through a systematic research approach whereby they build ways of inquiring into the impact their teaching activities have on the students' learning. Competences are hence developed on both teaching and research, thus increasing the educational capacity of these two disciplinary areas.

Further to this, this model of academic practice takes the participants on a study journey which focuses on Educational Themes, each theme covering discipline areas of identified programme units. Such approach reduces the traditional divisions between humanities and sciences, thus enhancing and consolidating a holistic approach to academic practices. Facilitating and enriching this approach, is the team of professional tutors and guest speakers coming from different specialised areas, expertise and work experiences, providing a wide and extensive spectrum of diverse perceptions and challenges to the learners following this Master's programme.

The programme uses a blended learning approach focussing on an interactive strategy which combines online and face-to-face instruction. Face-to-face sessions are delivered during three weekend schools scheduled in each of the first two years of this study programme, each weekend school addressing one Educational Theme; and Online learning, supporting the transfer and implementation of learning to the





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Further information can be acquired from
university.college@mcast.edu.mt or www.mcast.edu.mt
 or call +356 2398 7176.

These courses are part-financed by the European Social Fund under ESF Project 3.003
 – Development of Training Programmes at MQF Level 7.




teaching working environment.

All phases are realised through Team Planning, Team Delivery and Team Assessment, providing an experiential learning opportunity for the participants to develop and enhance their transferable skills necessary in team operations and working relationships, while building a community of practice.

At the same time this approach creates an increase in accessibility and flexibility, allowing mature students with other personal commitments (such as work and family), as well as foreign students, to embark on higher education studies.

In preparation for the first weekend school, MCAST





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IN EXERCISE AND SPORTS SCIENCE**
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**MASTER OF ARTS
IN PRODUCT DESIGN**
 Course Code: UC7-E11-18
 Blended learning over weekends & online
 EQF Level 7 at 90 ECTS

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Curriculum Department - Centre for Professional Development organised a training session for the team of tutors involved in delivering Weekend School 1. In view of this innovative blended approach of team delivery and assessment, the sessions allowed time and space where the tutors discussed, worked and prepared as a team and explored online teaching and learning practices.

We are eager to run this programme and feel sure that all participants following this programme will have an exciting study journey with a positive rippling effect on the learning experiences they will create for their students.



Raising Awareness and Interest in STEAM Employment

The Erasmus R.A.I.S.E Project is primarily aimed at raising awareness and interest in STEM/STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) employment. For the readers that are unfamiliar, STEM/STEAM provides learners with the necessary combination of skills to be used in their prospective career. The scope of this article is to communicate the key aspects that could be utilised by educators to turn conventional vocational teaching methodologies within classrooms, into an enjoyable, engaging and memorable learning experience.

The course that was delivered at the SISSA Laboratories in Trieste (Italy) demonstrated how STEM/STEAM could effectively be used to motivate young learners into considering STEAM careers within their future. The rationale behind this course is that employers are not always managing to find individuals that possess the necessary skill set to certain careers.

The two sessions held during the months of March and November 2018 were packed with content and sample activities that could be of use to educators. Attendees included members of several science centres including Malta's Esplora. While it was very interesting to see how such centres go to great lengths to deliver

learning content to the target audience, there are certain key elements that could effectively be adopted by any educator at MCAST.

In practical terms, a lesson consists of three parts that every educator is familiar with. These are the introduction, the core content and the conclusion. Vocational educators and STEAM educators share a lot in common. Firstly, they both rely on a hands-on learning experience to deliver the necessary skill set and secondly, it is not uncommon to have several resources ready to be used within a given activity. It would therefore be very interesting to delve into how one could make use of STEAM education within their lessons.

Introductions

Every course, lecture or lab session should initiate with something that is engaging. Introductions should serve this purpose apart from briefing individuals of the core content.

A very versatile way of starting off a course is through the use of "ice breakers" for familiarisation. Knowing who your audience is and utilising the appropriate medium of communication to ensure effective delivery is necessary. Introductions are a perfect time to acquaint participants with each other. The educator could actually benefit by observing behavioural patterns in individuals and for understanding the reason why an individual is attending the course. Taking note to tailor certain aspects of a given course as you go along will go a long way in terms of motivating that individual. In multicultural environments, the educator could actually allow the participants to create a brief presentation about themselves or the organisation they represent.

The benefits of such a session are two-fold: it would serve as an opportunity to exchange ideas and could also allow the educator to adapt certain aspects of the course to suit the audience.

Once that familiarisation is complete, the instructor

could gradually introduce core content. Since post-secondary subjects are more taxing than subjects taught at earlier levels, cognitive behaviour techniques can be a useful tool for instructors to help learners mitigate and manage problems. Cognitive behaviour therapy can assist with reinterpretation of thoughts in order to suppress negative emotions and thereby empowering a healthier and positive self-esteem. One such example to demonstrate the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioural Psychology was conducted by Dr Olga Puccioni. These activities were held in an open space and involved all participants.

The first task involved finding one's own name after "swapping" it with another random member within the group. The sole objective here is to find your own name by talking to the other participants in the group. Needless to say that the amount of confusion (using the random approach) was immense!

However, such group activities gave the instructor the opportunity to teach concepts related to cognitive behaviour. Subsequent iterations of the task involved participants to figure out a strategy to minimise the name swapping in order to locate their names faster. Once again the instructor taught the effectiveness of organisational skills while they were enjoying themselves. Such activities can be effectively used to enhance the learners' attention span and also to associate a practical task to higher order concepts such as Cognitive Behaviour Psychology.

The Core Content

Core content refers to the subject matter that is being taught during a lesson. STEAM educators use a myriad of techniques in order to maximise content delivery. Key to all techniques is the willingness to change. While subject matter in certain areas is not very dynamic, they still require some form of change and this could occur through tasks and content delivery. Some key techniques and resources for providing effective content delivery were outlined during the programme.

One such approach is the "thematic approach". The lecture would relate to a specific underlying theme so that it provides a better medium of communication to students

and a more immersive experience to the target audience. Another concept that was given due recognition was "scientific storytelling" which takes this concept further. It involves a combination of Arts (through theatre) and Sciences to educate the target audience. While this concept could be adopted holistically by science centres, it could also be of use to educators at MCAST (for example through group assignments).

Dr Andrea Brunello demonstrated how the general public could be taught something as complex as "Jet Propulsion" through the use of a story in a theatre. There are four key aspects composing effective storytelling; these include (a) the story itself (b) the underlying theme (c) the topic being taught (d) the plot. One should think of a story as a medium to transmit a plot with an underlying theme and a topic to be taught.

It was very clear that individuals will be educated subject that they are kept motivated. By providing only knowledge as the main source of "fuel", it will eventually wear off and could potentially lead to poor students' attention span. Even if scientific storytelling is not implemented as a whole, one could still include some partial elements within their lessons.

The ability of teaching highly technical subjects to a younger audience was also another objective that was discussed during the programme. As a proof of concept Dr Francesca Rizzato showed how concepts such as Machine Learning (a branch of Artificial Intelligence) could be taught to a younger audience in an interesting manner. One such example was to make use of Scratch which is known to be a visual programming language to create implementations of sprite-based games.

While this programming language is typically associated with individuals who are destined to be software programmers, it can actually be used at any age and can be conveniently used to facilitate simulations, creativity and critical thinking in any subject area. In this case, it was shown how such a tool could effectively be used to implement a solution to a "pathfinding" problem whereby the "ghost" has to find the shortest path to catch Pacman.

The reader is encouraged to head to the official website

of Machine Learning for Kids to explore the possibilities that such a tool has to offer to educators.

One other approach mentioned to disseminate awareness of STEM within the core content was to show how industrial experience and STEM education could be integrated for use by the general public. The ultimate intent here was to assist newer generations in determining an intriguing and professional career. Some websites that could be effective in assisting with dissemination and awareness, were also provided. But how can one involve the general public in an informal yet interesting manner?

Mr. Wiktor Gajewski demonstrated how science cafés could be an effective means of teaching/communication particularly to involve scientists and the general public. As the name implies, the setting for such activities is very informal and should take place in cafeterias, bistros or other places that allow for people to feel comfortable talking and interacting with others. The educator would communicate a given topic for discussion through the use of a story. The stories discussed combined the scientific topics with issues that the current generations are experiencing. All participants could interact at key points (through their smartphones) to modify the actual outcome of the story being narrated at the time. Some participants were also asked why they voted in a certain manner. This in turn sparked very interesting discussions and sharing of ideas amongst participants.

Closure and Course Feedback

While course closure could be used to recall the most important objectives of subject matter, one could also take the opportunity to determine how relevant is a given course. Course relevance gauges how important is your subject matter to the learner. It might not always be feasible to perform changes while the course is being delivered however in order to make the most out of your material it ought to be kept as relevant as possible. Most subjects are not highly volatile and would allow for incremental changes to be made.

In order to make this process as gradual as possible one key strategy to use is to elicit feedback from participants. Feedback can be gathered in a variety of ways; sometimes it could be done informally during coffee breaks but could also be more formal through the use of feedback forms. While this might sound laborious at first, it would actually make the subject being taught more interesting and would in turn be a more rewarding experience both to the educator and the

learner. The frequency of such feedback is typically left to the discretion of the educator, however one should ensure that it is not too obtrusive on the participants. The programme further discussed the methods of evaluation that could be used in order to analyse the gathered feedback.

Resources

The programme also made mention of some very important repositories found on the world wide web. STEM/STEAM communities tend to share their resources online for use by other like-minded individuals. The ones explored during the programme are briefly discussed hereunder.

European SchoolNet Academy

SchoolNet has a network of 34 ministries of education and provides resources for training as well as activities that could be used by educators of STEAM within their activities in general. They also specialise in dissemination and providing awareness of STEAM.

Scientix

Another very useful repository to the STEAM community in Europe is Scientix. This repository also contains a rich list of resources for use by educators. The added bonus here is that the members actually translate their activities to a number of European languages to better assist educators in the various countries. One other key strength of Scientix is the integrated webinars (seminars over the internet) within their Moodle platform to better assist with distance learning.

After attending the programme, it was felt that the adoption of STEAM education within a classroom setting is very important. This is not only because students learn by doing but also because STEAM education itself can contribute to a better combination of skills. Therefore individuals would not only be employable, but would also be capable of handling the industry's demands of the future.

About the Project

This Project is being led by MCST and MCAST is participating as partner. The MCAST team members include: Ing Christian Camilleri, Dr Ing Alex Rizzo, Mr Conrad Vassallo, Mr Mark Anthony Farrugia, Mr Paul Pulis, Mr Neville Magri and Mr Eric Flask.



MCAST launches the MCAST Journal of Applied Research and Practice

Vol. 2 Issue 1. 2018

The aim of the MCAST Journal of Applied Research and Practice is to serve as a platform for showcasing vocational and applied research that is carried out by the researchers and professionals working within MCAST and its collaborative partners, namely the University of Malta.

The nature of the research and innovative practice that is published is varied in nature to reflect the various aspects of vocational specialization that MCAST focuses on. The Journal

is published biannually and is aimed at researchers, academics and practitioners. The Editorial Board for this Edition is composed of Dr Ing Alex Rizzo, Ing Christian Camilleri, Dr Jevon Vella, Dr Rosienne Farrugia and Ms Doreen Micallef.

The Journal of Applied Research and Practice highlights several applied research studies carried out in 2018. These include the following: The Macro Economic Factors affecting Property Prices in Malta by Mr Luke Vella; How Effective is Apprenticeship to Learning? A Student Perspective by Ms Martina C. Vella; The Effect of Consumer Characteristics and Behaviour on Pork Consumption in Malta. A Quantitative Study by Mr Joseph J. Abela; The Attitudes of Maltese Consumers towards Renewable Energy: An Investigation by Ms Carmelina Frendo; A Coach's Perception: Major Factors influencing Late Goal-Scoring Patterns in Maltese Football by Mr Kenneth Costantino; Typing Biometrics as a Form of Passive User Authentication by Mr Darren Cilia and Mr Frankie Inguanez; The Impact on Education of Children Admitted in Care after Experiencing Abuse by Mr Neil Żammit and Ms Charlotte Moore; Malta's Higher Education Dimension: Analysing the Extent of Complexity in Change by Mr Colin Borg; and An Evaluation of the Implications of Thermography within the Healthcare Setting by Ms Cassandra Sturgeon.

LECTURER APPRAISAL AS PART OF AN ONGOING CPD PROCESS

The MCAST Experience

By Chev. Frank Gatt



Setting the Pedagogical Context

"The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers."⁽¹⁾

This quote stresses the importance of having a continuing professional development (CPD) process of teacher appraisal especially today in a world of constant change. Indeed, in this transformational scenario of high societal demands, education should become a 'living intergenerational project'.⁽²⁾

According to Pink,⁽³⁾ 21st century pedagogy should be the domain of a different way of being, knowing and doing with a predominance of right-brain capabilities, a view also shared by Howard Gardner.⁽⁴⁾

Heidi Hays Jacob states that a 21st century curriculum should not only focus on the tools necessary to develop reasoned and logical construction and acquisition of knowledge but should also aggressively cultivate a culture that nurtures creativity in all our learners that allows more time for more experimental and error-tolerant teaching and learning.⁽⁵⁾

According to Freire, teaching and learning should involve a continuous process of inquiry where the learners themselves do most of the thinking and not the teachers.⁽⁶⁾

Dewey also stressed the importance of making the learner part and parcel of the learning process. To him education is experience which is subject to constant change with the changing pattern of life. The process of education is a continuous one of adjustment.⁽⁷⁾

In *New Pedagogies for Deep Learning* (NPDL), Michael Fullan dwells on education's emerging role. New pedagogies refer to different and deep learning partnerships among students, teachers and families and involves immersing learners in the competences known as the 6 C's: Character, Citizenship, Collaboration, Communication, Creativity and Critical Thinking.⁽⁸⁾

Research from neuroscience lays stress on the importance of a learning environment which is friendly, challenging and interactive. Moreover, effective learning dwells on multi-sensory input and a real-life context.⁽⁹⁾

Vocational Education and Training Pedagogy (Andragogy)

According to CEDEFOP, there will be 15.6 million new jobs in the EU for tertiary graduates and 3.7 million jobs for secondary level students but that there will be a decline of 12 million jobs for those with low or no qualifications. So, VET will play an even greater role in life-long learning and mobility.⁽¹⁰⁾

Lucas unequivocally says that the best vocational educational learning should be broadly hands-on,

practical, experiential and real world. Among the well-researched and proven vocational methods mentioned by Lucas one finds real-life problem-solving, conversation, enquiry, coaching and virtual environments. He further stresses that vocational practical and academic learning are much more complementary than we used to think and strongly opines that practical learning is a fundamental part of our natural intelligence.⁽¹¹⁾

Likewise, Prof. J. J. Calleja affirms: "Technology is leveling the playing field between those who work exclusively with their brain and those who must also work with their hands to get things done. The shift is towards a larger number of knowledge workers (wise hands), people whose work necessitates a level of cognition coupled with an equally important level of operative approach."⁽¹²⁾

According to CAVTL, at its best, vocational teaching and learning exhibits the general characteristics of good learning and teaching practice but stating at the same time that vocational teaching and learning are dependent on the actual work context, where teachers situate theory in practical examples.⁽¹³⁾

L. Shulman⁽¹⁴⁾ speaks of "signature pedagogies", or that central form of instruction and learning in which a profession socializes its students to perform the role of practitioners.

Excerpts from the messages by MCAST Principal and CEO Prof. Joachim James Calleja and MCAST President of the Board of Governors Mr Frederick Schembri in Issue 47 of MCAST LINK, 2018

Prof. Joachim James Calleja

"In vocational education and training, building bridges, closing skills gap, opening pathways for learning, inclusion and excellence and being relevant to the world of employment are expectations synonymous with vocational colleges...

Our core business at MCAST is employability and the College is expected to be the road to employment, to re-skilling and to up-skilling of our workforce. Therefore, education and training programmes at MCAST must be both labour-market driven as well as oriented towards the formation of responsible individuals who value democracy, respect for fundamental freedoms and active citizenship...

Furthermore, we must ensure that anyone leaving compulsory education without the necessary skills for employment or for lifelong learning finds at MCAST an attractive environment not solely in its infrastructure but also in

its teaching methods and the programmes that we offer...

Society expects from MCAST to be in the forefront in the arts, in the sciences and in technology. Nothing less than high standards is suitable anymore in the various spheres of governance, management and teaching. Challenges are an added value."

Mr Frederick Schembri

"The attributes employers want to see are described as 'soft skills'. Soft skills are the personal attributes and capabilities that enable an individual to interact harmoniously and effectively with other people, and are indicative of that person's degree of emotional intelligence. Some examples of soft skills include: Teamwork, Communication, Positive Attitude, Self-discipline, Problem-solving, Resilience, Creativity, Willingness to learn, Leadership, Time management, Enterprising, etc...

Industry 4.0 will bring a dynamic transformation of how all aspects of business and production are done. Future workers will need to be highly trained in emerging technologies, including in the values associated with using these technologies. ...The problem in the future will not be the lack of employment, but the shortage of skills that new jobs will demand...

Students need to understand how they can correlate, use and apply different knowledge in diversified contexts... Tomorrow's industry leaders and managers must possess new skill sets to adapt, manage, and to take advantage of industry 4.0. They must be critical thinkers, problem-solvers, innovators, communicators and provide value-driven leadership."

The Appraisal of Lecturers Process at Mcast

The appraisal programme of lecturers at MCAST feeds on the ideas, vision and mission reported above. The rationale behind the performance appraisal exercise is to enhance the development and personal growth of lecturers, recognize accomplishments and good practices, inform lecturers of strengths, weaknesses and progress, assess performance and skill levels of lecturers, and identify professional development needs,

It needs to be stressed that the process is NOT an inspectorial one but a constructive dialogue between professionals. The role of the appraiser is that of a critical friend during the whole of the process. It is intended to build positive bridges of pedagogical and methodological

communication between the QA department, the various MCAST Institutes and each and every lecturer.

Our appraisal programme encourages lecturers to

- demonstrate a passion for learning and enthusiasm for their subject and constant research,
- be innovative and creative,
- be committed to their continuing professional development,
- be aware of the various cultural approaches to learning amongst their students,
- keep constantly abreast of the developments in their areas of study, profession and industry,
- remain connected to the real world through research, collaboration with industry, the professions and the wider community depending on their subject area,
- be constantly available to students by also responding positively and constantly to their positive feedback, and
- make sure that students are being equipped to handle change by encouraging independent learning and their ability to reason and question.⁽¹⁵⁾

Procedure

- Lecturers are informed beforehand of the visit and are free to choose the day, time and lecture when to be appraised;
- A true copy of the appraisal form to be voluntarily completed by the lecturer, is also e-mailed to each lecturer. This serves as a basis for a constructive dialogue between appraiser and lecturer during the one-to-one review meeting that follows the appraisal;
- Immediately after the appraisal, a time for the final review meeting is agreed upon by the lecturer and appraiser as close to the appraisal visit as possible, in most cases, during the same week. This meeting provides opportunities for reflection and collaboration to promote growth and improvement;
- The lecturer is then given a copy of the report that documents the appraisal process. This report becomes a vehicle for lecturers to further reflect on the feedback they have received and to identify opportunities for growth;
- A process for providing additional support depending on the outcome of the appraisal is also provided either by means of a second visit for regular lecturers or through a shadowing exercise for new and part-time lecturers. The shadowing process includes face-to-face meetings with the lecturer prior to and after the appraisal as well as two observation visits in

two different MCAST Institutes after which lecturers forward a report on their experience of the whole shadowing process;

- Finally, all reports are e-mailed to the respective Institute Directors to be completed according to Criteria 8, 9 and 10 of the appraisal grid and returned to the QA department duly completed and signed.

The appraisal visits are based on ten criteria, the first seven, Section A, to be completed by the visiting appraiser and the other three, Section B, by the Institute Director. Each criteria is broken into other sub-criteria with each sub-criterion being appraised on a score legend from 5 to 1, five being the highest. N/A stands for non-applicable.

The ten criteria are the following:

1. Quality of Lecturer's Course File (4 sub-criteria)
 2. Learning environment is pleasant, supportive and productive (4 sub-criteria)
 3. Learning environment promotes independence, interdependence and self-motivation (4 sub-criteria)
 4. Students' backgrounds, needs and interests are reflected in the learning process (4 sub-criteria)
 5. Students are challenged and supported to develop deep levels of thinking and application (4 sub-criteria)
 6. Clear evidence of meaningful task setting practices (4 sub-criteria)
 7. Learning connects strongly with practices beyond the lecture room (4 sub-criteria)
 8. Interpersonal Skills: effectiveness of the employee's interactions with others (6 sub-criteria)
 9. Approach to Work: Characteristics that the member of lecturing staff values (11 sub-criteria)
 10. Collegiality, Leadership, Supervisory Skills (10 sub-criteria).
- The whole grid can be viewed on the MCAST website.
 - The same grid is used for "new", "experienced" and "part-time" lecturers though some components may be applied differently and the frequency of appraisals may differ.

Number of Lecturers Visited per Institute

The table below shows the number of visits per institute during the period 2013 and 2018: a total of 802 visits plus 802 one-to-one review meetings. These included full-time as well as part-time lecturers and VTTU trainee lecturers.

LSU 57	GOZO 70	IIT 201	ICT 93
ICS 113	ICA 85	IBMC 102	IAS 81

Lecturers' Comments and Suggestions

The appraisal grid reserves some space for any comments or/and suggestions by the lecturer. The following are some comments and suggestions made:

- I would encourage more processes as this one because I believe they can really help in our professional development.
- It was a positive learning curve.
- I would like to include student participation as much as possible. .
- Constructive feedback received and sound and good suggestions.
- Appraisal was done at the right time of the year and appraiser was very flexible and understanding. I never felt threatened.
- I believe MCAST would benefit from offering lecturers the opportunity to attend sabbaticals.
- I wish to see the aspect of lecturers' research being given due consideration.
- A positive and motivating experience.
- I have found the shadowing exercise a very positive experience.

Monthly online educational forum bulletin

As part of the CPD process, the QA department issues

a monthly online bulletin on various pedagogical issues. These are e-mailed to each and every lecturer at MCAST and lecturers are encouraged to send their comments and suggestions online. We are in our 70th issue.

Various topics have been tackled some of which were: learning strategies, questioning techniques, action research, gender issues, emotional intelligence, entrepreneurship, interactive teaching and learning, reflective teaching, vocational pedagogy, problem-solving learning, celebrating diversity, and many others.

We believe that these issues help our lecturers to keep abreast of the latest trends in pedagogy and methodology and spur them on to further research and inquiry.

All the 70 issues can be downloaded from the MCAST web site.

Conclusion

At MCAST, we are committed to provide the best quality teaching to our students. We concur with research that professional development is vital for educational reform⁽¹⁶⁾ because it can really improve the quality of teaching and learning in a sustainable manner by increasing the effectiveness of education and training and adding value for learners, educators and employers.⁽¹⁷⁾

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Mapping the way

In September 2018, MCAST launched an important process of dialogue with key stakeholders about its strategic direction. The College drafted a comprehensive strategic document aimed at building upon the strengths, address the weaknesses and prepare the College for the challenges which dynamic economy and employment markets are generating.

The strategic document outlines priorities intended to bring the College more in tune with the modern demands of the economy, as a quality learning and working environment, for staff and students alike. Simultaneously, the College is seeking to improve the quality support structures, amplifying the learning experience and engaging better with industry, community and stakeholders.

The plan envisages seven strategic objectives, each with a number of initiatives and measures:

1. Invest in modern infrastructure that is fit for current and future staff and students.
2. Strengthen Quality and Relevance.
3. Put quality Work Based Learning at the heart of all professional and vocational training programmes offered by MCAST.
4. Reinforce the image and build the esteem of Vocational and Professional Education and Training.
5. Broaden the local and international MCAST partner network.
6. Provide support and reinforce the Management and Governance Structures.
7. Incentivize the development of sustainable innovation across the College



▲ Publication on an Overview of the MCAST Strategic Plan 2019-2021

At the end of November 2018, the College published an overview of the Strategic Plan intended specifically for consultation. Copies of these documents were circulated to all staff members and circulated to social partners, civil society and relevant public authorities. All students received a copy for their review.

The formal internal consultation process kicked off on the 3rd December 2018 and proceeded until mid-February 2019. During these few months, 14 consultation workshops were organized and were attended by more than 500 staff members and more than 100 students. On the 11th February 2019, the external consultation process kicked off, until the 8th of March 2019. During these 4 weeks, MCAST met with more than 90 employers and more than 55 stakeholders.

On the 5 March, employers were invited to a consultation workshop specifically focusing on the improvements of Work-Based Learning as a core component of the learning experience at MCAST. Employers were able to discuss and put forward a number of recommendations aimed at marrying better the needs of the jobs available on the market, the direction which the industry is taking and the educational programmes which MCAST offers.

On the other hand, stakeholders - including other

▼ MCAST President Frederick Schembri addressing the stakeholders during the consultation session on the 7th March 2019.



▼ MCAST Administration Staff during an internal consultation workshop.



▼ MCAST Student Yanika Ciappara giving the students' view point during the stakeholders' consultation event.



▲ President of the Kunsill Studenti MCAST Mr Ahmed Lamur briefed about the proposed Strategic Plan.



▲ Employer Mr Ivan Refalo contributing to the discussion at the event held on the 5th March.

education institutions, social partners, unions and public authorities - attended a consultation workshop held at ESPLORA on the 7th March 2019, where they were able to review the proposed plan, put forward recommendations and provide MCAST with feedback about the general direction which the College should be aiming for in the coming years.

In parallel to the consultation workshops held, the College has also made available a generic email address at which internal and external stakeholders could submit their views and feedback. Furthermore, an online questionnaire was designed with the intention of eliciting more structured feedback about the College's strengths and weaknesses,

the communication structures, the centrality of Work-Based Learning and the improvement of academic excellence. Within a span of four months, more than 200 persons have responded to the anonymous questionnaire.

This 6-month consultation process has been a very important step for MCAST. It is one other way how the College is reviving a management culture which valorizes the input of different stakeholders in the MCAST way of doing things. The next step is to review the feedback gathered, consolidate an updated strategic plan and present it to the Board of Governors for their consideration.

The MCAST Strategic Plan 2019-2021 will be launched formally in the coming weeks.

Corporate Social Responsibility Programme launched at MCAST



MCAST launched its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme on Wednesday 13 February 2019 at MCAST Main Campus, Paola. The aim of the programme is to provide MCAST learners with the opportunity to enhance their studies with life-enriching experiences that add value to their holistic knowledge base.



▲ Hon. Evarist Bartolo addressing the audience



◀ Prof Joachim James Calleja addressing the audience

The programme will bring MCAST together with non-governmental stakeholders to form key partnerships in an effort to develop and cultivate skills, attitudes and values that enhance society and the environment. Areas of cooperation include entrepreneurship, creative and performing arts, sport, and voluntary work in the cultural sector. MCAST CSR will also provide a framework for all college learners to have the knowledge and skills acquired through the programme, recognised and accredited within their formal programme of studies. MCAST is committed to empowering its young and adult learners to become active and employable citizens that contribute to Malta's dynamic democratic society and economy.

The Strategic Objectives of MCAST CSR are as follows:

- To cultivate student engagement and motivation;
- To promote high aspirations in learning;
- To accredit and certify experiential and work-based learning;
- To strengthen the links between the worlds of education, work and active citizenship.

The launch was addressed by the Minister for Education and Employment Evarist Bartolo, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Youths, Sports and Voluntary Organisations Dr Clifton Grima. The Chairman of the MCAST Board of Governors Frederick Schembri and MCAST CEO and Principal Prof James Calleja, also addressed students and staff present.

MCAST lecturer Juan Debono and MCAST student Jesmar Frendo shared their experiences in voluntary organisations, whilst Morten Bo Andersen, from Danish NGO Game, encouraged the MCAST community to embrace CSR.

Local NGO MOVE organised a number of fun activities on campus as part of the CSR programme launch, whereas a number of local NGOs were also present.

MCAST Principal in Hong Kong for talks on vocational education



▲ From left: Dr Albert C Cheuk Director Quality Assurance and Accreditation of the Hong Kong Vocational Training Council, Prof Joachim James Calleja and Associate Professor Dr Watson Baldwin Culinary Arts and Management of THEi.

In January 2019 MCAST Principal Prof Joachim James Calleja was in Hong Kong for meetings with vocational education leaders.

Prof Calleja attended a meeting with the President of the Technological and Higher Education Institute (THEi) of Hong Kong Professor Christina Hong. He also had a meeting with the Executive Director of the Vocational Training Council Mrs Carrie Yau in which they discussed the exchange of Faculty and students between VET Institutes in Hong Kong and MCAST and ITS.

Prof Calleja participated in the Council Meeting of the Hong Kong Council for the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAQ). The MCAST Principal is an international council member of HKCAAQ. He has been a member of the council since 2015.

MCAST lecturer launches second book

MCAST Maltese lecturer Mr. Noel Cachia published his second book in the series entitled, 'Stejjer ta' Dari u tal-Lum'. During the launch of the book, Professor Oliver Friggieri, Professor Charles Briffa and Professor Raymond Mangion praised the excellent work and remarked that the novels related to Malta in the late 60's and early 70's. The novels reveal and portray sentimental, descriptive, social, religious, psychological, humouristic and didactic elements. Themes relate to childhood and nostalgia, religion, animals, nature, life and death. The stories are written in simple Maltese and in short sentences, while the novel, 'It-Tempesta' nears to poetry. Her Excellency the President of Malta Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca commented that certain novels revealed the life of the Maltese people at that time and brought memories of her childhood. The Maltese President stated that 'Stejjer ta' Dari u tal-Lum' enriches the collection of books in her library. The 'Anton Buttigieg Library' at the Palace is purposely equipped to be a Melitensia for Maltese writers.



▲ Mr Noel Cachia and his mother with Her Excellency the President of Malta Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca

The book launch was held at the residence of the President of Malta in Sant' Anton Palace Attard on the 3rd of December 2018. This book can be purchased from The MCAST Institute of Community Services, Pierre Stationary Hamrun, or from the author, for a donation of €2 or more in aid of the Malta Community Chest Fund.

MCAST collaborates with Hudson Group to enable its students grow within the retail industry



▲ From left Mr Martin Gregory, HR Manager Hudson Holdings, Mr Alfie Borg, CEO, Hudson Holdings, Mr Louis Aquilina, MCAST Director International Office and Ms Nathalie Camenzuli, MCAST Manager

MCAST and Hudson Group have signed a Memorandum of Understanding which will enable MCAST students to gain exposure and on the job training within the retail industry. This will seek to equip students with the necessary skills to grow within this ever growing international industry.

Whilst the retail industry is one of the main employers on the island, besides the Advanced Diploma in Fashion and Retail offered by the MCAST Institute of Creative Arts, there is little other related formal education offered to students who wish to take up a career in this field.

The two parties are therefore collaborating in order to enrich the theoretical and practical training to prepare students for employment in the retail industry. In particular, Hudson Group employees will support the development of the current curriculum and will run lectures and workshops for the MCAST students in a number of retail related fields.

Furthermore, on an annual basis, a number of students will be offered apprenticeships that will enable them to gain invaluable work experience that will complement their studies, whilst exposing them to the various interesting career opportunities in the retail sector.

MCAST signs CSR agreement with Marigold Foundation



▲ Mrs Muscat with Mr Schembri, President of the Board of Governors, and Prof. Joachim James Calleja, Principal and CEO

Mrs Michelle Muscat visited MCAST Main Campus in Paola on Thursday 21 March for the signing of a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Agreement between MCAST and The Marigold Foundation. The signing took place at the Institute for Applied Sciences, where Mrs Muscat also received a tour of the Institute and met with MCAST staff and students.

On behalf of The Marigold Foundation, Mrs Muscat discussed a collaborative partnership with MCAST, which will provide students with the opportunity to enhance their educational experience with the Foundation and to organise educational activities of interest to both parties.

During her visit to MCAST, Mrs Muscat visited the MCAST Youth Hub and spoke to MCAST staff who were preparing for the MCAST Open Day, as well as the MCAST Entrepreneurship Centre which remains committed to training talented young entrepreneurs to help them succeed in the Maltese market. Mrs Muscat also spoke with representatives of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh and MOVE, who both have a physical presence on the MCAST Main Campus where they engage young people in extra-curricular activities.

A total of 779 students graduate from MCAST



MCAST celebrated the graduation of 779 students who successfully completed their degrees or diplomas. The ceremonies took place at MCAST Main Campus in Paola on Monday 3, Tuesday 4, Wednesday 5, and Friday 7 December 2018. During the eight ceremonies, 419 students were conferred with degrees while another 324 received Higher National Diploma or other MQF Level 5 certificates. A total of 36 students also graduated at a postgraduate level.

Mr Frederick Schembri President of the MCAST Board of Governors, Prof Joachim James Calleja, MCAST Principal and CEO, Mr Ronald Curmi, MCAST Registrar, Dr Ing Alex Rizzo, Head of University College, together with other MCAST officials, presented the certificates to the MCAST graduates.

On Friday 30 November 2018 MCAST staff joined graduates for the Graduation Mass which this year was held for the first time at St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta. Mass was presided by Auxiliary Bishop Monsignor Joseph Galea-Curmi.

APPRECIATION

Nolan Farrugia

by Nicole Vassallo

MCAST welcomed 2019 with a student less. Nolan Farrugia, aged 21, who was in his final year, reading for a Bachelor of Science (Honours) degree in Marine Engineering, lost his life tragically in a motorcycle accident on the 27th December, 2018.

At first glance a quiet and reserved student, all who knew him know how easy-going and joyful Nolan was. Through his charismatic nature, he brought happiness and positivity into the lives of all those who had the pleasure of knowing him during his short life. It is for this reason that Nolan's passing shocked and saddened so many. A golden soul that the world lost too soon.

Although physically gone, Nolan lives on inside all the



hearts he touched so dearly. Even though his life, by our standards, was cut so brief, he lived a very full one. He experienced true love, friendship and happiness, things not everyone alive today is lucky enough to have.

Let us make Nolan's untimely demise a reminder for us all to prioritise what matters and what does not. Everyone is headed to the same place and no one knows when that day will come. All we can do is live life in the best way we can so that when death comes, we can greet it like an old friend.



MCAST signs agreement with SIA IMPRESE

MCAST signed an agreement with SIA IMPRESE in Modica on cooperation in vocational education and training, human capital development and on attracting human resources to the expanding economic sectors in Malta. The Principal of the College Professor Joachim James Calleja is pictured shaking hands with Dott Roberto Garaffa after signing the agreement.



▲ Dr Joachim James Calleja at the Christmas party of the MCAST support staff.



JUMP2Excel Mentoring Week by Top World Leading Research Centre, CEA

The JUMP2Excel: Joint Universal activities for Mediterranean PV integration excellence consortium has just organised the first mentoring week. Mentor Antoine Guerin de Montgareuil from The French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) has met MCAST Energy researchers, MCAST Institute of Engineering and Transport members as well as Maltese stakeholders where a vast range of topics on Photovoltaics Integration has been discussed and guided.

During this mentoring week JUMP2Excel Modular Training was conducted to MCAST members on modelling photovoltaic energy production with a presentation of MotherPV method developed by CEA. In addition, the JUMP2Excel Public Lecture Series was launched. His public lecture hosted by The Malta Group of Professional Engineering Institutions (MGPEI) delved into the highlights on technologies developed at CEA and their potential application on insular territories.

JUMP2Excel project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 810809. JUMP2Excel Public Lectures series is organised in collaboration with MGPEI and The Chamber of Engineers (CoE).

Antoine Guerin de Montgareuil is research engineer at CEA's solar group since 1997. He is an expert in the measurement and the modelling and the prediction of the solar resource, the measurement and the modelling of the performance of photovoltaics, modules and systems, and the sizing of energy storage for photovoltaics in smart grids. In 1987, he had started-up Artificial Intelligence (AI) research at The National Institute of Research in Computer Science and Automation (INRIA) and recently participated in a collaboration with Météo France and French Laboratoire National d'Essais (LNE). He also participated in the accurate calibration of absolute cavity radiometers and of global pyranometers.



▲ Antoine Guerin de Montgareuil from The French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) with Renata Mikalauskiene MCAST Projects Manager (Research) and Dr Ing. Brian Azzopardi Coordinator JUMP2Excel.eu, MCAST Senior Lecturer.

Antoine Guerin de Montgareuil has been involved in many international and national research projects, including as an expert within the International Energy Agency. He is currently working in the domain of solar resource forecasting with the universities of the French overseas departments.

JUMP2Excel activities may be also open to the Maltese research community and the public, free of charge. For further information visit: JUMP2Excel.eu.

MENTAL HEALTH AT MCAST

We are here to support you!

Anxiety and worry are very fundamental human emotions that we will all feel at times. Some people suggest that we only notice them when they occur in excess. Many people adapt to very high levels of anxiety and do not consider it a problem until they meet people who are less worried than themselves.

Anxiety has a very healthy purpose. If we did not feel anxious about certain situations, then we would risk facing dangerous situations without any thought process (falling

over cliffs, stepping into fires and so on). Similarly, if we had no anxiety about ourselves in relation to others we might well behave with great insensitivity.

Symptoms of Anxiety

Here is a diagnostic chart of symptoms of anxiety. You may experience only one of these or you may have several of these symptoms simultaneously.

PHYSICAL SIGNS

Racing heart, dry mouth, increased rates of breathing, increased sweating, disturbances of bladder and bowel functions, trembling, disturbed sleep.

SENSATIONS

Tense muscles lead to increased fidgeting, prickling sensations in the skin and stiffness in the joints. There may be unpleasant sensations in the solar plexus region (a complex system of nerves and ganglia found in the pit of the stomach), headaches and aching elsewhere in the body.

IMAGER

When we are anxious our mind often produces sharp flashes of imagination (e.g. of us in a feared situation such as an exam) with pessimistic overtones. These can be very vivid and disturbing.

THOUGHTS

Anxiety tends to increase the amount of thinking we do in the area of concern. Usually the thoughts are selective, isolating and magnifying the worst aspects of the feared situation.

RELATIONS WITH OTHERS

Two opposing tendencies

may be experienced here. The anxious persons can isolate themselves and withdraw from people. Alternatively there can be increased dependence upon others - such as asking repetitive questions, looking for reassurance, or just needing to be in the presence of others to bring about calm.

ACTIVITIES

We either become more frenetic and over-active or else, more commonly, we avoid the source of the worry entirely – sometimes even to the extent of not

even allowing ourselves to think or imagine the worry. For example a person who is worried about speaking in a tutorial may decide not only to not do this, but also avoid imagining doing it and may even hide all the lecture notes associated with the subject of the tutorial.

FEELINGS

Feelings are hard to capture in words but are usually described as uncomfortable, pressured feelings with edginess. Such feelings interfere with everyday activity and take away the fun in life.

Sometimes anxiety can become excessive and unhealthy. In what follows we shall endeavour to identify the levels of anxiety and worry which are suitable for remedy and to give some ideas about responding to them. However we do this bearing in mind that anxiety is a necessary feature of living.

Identifying the trigger for the anxiety

Identifying symptoms of anxiety is one step, but another

feature of higher levels of anxiety is that it does not always affect us in the same way. Quite often there are just one or two situations which bring it to the surface. Anxiety can be experienced by just imagining the situation. There is often nothing so powerful in triggering anxiety as picturing yourself in some feared situation or state even if in reality you are unlikely to be within a million miles of it actually happening. Finally, anxiety takes different forms and expressions.

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These forms include:

- **General anxiety** – *being anxious about many aspects of your life.*
- **Worry** – *continually thinking over a problem beyond what is needed to produce a solution.*
- **Specific anxiety** – *anxiety over a certain situation - e.g. exams; social situations etc.*
- **Phobia** – *an excessive fear of a particular situation or item leading to avoidance.*
- **Hypochondria** – *an anxiety about suffering illness.*
- **Panic attacks** – *a sudden uncontrollable triggering of physical anxiety symptoms.*

These forms can be chronic (i.e. be in the background and have a long history) or can be acute (i.e. be sharp and in the present). They could combine elements of both. So here are four steps classifying any anxiety you may have.

- Decide if time duration makes it a chronic concern, an acute one or both.
- Identify which of the above forms your anxiety is taking.
- Locate triggers or situations which lead to anxiety.
- Identify how it is experienced and expressed.

Therefore someone who gets severe butterflies just before presenting a paper but is otherwise socially at ease might say:

"I have an acute (time duration) specific anxiety (different forms) about pre-planned public speaking (trigger) which always makes me feel sick and gives me an upset stomach just before I have to do it (experience and expression)."

Responding to anxiety

Modern approaches are now tending to shy away from the endless lists of things one should do to relax - partly because anxiety is a functional and general part of our lives and partly because this is not helpful for specific anxieties. The approach nowadays is to come to some understanding about the anxiety at the same time as generating possible control or relief from the symptoms. The following paradoxes about worry may become apparent when you start to deal with it:

- You may create more anxiety if you become too concerned to control or relieve all the symptoms.
- You may find you maintain your anxiety because you believe it is wrong not to worry and so you feel more insecure if you relax. This is particularly true of exams where people can feel something is wrong if they are not hyped-up.
- You may worry about worrying because it seems uncool. This is often true of a fear of speaking in public, which most people have but to which few admit.
- You may worry about not solving the whole worry all at once.

Usually there is not a simple single solution to such things as exam fear - the way forward is a mixture of anxiety, control, practice, revision and acceptance of some degree of nerves. If these ways of responding to anxiety sound too complicated, seeking therapeutic help can support you to work through this process.

Coping with anxiety

- Do not immediately consider complete relief as the only solution. Much anxiety may even help you.
- Take an interest in exactly how your anxiety manifests itself. Modern thought would suggest that we might gain from being informed and monitoring ourselves.
- Identify what sort of worry you have. If it takes a particular form you may need to seek a treatment which is appropriate to it. Panic, for example, will not respond to techniques and strategies aimed at reducing and dealing with general worry. Nor will a particular phobia give way to general advice about keeping relaxed - specific approaches designed to meet the particular anxiety are more helpful.
- Understand how you react in different situations and think of what particularly worries you.
- Seek to learn more about your anxiety. Reading may be a tool to help in this.
- Develop a problem solving attitude to allow you to dismantle the large problems into lots of smaller ones and then to resolve them by practical steps. For example small steps to deal with a large anxiety over public speaking could include talking to a counsellor/therapist; observing how others cope; making your tutor aware of the problem you have; preparing the subject; rehearsing in private; taping your voice; practising before a friend; getting as relaxed as possible on the day.
- Do not completely disregard general stress management and relaxation - they will not banish a specific anxiety, but they will make you generally happier and so more able to deal with the things you find difficult.
- Medication can be very useful for some people when they are coping with specific crises or when anxiety needs an initial reduction to allow for planned action to be taken. Be very wary of using alcohol or non-prescription drugs to overcome anxiety as they rarely offer more than a fleeting solution.
- Talk about your worry to a counsellor/therapist so you can become more objective about it and begin to understand the triggers, manifestations and the best way to deal with them.



Interested in a Career within the EU

By Nicole Piscopo

MCAST EU Careers
Student Ambassador



The school-to-work transition posits various challenges. What happens after we finish our studies? Do we know all the opportunities we have beyond student life? What about opting for a career abroad or even in Malta with the European Union? Opportunities are endless when you know all the choices you have. These opportunities also increase your chances of travelling within the EU and also other countries across the globe. How? My role as MCAST's EU Careers Ambassador is to inform you and guide you through the endless opportunities available.

Various types of contracts are available, depending on the level of education and duration. Traineeships, Contract Agents, Parliamentary Assistants and the Junior Professional in Delegation are the most popular as they offer flexibility and work-life balance. These serve as a starting point and stepping stone in one's career. Other contracts are offered to those officials who opt for a Career within Government and are nominated to represent Malta within the various EU Institutions and Agencies. These include Seconded National Experts and National Expert in Professional Training. During their 30's usually, officials apply for Temporary Agents followed by more Permanent positions. A salary of more than €6000 per month is earned by these officials...extra money to travel round the globe!

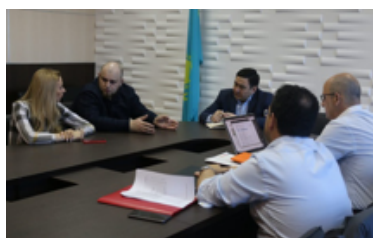
Within the EU there is a job for everyone. There are jobs for scientists, computer studies, media, engineering, construction, business and much more. Apart from the Institutions there are also job opportunities within Agencies, across the 28

EU member states. Do you know that, despite the fact that Malta is the smallest member state, we have an EU Agency, whose function is to assist on Asylum? This is called the European Asylum Support Office or EASO. MCAST students have a higher chance of being successfully recruited by EU Agencies, in view of their technical expertise gained during their studies. Examples of job opportunities within several Agencies are: for students studying chemical technology – the European Chemicals Agency, for students reading for a degree in computer systems and networks – the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security, those in possession of an Advanced Diploma in Electrical Systems – the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulations, and for those students in possession of an Advanced Diploma in Creative Media Production – the Executive Agency for Education, Audio-visual and Culture. However, these are just a few, as there are 45 EU Agencies till now!

Apart from the job, working within the EU brings with it several benefits such as social benefits, family allowance, medical insurance, courses free of charge and much more. You will also get the opportunity to work in a challenging multicultural environment, the opportunity to travel and also the chance to make a difference and work together with other people for a better Europe. Shaping Europe together is our goal. Therefore, if you are interested in learning more about these opportunities, requirements and other questions feel free to contact me on eucareers@mcast.edu.mt or send us a message on our EU Careers-Malta facebook page.

Collaboration between MG2i and the Institute of Engineering and Transport to enhance the International Dimension

MG2i is placing great importance on the enhancement of MCAST's international dimension. For this reason MG2i is establishing an extensive international network of international institutions with which to collaborate and work. The Institute of Engineering and Transport is actively working together with MG2i to benefit from this internationalisation effort in order to expand its activities. Two such joint projects have already been embarked upon in the past few months. One of these projects is being conducted in Kazakhstan and the other project is in India.



Kazakhstan

In October of 2018, MG2i and the Institute of Engineering and Transport started delivering a specially designed Award in Electrical Systems in Kazakhstan. This project was set up to train Kazakhstan students in the latest electrical technology, thus preparing them to take on technical work in the country's growing economy.

Before course delivery could begin, in April of 2018, Mr. Stephen Vella General Manager MG2i and Ing. Stephen Sammut Designate Director of the Institute of Engineering and Transport, visited Apec Petro Technic in the city of Atyrau, Kazakhstan to view facilities, meet administration officials and set up the logistics required to run the course. During this visit the required course structure was discussed and a draft structure set up. Based on this draft structure the Level 4 award was designed and the units and course content were prepared. This course was designed based on 60 ECVETs and contained 10 modules in various areas such as Analogue Electronics, Cabling Systems, Cable Selection, Transformation, 3 Phase Theory, Plant Maintenance, Testing of Installations and Motors and Drivers.

Thirty six students applied and were accepted to join the course. To ensure that individual attention could be provided the students were divided into two groups. The modules are being delivered by nine lecturers who travel to Kazakhstan for two week periods. In each of the two week periods a module is delivered.



Visit to CV Raman College of Engineering in India

On the 14th of January 2019, Mr. Stephen Vella General Manager MG2i and Ing. Stephen Sammut Designate Director Institute of Engineering and Transport visited CV Raman College in India to investigate the possibility of establishing cooperation in various areas of Engineering. During the two day visit, meetings with various heads of departments and leading members of faculty were held.

Various options for collaboration were discussed in the areas of Mechanical, Aviation, Electronic, Marine, Auto and Civil Engineering. Opportunities such as double badging, joint masters programmes, student exchanges, sharing of facilities, delivery of MCAST programmes abroad and research collaboration were identified.

The year 2019 promises to be a year of great opportunities for MCAST in which its collaboration with CV Raman College starts to flourish and bear fruit.

MCAST launches the ReNature Horizon 2020 Project

The Institute of Applied Sciences launched the ReNature Horizon 2020 project which aims to develop a research strategy in nature-based solutions. It includes training and networking events, including international PhD summer schools, in an effort to promote research excellence in the field.

The project builds on the research initiatives carried out in the sector over the past years and strives to promote Malta as a research leader on a regional and international level. The ReNature project has a budget of €1 million and is being coordinated by MCAST.

ReNature was officially launched by the Minister for Education and Employment Evarist Bartolo during a press conference held on Friday 8 February 2019 at the Institute for Applied Sciences, MCAST Main Campus, Paola. Parliamentary Secretary for Youths, Sport, and Voluntary Organizations Dr Clifton Grima was also present for the launch.

Nature-based solutions, in the form of urban green spaces, walls and roofs, contribute to the improvement of human well-being and help tackle environmental challenges such as reducing flood risk, limiting the environmental impact of urbanization, and increasing biodiversity in cities. Nature-based solutions can also reduce air pollution.

ReNature project partners include Trinity College Dublin (Ireland), University of Trento (Italy), University of



▲ From left: Dr Mario Balzan, Senior Lecturer MCAST Institute of Applied Sciences, Hon. Clint Camilleri : Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries & Animal Rights, Hon. Minister Evarist Bartolo : Minister for Education and Employment , Prof Joachim James Calleja, MCAST Principal and CEO and Dr Ing Alex Rizzo : MCAST Deputy Principal – Research & Innovation during the launch of ReNature Horizon 2020.

East Anglia (United Kingdom), and Pensoft Publishers (Bulgaria). This multidisciplinary team of professionals incorporates expertise in agricultural and fisheries sciences, environmental sciences and management, health sciences, and engineering and information technology.

ReNature has been funded by grants received from the EU Horizon 2020 programme by the Malta Council for Science and Technology through the ARIMNet2 Joint Initiative. The project is also supported by the European Commission in the framework of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Green Infrastructure Strategy. Key policy stakeholders are also involved.

More information on the project is found on: <http://renature-project.eu/>



Food Science and Technology

The Institute of Applied Sciences delivered an interactive session on Food Science and Technology during the Teen Science Café (TSC) programme at Għarb primary school, Gozo. Young students were given the opportunity to understand the importance of food sciences in their daily lives through direct interaction with Food Technologist Ms. Alicia Said (MCAST Advanced Diploma in Food Technology Alumni).

H2020 FOWARIM PROJECT CLOSING CONFERENCE:

Fostering Water-Agriculture Research and Innovation in Malta



▲ From left: Hon. Clint Camilleri : Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries & Animal Rights, Hon. Minister Evarist Bartolo : Minister for Education and Employment , Dr Ing Alex Rizzo, MCAST Deputy Principal – Research and Innovation and Dr Stephen Hallett : Associate Professor in Environmental Informatics, Cranfield University

MCAST hosted the closing conference of the project ‘FOWARIM - Fostering Water-Agriculture Research and Innovation in Malta’ on Wednesday 12 December 2018 at the Carlson Suite, Radisson Blu Resort, St George’s Bay, St. Julian’s.

The conference’s aim was to highlight the project’s focus on strengthening the research capacity of MCAST’s Water Research and Training Centre in four crucial themes related to the field of water use in agriculture. The themes were Decreasing Water Demand, Making Use of Alternative Sources of Water, Renewable Desalinization, On-Farm Desalinization and Utilization of Saline Water and Decreasing Negative Environmental Externalities caused by Nutrient-Rich Farm Waters.

During the closing Conference, the research results were presented by the various project partners including the Centre International de Hautes Etudes Mediterraneennes – CIHEAM (Italy), Europe for Business Ltd (UK), Cranfield University (UK), ID Consulting (Belgium), and Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya (Spain).

The research results focused on promoting innovations and best practices in agricultural water management, outlining of scientific and management training courses provided during the project, showcasing irrigation water governance and economical models, adaptation and mitigation measure of water use in agriculture in a changing climate, making use of saline water – the case for salt-water agriculture and an overview of the practical sessions provided to the local agriculture community on how to make more efficient use of water in the agriculture.

The Minister for Education and Employment Evarist Bartolo and the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights Clint Camilleri addressed the conference.



Paula Grech Bonnici

New Director at the Institute of Applied Sciences

Ms Paula Grech Bonnici has been appointed Director of the Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS), having started in her position on 2 January.

Ms. Grech Bonnici holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and Chemistry and a Master of Science degree in Biology, both from the University of Malta. She first started her career as a scientific officer at the Forensic Science Laboratory and later moved to the Water Services Corporation for a lengthy career of twenty-two years. She joined the WSC as a laboratory scientist and gradually went up the ranks to the position of Executive Director. Her experience extends to water and waste water quality analytical expertise; quality management systems including ISO9001 and ISO14001; ISO17025 laboratory accreditation; management of the Institute of Water Technology; design and development of courses; training and lecturing at various institutions and active participation in various EU funded projects ranging from research to major structural projects. As part of her previous remit she also set up the Commercialization and Innovation arm at the WSC. She was also responsible for the achievement of the ISO17025 accreditation of the first laboratory in Malta.

Over the years, Ms. Grech Bonnici formed part of various government boards including the Pesticide Control Board, the Trade Testing Board for Laboratory Technologists, the Environment and Resources Authority Board and the Malta Resources Authority Board. She has also frequently participated in various European policy and federation meetings and also in a lot of workshops and conferences especially in the fields of water and wastewater quality.

CREATE PRODUCTIONS LONDON

My dream came true!

This was my third Erasmus experience that I have had throughout my five-year experience at the Institute for the Creative Arts. Since this was to be my graduating year, and I knew I would not be returning back to College as I had previously done, I knew it had to make it count.

by Chanelle Buttigieg



This was the first time I had chosen the allocated company to be sent to for the work experience in another country, and since I had already worked in countries where English was not the native language, I made sure that I would find a job placement in the UK.

I spent three months at Create Productions in London working full-time. Those three months gave me hands-on experience and a taste of what it is like to work hard. My responsibilities were not small, in fact the company made sure to give me the same duties that any other media worker within the office would have. My duties included filming hands-on with new equipment that I had to learn from scratch. This helped me expand my knowledge on different systems and camera formats. I was also in charge of editing important projects for the company. This taught me to shoulder responsibility for every project handed to me since Create deals with big clients in London, as well as how to deal with such clients in the most professional manner possible.

During this internship I learnt about the importance of asking questions. I was allocated my own line manager who allowed me to focus on the areas that interest me and helped me to enhance my knowledge and portray my strengths. I understood how different employees work within a professional office, and who is responsible for what within a media company. He made sure to remind me to always ask questions as these would help me learn.

Since I was working a lot on camera work, they acceded to production my wish to focus my strengths more on producing work, and within a few weeks I was handling my own production projects and eventually writing scripts for big clients both within and outside the UK.

Every two weeks I would have a one-to-one meeting with my allocated line manager and allocated mentor so as they would make sure that I was happy at work and in order to see how they could improve make my experience. This impressed me very much as it showed me just how important it is to keep in touch with all your employees for the benefit the company as well to ensure that employees as comfortable within the office environment.

Two months into my internship, during one of my one-to-one meetings I was surprised to be offered a full-time job within the company. They expressed their gratitude for my input, and I gladly accepted.

I am ever so grateful for Erasmus for providing me with such a valuable experience! I have always believed that Erasmus is something that every student should experience at least once within their scholastic lifetime, and I have been blessed to have been able to experience it three times. And now, thanks to Erasmus more than one of my lifelong dreams has finally come true, namely that of living and working in a foreign country after graduating, along with working with clients I have always looked up to such as Spotify, Coca-Cola and Universal Studios.

Intitute lanches new iGaming Diploma



▲ MCAST IICT Students visit Betsson Group

▲ MCAST ICT Level 3 iGaming Students at SIGMA 18

The Institute of Information and Communication Technology launched a new Diploma in iGaming, targeted at those students who wish to pursue a career in iGaming.

iGaming is Malta's largest sector in IT. It employs more than 9000 people on the island and contributes to around 12% of the GDP. An integral part of this course is to provide students the opportunity to connect and collaborate with their future potential employers. In the digital world, technology is rapidly changing. Companies have to implement new technologies in order to become more productive, efficient and competitive. Therefore it is in the interest of both parties to work closely to provide students with the best possible learning experience.

During the first semester, the students following a Diploma in iGaming visited Betsson, one of the leading iGaming companies in Malta. The visit initiated with a warm welcome in their auditorium followed by some nice refreshments before the students proceeded to visit some of Betsson's departments. Here, students had the opportunity to see what kind of technology is being used, what skill sets are required for each sector, and the different job opportunities that the company offers. This experience certainly provided students with much more enlightenment and understanding of an iGaming office environment and the different work opportunities that await them.

The following visit was at Malta's first ever Supernova e-sports tournament. Mr Koen Shobbers, one of the top

e-sports athletes, gave a first-hand experience on the various work opportunities and challenges that one would face in an e-sports world.

The third visit was at SIGMA, the largest iGaming expo held in Malta. Here, students had the opportunity to get a glimpse of the various iGaming companies based in Malta, and also of other companies which work closely or offer services to iGaming companies, such as the Malta Gaming Authority. They also had the opportunity to attend two conferences: Malta Gaming Summit by GamingMalta and European Fantasy Sports Summit by GamingMalta.



▲ Student teams Enigma, cCicada and 3RROR! made MCAST proud as they ranked 2nd in the MITA Hackathon Competition 2018

Business and Commerce



Students reading for the Advanced Diploma in Financial Services at the Institute of Business Management and Commerce recently visited the Malta Stock Exchange in Valletta.

This initiative was led by MCAST senior lecturer Michel Said and spearheaded by the Institute in partial fulfilment of its continued academic pursuit to further bridge industry knowledge, insights and networking opportunities for its numerous business management and commerce students – so as to collectively uphold the quality of the Institute's learning solutions.

During the visit, Malta Stock Exchange manager Mark Borg Cardona gave those present a thorough overview of

the central securities depository, compliance and market operations including the latest developments across fintech.

In support of their Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Business Enterprise, a group of second year students at the Institute recently also visited Bank of Valletta's headquarters in Santa Venera where David Pace Ross, senior manager at BOV Capital Markets and Institutions, delivered a talk about the group's operations on capital markets and asset management divisions followed by a Q&A session.



ERASMUS+ MOBILITY IN FINLAND

The experience of two Gozo Campus lecturers

In the past years, a great deal of interest has arisen in Finland's educational system. In November 2018, Finland was a natural choice for an Erasmus+ mobility for two Gozo Campus lecturers, Ian Attard and Mark Anthony Cassar. Together, they had the opportunity to visit YAI Vocational College based in Ostrobothnia and observe at first hand the VET system in place.



◀ Ian Attard and Mark Anthony Cassar at YAI College

The college employs around 220 employees and has 2200 students. It falls under the Federation of Swedish Ostrobothnia for Education and Culture. It operates in four cities in this region namely, Närpes, Vaasa, Pedersöre and Jakobstad. During their visit, the two lecturers had the opportunity to visit the main campus in Vaasa and a satellite campus in Närpes, similar to the one in Gozo in terms of student population.

The Finnish approach is a very flexible one which offers its student a remarkable mobility between the academic and the vocational education routes, in a rather seamless manner. The students' educational journey is built together with the help of a student counsellor rather than following a pre-designed course in a rigid manner.

Being a vocational college, YAI provides a highly hands-on approach and integrates the studies with apprenticeship in a highly effective way. Students sign a contract of employment with an employer. They receive a salary and will need to carry out at least 25 working hours per week.

This apprenticeship programme guarantees a seamless transition from education and training to employment.

While in Närpes, the lecturers had the opportunity to visit Makerspace. Makerspace is a room which allows the students to work on a project, share experiences and knowledge, collaborate and share ideas together. This room is equipped with a variety of resources which the students can use freely to experiment and unleash their creativity during their free time. The resources include 3D printers, photography equipment, educational robots, Pepper – the humanoid robot, VR glasses and gaming consoles.

Culture and social events are also an important component of such mobilities. The two lecturers had the opportunity to visit the outstanding World Heritage Site Suomenlinna. Construction on this fortified island began in the mid-18th century, when Finland was still part of Sweden. On their final day of their visit, the lecturers were treated to a typical Finnish barbecue in a forest hut and a visit to an old village in the countryside of Vaasa.

MCAST Gozo Campus lecturer at the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) Scitech conference and NASA Ames Research Lab in California

In January 2019, Ing. Christian Zammit, lecturer at the Gozo Campus, presented a research paper at the Scitech Conference in San Diego, California. This annual conference is considered as the largest conference in Aeronautics and Astronautics in the world and provides a platform for engineers, scientists and technologists to disseminate and network in over 70 disciplines within the aeronautics and astronautics research fields. Currently it houses over 35,000 members from 80 different countries. This conference is the place where aeronautics academia and industry meet and exchange ideas for the future of Aerospace. This year's edition saw the participation of more than 4,000 academics, industry professionals and students from over 1,000 institutions from 45 different countries, as well as the presentation of over 2,000 peer-reviewed research papers. NASA, Northrop Grumman Corporation, Air Force Research Laboratory, Rolls-Royce, Boeing and Lockheed Martin were among the industrial presenters and exhibitors. Renowned universities including the University of Michigan, MIT, Delft University of Technology, Stanford University, Purdue University, Princeton University and others presented their research.

The conference offered an exhibition hall where attendees could network and discuss with leading industrial players in the field. These institutions displayed prototypes of new products that will be launched on the market and advertised employment opportunities. Furthermore, participants were offered networking opportunities with technical committee members together with speed mentors from experienced academic and/or industrial individuals.

Ing. Christian Zammit holds a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering and a Master's degree with Distinction from the University of Malta. His master's thesis focused on aircraft taxiing in low visibility conditions. He is currently a PhD candidate at the Aerospace Faculty of Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands. His current research interests are autonomous systems, path planning algorithms, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), model uncertainty modelling and guidance systems.

In this conference, Ing. Zammit presented a paper entitled "Advancements in 3D UAV path planning of UAVs". This paper, which followed a previous paper presented in Scitech 2018, further discussed the use of the A* and the Rapidly-Exploring Random Tree (RRT) algorithms and their sub-categories for 3D path planning of UAVs in different obstacle-rich environments. This paper focused on the ripple reduction with varying environmental resolution of the A* algorithm and the optimisation of the smoothing algorithm. Both papers are available online at: <https://arc.aiaa.org/doi/10.2514/6.2018-1846> (Scitech 2018), and <https://arc.aiaa.org/doi/abs/10.2514/6.2019-0920> (Scitech 2019).

After the conference, Ing. Zammit, together with other Master and PhD students from Delft University of Technology, were invited to visit the NASA Ames research lab situated in Silicon Valley, San José, California. The



▲ Ing Zammit at the AMES Research Centre

hosts, both senior members of this renowned research lab, provided them with an overview of the facilities. The group was able to visit some of these facilities – it is to be noted that some sections of these facilities are strictly not accessible to external visitors due to military secrecy. The group visited Moffett Federal airfield, currently a joint military-civil airport previously used to test NASA prototypes as well as Hangar 1 which was built during the Depression era for the USS Macon, a rigid airship built by the US Navy as a prototype flying aircraft carrier. Furthermore, one of the hosts explained in detail the state-of-the-art 3D simulator present within the research lab that has been – and is still – used to train astronauts for all space missions since the early days of space exploration. This particular host is currently a managing operator of this unique simulation platform.

Furthermore, Ing. Zammit visited the Unitary plan wind tunnel having a test section of 11ft x 11ft with an

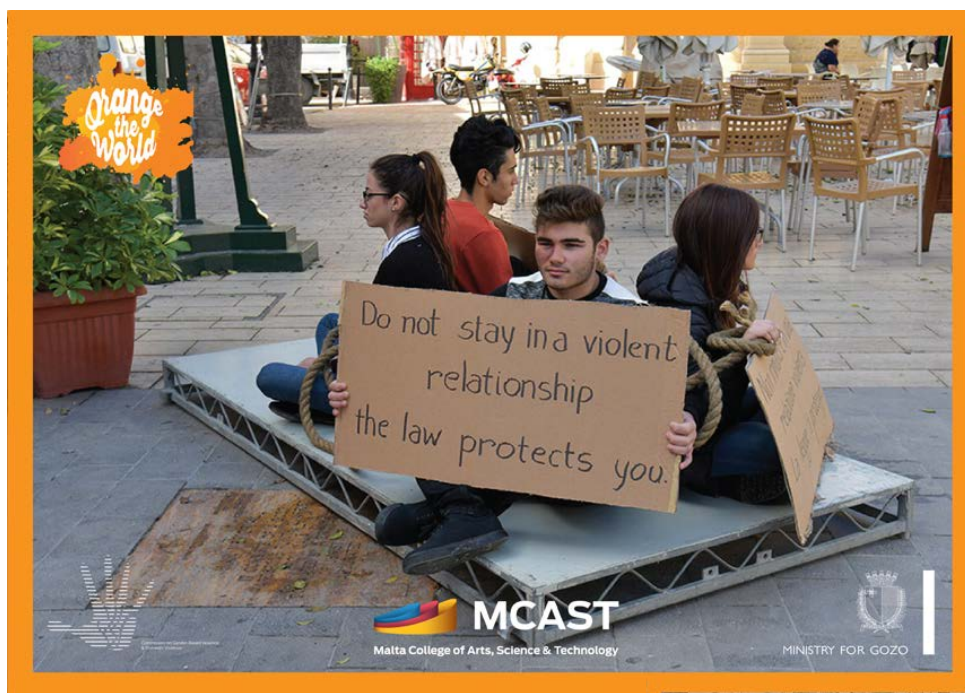
operating power of 75MW, a test field simulating the lunar surface and several NASA prototype aircraft from post WWII to post Cold War era. The visit concluded with a campus visit to Stanford University, Carnegie Mellon University and the Google headquarters.

“Attending and presenting my research paper in such an important conference has been an enriching experience that will undoubtedly help me in my academic career. It was an opportunity to network and discuss ideas and collaborations with other researchers and key players in the vast and dynamic field of aerospace. My visits to NASA Ames, Stanford University, Carnegie Mellon University and the Google headquarters were a unique opportunity to have first-hand exposure to the facilities and work practices in these world-renowned institutions,” concluded Christian Zammit.

Ing Zammit’s participation in this conference was partially funded by MCAST.

Gender-Based Violence Awareness

Sixteen students following courses at the MCAST Gozo Campus staged an activity to raise awareness against Gender-Based Violence. The number of participating students, sixteen, is symbolic as it represented the sixteen days of activism against such violence.



The event was held in conjunction with the Gozo Ministry on Tuesday 27th November 2018 in Independence Square, Victoria. Students held placards with statements written in Maltese, English and Italian in an attempt to reach out to as many individuals as possible, including locals and foreigners.

Statements included:

Teach your children that Violence is NEVER acceptable.

Silence is NOT the answer. Report the abuse.

When violence starts ... the intimate relationship ends.

Do not stay in a violent relationship. The law protects you!

The event was indeed a collective effort by students and staff members as lecturing staff from the Hairdressing and Beauty vocational areas took care of the required hairstyling and stage make-up, while lecturing staff involved in student support accompanied the students and took care of logistics.

By Mr Raymond A. Scicluna

The up-and-coming Gozitan pride

Thirty-three year old Matthew Xuereb, native of Nadur but resident of Xewkija, is a long-distance athlete with increasingly impressive performances. What started as testing the waters four years ago, has now become part of his lifestyle. He has already competed in 135 races both on the track and the road topping the finish list. Very recently he has managed two remarkable PB's in the Mdina Spinola in 1.00.51, just 52 seconds away from entering the Hall of Fame of this local oldest race. Matthew is married to Ġuza and has recently become Dad to Giulia. He is a Senior Lecturer at MCAST (Gozo Campus). He graduated in 2008: BA (Hons) Geography with Psychology as a secondary concentration. He obtained his Post Graduate Certificate in Education in 2009 from the University of Malta. He pursued his studies with the University of Sheffield (UK) where he completed his Masters in Educational Studies: Learning, Teaching and Research and graduated in 2013.

Matthew, you are quite new to the local running community, yet the incredible number of races which you have participated in, makes you an icon with your competitors. Please do enlighten us about your initial personal bests and the current ones. Competing so much in a season means that your training schedule allows you to recover and the performances can only vouch for this. Apart from consolidating what was achieved in the season, what are your targets for this season? You have now set the standards high.

I do participate in many races. In essence, many of my running acquaintances joke with me about this and indicate that I should be awarded

for such a feat. Others believe that if I race less, I would deliver more. Striking a balance is essential. I believe that racing frequently is important as in doing so, you go to the starting line full of confidence and this surely plays a good part in the end result. Racing frequently helps me keep motivated, contained and focused. Performances do not seem to have reached the plateau stage yet, so this formula seems to be working since progress has been steady along the past years. I believe that we are all different and it does not mean that the same recipe applies for all. I do my races in accordance with my coach Mario Pisani who kindly enough schedules my training regime around these races. I seem to recover quite fast by nature as well and this together

with proper nutrition and frequent massages helps me to recover as fast as possible and to show up on the start line for the next race.

My first race was on the 31st of March 2015, just four weeks after starting training solo. The race was Pembroke 5K and I managed a 23'26". It was a baptism of fire, the route was a rather tasking one which included several hills and inclinations. I was literally so scared on the starting line looking like a beginner with the racing bib attached to my rain jacket which I ran in on a sunny day! I remember myself being so impressed by the elite runners doing their warm up and the initial strides a few metres away from the start line. I did not know what to expect. By the



time I crossed the finish line at the end of the race, I was already asking people when the next race was. I was hooked!

The first 10K race I participated in was Mosta 10K on the 31st of May 2015. I still lacked the endurance to participate in a 10K race but managed to finish in 44'36". I managed a 1:31:57 in my first Half Marathon (Malta HM) on the 28th of February 2016.

After several years of hard training and commitment, I managed to lower my times considerably. They may not be the most amazing times for some athletes but when you manage to achieve something through hard work and determination, no one can take that away from you. My personal bests stand at 16'46" (5K), 35'26" (10K) and 1:21:50 (HM). In accordance with my coach, we have set new targets, quite demanding to say the least, but I am a very determined person and will do my best to succeed in this regard. The recent fantastic result of 1:00:51 achieved in the Mdina to Spinola Race 2018, which is very close to the legendary sub 1 hour mark milestone, fills me with encouragement to work hard for a sub 35' 10K, a well under sub 1:20 HM and to better my already decent 5K time.

Matthew, as mentioned above, you competed in over a hundred races mostly in Malta, few units in your homeland Gozo and a couple abroad. The question comes automatically: what are your instant feelings competing in Malta, Gozo and abroad? Do you notice any difference? You have become a seasoned track athlete too and gathered the right

experience. What difference do you find racing on a track rather than on the road? It is common knowledge that track is more mentally demanding but the statistics which really hold water are those obtained on the track. An athlete qualifies for worldwide races according to track stats save for the Half and the Marathon rather than the PB's obtained on the road. What are your views in this regard and was it difficult to get used to the track?

Every race has its own story be it in Malta, Gozo or abroad. I take all races seriously and from the total of 135 races I participated in, I always gave my all in each and every race and did all of them so as to say 'race mode'. Having said this, racing abroad is always special as it is kind of an exciting journey which starts at the airport. I have raced three times in Italy, once in the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland and the Czech Republic. Racing abroad at times comes with an added amount of pressure as one would like to fare well but this excitement helps the individual perform at best most of the time. A particular race was the one I did on our honeymoon (yes, you heard well). It was a cross-country 5K race in Prague (Šárceky Kros) which I got to know about from a friend who is also a runner. Racing on the honeymoon was a gutsy thing to do but I had my wife's blessing and it turned out to be a positive experience as I placed 3rd overall.

Having several road races under my belt, I was encouraged by my friend Charlton Debono to start participating in track races. Again, setting my foot on



the Athletics Track in Marsa at first was a bit like swimming in undiscovered waters. I did not even know my way around the track facilities. After a first take at 3000m race which went quite well to my surprise, I decided to participate in the 10,000m race which given my lack of experience proved to be a really bad decision. Being still a rookie, I set out very fast and at 3K to go, I mentally and physically shut down and crossed over from the track rubber to the grass. The moment my feet touched the grass it was constant regret. I might not have finished that race but it sure was a learning experience. Two years later in June 2018, after collecting several appearances and decent results on the track, I managed a podium in

the MAAA National Championships (3rd Overall) sharing the podium with Charlton Debono and Andrew Grech. This remains one of the proud moments of my running career.

Nowadays, I enjoy racing on the track as much as I do on the road (if not more). Getting used to it was not easy. In Gozo, we do not get to practice on such a surface as personally speaking, the majority of my track sessions are done on a dirt surface at the Horse Track. In addition, whilst racing at the track you have another element which is spectators who are constantly watching you as you go around the oval. This might be a bit intimidating at first. I worked hard to break this mental barrier and kept telling myself that if I can ace my track sessions at the horse track which contains a bit of elevation, alone and on harder surface, racing in much better physical conditions should be easier.

My main focus for 2019 is to prepare adequately for the 1500m and the 5000m distances as I will be participating in these events representing the Malta Employees Sports Association (MESA) at the 22nd European Company Sports Games (Salzburg) in June 2019.

Gozitans have more difficulty travelling. It is not easy at all, even though Gozitans are hard workers and achievers and get used to it by time. You work at MCAST Gozo, so at least you don't need to do this on a daily basis but for races it is still quite a headache. Surely, given your myriads of races in Malta, it was not a hurdle. What are the most obvious inconveniences

which you encounter travelling to Malta for races and how are you dealing with them?

Indeed, as you have rightfully highlighted, the travelling issue is truly a challenge for many Gozitans including my wife who works as a teacher in Malta. The time spent travelling is such a waste of time and for those people who have to train this is frustrating. Personally speaking, working in Gozo is a blessing as travelling to Malta on a daily basis would surely take its toll in the long term.

As Gozitans we always take note of the weather forecast a couple of days beforehand as there is always a risk of the ferry not operating in case of excessive wind. To be honest, I believe that this never happened but there were instances in which I decided to anticipate my arrival in Malta to play safe and stay in my family apartment in Msida from the night before the race. On all occasions, whilst crossing over from Gozo for all races we plan in advance as whilst standing in the ferry queue there is no guarantee that you will board. Therefore, on many occasions we tend to arrive early and are the first ones to arrive at the race venue which, to be honest, does not bother me as it gives me ample time to settle down and warm up properly.

You started running post your tertiary studies and not before or during. Through experience, many long-distance athletes are either former track athletes or become running enthusiasts who embark on competing when they are more mature and have their life and status quite settled.

You belong to the last group and yet your achievements and performances are well known. You impress many of us and local athletics can only benefit through this. Competition is always highly welcome. We are aware that lest one reaches a plateau quickly, there are many factors which need to be addressed. Smart and consistent training, strict healthy diet, adequate rest, good knowledge about athletics, the right motivation, eagerness to perform and to improve, etc... In your opinion what were the most significant factors of such positive outcome and transformation?

Exactly, I started running well after I completed my studies. Additionally, I was never into sports as such and just played football amongst friends and attended a gym on and off throughout the years. Although I owe most of my past successes especially those of an educational nature to my beloved parents, they never encouraged me to take up a sport. Thinking about it, my other three brothers all formed part of the Nadur Youngsters Football Nursery and were quite decent players as opposed to myself. During my years at University, I ate mostly unhealthy food and at one point weighed 82kg as opposed to the 61kg I presently weigh and I am also an ex-smoker. Therefore, I went through a huge transformation to be where I am today.

All the factors you have mentioned are essential and as we gain experience we become more efficient runners. For instance, during my early running days, I used to depend on other runners to keep the pace. However,

with proper guidance, consistency and perseverance improvement can be registered. In my opinion, in running there are no short cuts and at the end of the day running will give back to you what you give it. Needless to say, certain social events are difficult to attend, and if I do, I have to leave significantly early during the night as most of the time such events happen during weekends the night before a race. It becomes more of a lifestyle which one has to adopt and together with this transformation even the acquaintances and the persons you surround yourself with change as well.

In the past few months I have been doing 90% of my training alone. I liaise with coach Mario Pisani continually over the phone however, it is very difficult to train with the team as crossing over to Malta for training purposes is close to impossible due to other family commitments. This comes with the negative aspects as cold morning solo training can become increasingly difficult, but on the other hand it builds up the character of the individual and builds up the resilience needed in particular moments during a race.

Matthew, your status has of very recently changed drastically from single; and living with your parents to married and living with your wife Guza and finally father to Giulia. How can you relate running to all this? Such changes demand responsibilities which I am sure you shoulder with great responsibility but what about training whilst coping with your work and the rest of the family? To be frank, all



these changes triggered better performances, how come?

As a matter of fact, I was unsure about how to juggle such important responsibilities, work and sport commitments. However, I believe that if one has the determination and the eagerness to succeed, everything is possible. Needless to say, my family, especially my wife is very supportive as she knows how much running means to me. Most of the time she also

accompanies me at the races as well. I believe that without her support, I would never have achieved the recent running related results.

On a personal note, I find that doing my training close to my residence to minimise commuting time as much as possible is effective. Most of the time, whenever I have a speed session, I leave to the horse track which is exactly 2km away from my residence. In this way, when I get to the horse track most of

my warm up is ready and I am already geared up to start with the drills and carry out the session. The cool down is done on the way back home. In addition, when I have double sessions or cross-training (spin bike) on my running schedule, the morning session which is done early in the morning before work is done at home on the treadmill. In this way, I spend more time at home so that I am present to give a helping hand with family matters if need be. At home, I have a small room dedicated completely to running. Here I have a treadmill, a spin bike which was a gift from my wife, many running photos, race bibs, running trophies and medals. I call it 'The Running Room'. The other session is done right after work, mostly late afternoon.

I plan all my training with Mario Pisani in advance. This helps me to be efficient in order to cope with all these responsibilities in the best of ways.

Matthew, there is a different side to you. You are proactive, and kind hearted with those in need. Together with Nadur Local Council, you are giving a massive helping hand in organizing and promoting the Nadur 8k which this year has reached its fourth edition. This race is becoming popular and attracts the Maltese and the tourists who happen to be in Gozo or Malta. Race profits are donated to Puttinu Cares. A commendable move indeed. Apart from this, it shows that you are still very attached to your native Nadur and the respective Local Council has shown its mutual respect by allowing you to taste international races in Italy: a half marathon and a 10k.

Describe your experiences there and the eagerness and sense of belonging to keep giving much to Nadur.

Nadur 8K is a dream come true. I am the founder of this race together with the present Nadur Mayor, Edward Said. I remember speaking to the mayor about the possibility of organising a race in aid of charity. He immediately rose to the occasion, set up a meeting and formed a team that works hard in order to be able to organise this race. As you know, organising a race is a highly time consuming task but through hard work and the assistance of other volunteers we managed to increase the participants year after year and new sponsors have helped us reach new heights. In this respect, Nadur Garmin 8K has now established itself in the yearly MAAA racing calendar and on the agenda of several local and foreign athletes. Dedicating this time in aid of Puttinu Cares is my pleasure. I see it as giving back something to the community and running. As indeed, running has given me a lot of satisfaction and made me a much better person.

The race has now reached its fourth edition and the Local Council has awarded me with a precious memento recognising my efforts in this regard. In addition, throughout the years, the Local Council has assisted me to participate in a Half Marathon held in Baveno (Italy) and a 10K Race held in Cicciano (Naples - Italy). These two localities are twinned with Nadur. The attachment to Nadur is there, in fact, I always tease my wife (native of Xewkija) that we should be living in Nadur in a couple of years. The experiences in

these two races were very positive. The contacts and the people I got to know whilst I was there are dear to me. They welcomed me fully in their communities and treated me like a VIP. The President of the running club from Cicciano, Luigi Montanino registered me with their Club – Cicciano Marathon so that whenever I race in Italy, I would have the option to represent their club. In addition a number of athletes from this club took part in the third edition of Nadur 8k in 2017.

You are a perfectionist, insatiable, high achiever, eager to improve and perform better. During the past 4 years you kept improving gradually but you kept looking for the right coach and club even though it must be said that Charlton Debono, Fabio Spiteri and Mario Pisani, the latter being the present coach, all rubbed off on you. Even as a club you moved from Athletix AC to Zurrieq Wolves. You pursued and opted for those persons and clubs which you deemed fit might enable you to reach the next level. How was the transition process from one coach to the next and the club?

Indeed, I am truly a perfectionist and I take running seriously. I have all my running data organised with dates of participation in each race, achieved time, position and also additional comments. If I put my mind to something, I make sure to do it to the best of my abilities and dedicate myself fully in an attempt to do so. It is how I am. In essence, doing something for the sake of doing it is not my style. I have the same attitude at work.

As you have rightly highlighted, along the way, I have teamed up with different persons who in one way or another contributed to my development as a decent local long-distance runner. After a few months of running solo, Charlton Debono, a long-time acquaintance and nowadays friend, also native of Nadur, helped me out with some running sessions as I used to join him at the horse track and on other occasions for runs around the highly elevated roads in Gozo. Before such valuable guidance, I had no idea what running was all about and mostly tried things out by trial and error. Here, I started to take an intrinsic interest in the sport and through endless running related discussions with Charlton and other runners and professionals and also personal research, I started achieving good results steadily.

During this time, Charlton started winning races and doing very well running very fast times and as it made more sense to let Charlton focus on his running career, I joined Team Fabio under the guidance of Fabio Spiteri. At the time, several Gozitan athletes and triathletes were also under his guidance, therefore, for the first time ever, I was running in a group as we met for track sessions and even Zone 1 long runs especially towards the end of the week. From the group, I was the newbie, therefore, I had a lot to learn from all these Gozitan athletes as I observed, assimilated and asked a myriad of questions in the process. Under the guidance of Fabio, I learnt a lot and progressed steadily. Fabio is the type of person who shares his knowledge with everyone and that is a quality which needs to be appreciated as not everyone is ready to do so. In addition, he is a very altruistic person and is always ready to help others in

need. These are qualities which I tried to take with me which in turn would make me a better person.

Then I transferred with my current coach and supportive friend Mario Pisani. Mario is a very reserved character with a heart of gold. He is a walking running encyclopedia and his presence is indispensable. The shift from Fabio to Pisani was very smooth and amicable. As I developed the love for track races, I was looking for someone who would be more present at the track to mentor me accordingly. Under the guidance of Pisani, I developed more as an athlete, improved my running form and running efficiency and matured as an athlete. I started achieving respectable times as well.

Another important move was the one from Athletix AC to Zurrieq Wolves. Here again, the transition was quite smooth and I still consider the Gozo club athletes and committee members as friends. In fact, my brother David still runs for the club in Gozo. I had an open offer for consideration by Frank Bartolo, a hard working Zurrieq Wolves athlete which turned out to be suitable for me, with attractive schemes to encourage the athlete to delve deeper to try to achieve the running targets. This was in effect what I needed, in order to try my best to make it to the next level. Here, I joined Neil Brimmer, a seasoned track runner and a great family of long-distance athletes who welcomed me with a great deal of excitement and positive vibes. The plan is to do my best to also win as a team.

Few people may know that this fantastic experience which you are relishing could have been better if you were not involved in that terrible and unfortunate accident which side lined you for

a good couple of years prior to start compete. Your determination, persistence and resilience are above average because otherwise we are not here telling your successful story after such a nightmare. What really happened in Xlendi and how painful was it being kept at bay for a couple of years but making a successful, strong comeback thereafter?

I had originally planned to start running competitively back in 2011. I remember that I had purchased a very bulky running watch at the time and started jogging / running and also cycling. I was enjoying it, I wanted to lose weight and I was determined. During this period, I used to reside in Malta as it made it easier to commute to work since I worked at MCAST Main Campus in Paola. Most of the time, I spent my weekends in Gozo to be close to my family.

However, an unfortunate accident literally a few weeks later put me off track for a couple of years. I will never forget that night. It was a bit before midnight on a Friday at the beginning of March 2011. I was making my way to a Carnival party at La Grotta, a popular discotheque in Gozo, when I was run over by a careless driver. It all happened really fast in a split of a second. I recall being in a huge shock and ended up with a fractured tibia and fibula which was quite serious. I had to be operated with a metal plate insertion which I had removed with another intervention after two years. It was painful and the rehabilitation process was a long one. It put me completely on hold and I was very depressed. As I speak about it today, my eyes still fill up with tears each time. It was a huge mental blow, however, I learnt a lot from it. I appreciated the love of my parents who took great care of me at the time. Nowadays, when I look at

the visible marks this accident has left on my leg, I turn the frustration into fuel to achieve my running targets.

After a couple of months using the crutches, there was a huge difference between the muscle mass of the left leg and that of the right leg. Therefore, I took up swimming and did a lot of gym work in an attempt to get back to normality as fast as possible. At the time, I was unsure if I could ever run properly again. However, with perseverance and a great deal of determination, I made the return to running exactly four years later in 2015.

I still have that running watch and it still works just fine. Although nowadays I use a different watch, I will never sell that running watch as it does have a very inspirational story to tell.

You have been teaching at MCAST since 2009. MCAST caters for a wide spectrum of students and offers a wide range of courses across different levels. You give your input by lecturing at different levels including those students aspiring to become Child Carers or Educators focusing on the early years and learning support educators. However, your main role is that of a Student Support Services Coordinator and Career Guidance which you have held for the past four academic years. How many Gozitan students are embarking on Physical Education as their future profession and how fulfilling it is for you seeing such influx of prospective students who can only enhance the physical activity in Gozo be it: walking, running, gym goers, trail walking/running, any other sports?

As you have rightfully highlighted, I

teach students aged 16+ who are going through a particular and delicate time in their lives. I take great pride in what I do and try my best to be available in order to support students attending the College accordingly. Many students at MCAST Gozo College follow my running ventures and always ask for feedback regarding the race on a Monday morning. I love being an inspiration to these youths and always encourage various individuals to take up a sport.

MCAST (Paola) on the other hand, is giving its fair contribution to the educational aspect related to sports as it is already offering several courses across different levels related to sports, personal training and nutrition even at a degree level. In addition, as from April 2019 it will be launching a Master of Science in Exercise and Sport Science.

As regards to the situation in Gozo, running is nowadays gaining its fair share of popularity where as opposed to a couple of years ago seeing people running in the fairly traffic free roads

in Gozo is a common occurrence. In addition, Gozo is also paradise for trail runners as the options are various.

A rather interesting phenomenon is the large amount of young children who are taking up the sport from such an early age and it is a pleasure to see them enjoying it. This might be the result of the well organised academies of Athletix AC and Tri Gozo who focus on running and triathlon respectively. Such entities are giving a great contribution to the Gozitan community in general as nowadays young children have other options. When I was their age, the situation in Gozo was that either you were good at football or else you would have to sit down and watch others play.

Matthew, it was an honour for me, asking some personal questions and am confident that the readers concur with me that you have nurtured an indisputable passion for running and competitiveness which distinguishes you from many others. Keep up the good work.



Librarian's Voluntary Experience in Africa



My name is Laurence Zerafa and I am a 59 year old professional librarian employed as a Librarian at MCAST for these last fourteen years. Since my late twenties (30 years ago!) I had been interested in going on a long term volunteering experience abroad. I participated in several short-term experiences with the Sisters of St. Mother Theresa in Palermo, Italy and with Caritas in Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt. But apart from not feeling confident enough for such long term volunteering, there was also the intervention of further studies, several career moves and family commitments (I am single but for several years I accompanied my elderly mother), so nothing concrete came out of this wish. However the idea and wish remained there and around three years ago I decided to actively explore the idea.

Deciding and practicalities before leaving

Uprooting oneself is never an easy thing to do but there were several pointers leading me towards this decision to suspend my employment for one year and carry out this experience. Being the cautious type and with a background in Ignation spirituality (I am a member of a Christian Life Community CLC <http://www.cvx-clc.net/>) it took some time (3 years) to actually be on a plane leaving Malta to head down south to Dodoma in Tanzania some 9,000 km away. With my CLC group and personal spiritual adviser I discussed the idea and prayed on it to weigh the pros and cons and clarify motivations. All this helped me to decide to go ahead. Then the practical matters had to fall into place; arrangements to take one year off unpaid leave from work with a promise to return back to work, arrangements for somebody to look after the house and effects I would be leaving behind (the extended family certainly proved helpful here), getting the endorsement and formal support (including material) of a local Church NGO (Voluntiera Lajci Missjunarji VLM), the health aspect (check up, vaccines), fund raising prior to leaving, and where to go and what to do.

Why the Salesians in Dodoma?

I did not have much contact with the Salesians in Malta having been a student at the Jesuit school. The Malta based sending organisation (VLM Voluntiera Lajci Missjunarji, a catholic church NGO that specifically prepares and supports such volunteers) through their international contacts and because of my practical experience in library matters suggested, in 2015, that an opening for a volunteer librarian existed in Moshi, Tanzania at a Salesian Seminary.

I started corresponding with them (Fr. Augustine Sellam SDB) and because in the summer of 2015 I had booked a holiday to East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda) to get a feel of the land and people, Fr. Sellam suggested I visit them in Moshi. The days available during my 2015 holiday in East Africa did permit me to visit Moshi and a three-day visit to the Salesians in Nairobi was possible and did happen. This was thanks to the arrangements and hospitality by Bro. Damian Formosa SDB (a fellow Maltese) at that time staying in Nairobi. I liked what I saw about the Salesians in Nairobi and decided that volunteering with the Salesians would be the right place for me. In December 2015 I officially tendered my application for a one-year unpaid leave from my present work place but

only in January of 2017 did I get a formal go ahead from my employer. At that point the Salesians in Moshi asked me if I was willing to go to another of their missions in Dodoma, where they had a 6th form school library that required re-organisation and upgrading. I accepted with no hesitation and on the 11th of June 2017 early in the morning I landed in Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar Es Salaam on the eastern Indian Ocean coast of Tanzania.

The first 5 months of my stay in Dodoma

After a few days' stay with the Salesian Community in Upanga Dar Es Salaam, which days I used to familiarise myself with city life in Tanzania, I made my way to the Salesian Community in Dodoma, a day's road journey with a lunch stop at the Salesian novitiate community in Morogoro, more or less half way. In Dodoma, the Salesian community consists of 4 Salesian priests and 3 brothers who have under their responsibility a Technical Institute (ca 1,100 students), a Sixth Form Seminary School (ca 150 students) and a Parish (Ihumwa and outlying stations) a few kilometres away.

My assigned responsibility was to help with organising their school library. Once I arrived there was the beneficiary of Polish Aid funds administered in person by two Polish volunteers (Monika and Katarzyna) from Polish Salesian Volunteers <https://swm.pl/en/>. Polish Aid provided the funds to refurbish the library premises, purchase additional library furniture, a computer and library management software, and employ an additional person plus the purchase of ca 2,000 new books. Whilst the premises refurbishment process was in progress, during June to September the library was operating from temporary premises where the collection of ca 5,500 books needed to be catalogued electronically for the first time using temporary software until the new one could be purchased. I still remember the many hours opening big boxes packed with heavy books and placing them one by one on tables after dusting and washing the place and furniture, which cleaning is done at least once a week with the help of the school students. In the beginning of October the new premises, furniture, computer and software were in place and the process of transferring everything into the new premises and changing over to the new automated systems with all the effort and training that it entails started. Towards the middle of October the first batch of ca 400 new



books arrived and were catalogued and right at the end of November another larger batch of ca 1,350 books arrived and was waiting the start of the cataloguing process.

My role in all this was to use my library expertise and past practical experience to learn new systems through actually doing things with the resources available and then coordinate works after training present staff and a good number of student volunteers who helped out with repetitive tasks. Apart from the work being personally professionally challenging, it was also fulfilling on several other levels;

1. Seeing before one's eyes the physical transformation of the library room to a modern space
2. Seeing books arriving, cataloguing and shelving of old and new books all ready for use
3. Seeing the appreciation of library users for having a properly organised and well stocked library that met their study needs
4. Seeing library staff learning new processes (e.g. first time library computer and software, first time barcode reader and scanner/printer).

I must however admit that though I would have liked to involve myself more in school life after the considerable library work I had little time or energy left except for attending activities as a spectator (concerts, competitions, graduation etc.). This means that my experience was very much limited to library work and interacting with the Salesian Community during daily mass, breakfast, lunch and supper. I made an effort however to learn about the life of the country through walks around the city of Dodoma, visiting other parishes and as opportunity lends itself other towns as well. It certainly was not a holiday! On a daily basis, I used a fair amount of my time to post on my Facebook page pictures and explanations from

my stay there to reach family, friends and sponsors. It was a way of showing the good work that went on there, thereby encouraging others to support the work. Monthly, then I prepared a detailed report to e-mail to my financial sponsors back home to show them how their financial contribution towards this Dodoma mission was being spent.

What happens after the one-year experience?

I carried back with me many beautiful positive memories of the people I worked and lived with, even though not all situations were easy. It proved to be a stay that is giving me a first-hand experience of life in a developing stable African country, which is a view rather different from what we read and see back home about African countries and peoples. I could also see that there was much library cataloguing and modernising work to do there library by library; two years work at least for the SDB Tanzania School libraries. The way to tackle this with a long term view for a future sustainable good library system is to coordinate the libraries and the staff working in them. It is not easy because distances are huge and opportunities for library staff to come together are not easy to come by. However a right library volunteer roving around the different libraries, staying a longish time to start up the renovation process and train staff in place and a shorter stay in established libraries to support and reinforce systems should go some way to creating a good and sustainable library system.

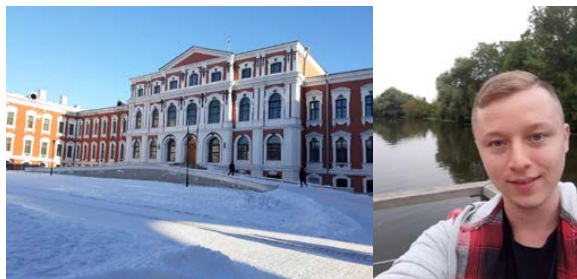
I can only hope that after I retire, I will be in a position to take up such a role and that the Salesian Province of East Africa continues investing in its school libraries as it has already done particularly in Upanga, Dodoma and Didia where Polish aid money was available for the renovation phase on what was already in place since when the schools had started.

Three ICT students' Study Exchange in Latvia



Erasmus+

ICT students Frankan Tabone, Samuel Sant and Yanika Mifsud travelled to Latvia to study at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technology (LLU) in Jelgava, for four months from September to December 2018, as part of an Erasmus+ Mobility. Each of them successfully completed 30 ECTS of studies, which will be part of their MCAST degree. MCAST and LLU have an inter-institutional agreement through Erasmus+ that made this study exchange possible. The students also received a grant from the Erasmus+ Programme towards the extra expenses for their stay abroad. Let us hear about the students' experiences through their words and photos:



Frankan Tabone

"Where shall I begin? Latvia was a very beautiful and welcoming place, and I fell in love with it at first sight. When I arrived at Jelgava, the city where I was to be staying, I immediately realized what a beautiful place it truly was! It had a river and so many trees – I had never seen such greenery and I was happy that I would be living there.

I remember going to college for the first time and oh my, the place was gorgeous... it looked like a fairy-tale palace! The lecturers were also very caring; when we had a problem or a question they did not hesitate to help us with whatever we needed and this made me very grateful to them.

I remember the first time it snowed in Jelgava, we were attending a lecture and started seeing tiny snowflakes through the window. After the lecture we all went outside and played in the snow!

This mobility was a lovely experience as I met new people and explored the culture of this beautiful country. I would recommend this experience!"



Samuel Sant

"Little did I know that this experience was going to shape me as much as it did, and will forever be referred to as the best experience of my entire life! It began very early in the morning after an entire night of tossing and turning, trying to control the butterflies in my stomach.

Upon arriving at Riga, the air felt so much cleaner (and colder), it was actually insane. We had pre-booked a taxi because we thought it would be the safest bet, and we had the nicest cab driver who managed to fit ten large suitcases and six people in one tiny Volkswagen van. We then had a wonderful time watching the scenery and slowly breaking the ice whilst looking at the beautiful verdant Latvian landscape, slowly trying to accept that this place will somehow become our home for the next few months.

Upon arrival we learned that the lady at the reception did not speak a word of English and that we had five flights of stairs to get to our rooms. Looking at it in a positive light, I burned so many calories running up and down those stairs. We left our luggage in our room, and headed out to the University to find Beāte, the External Relations Coordinator, who was the only person we knew

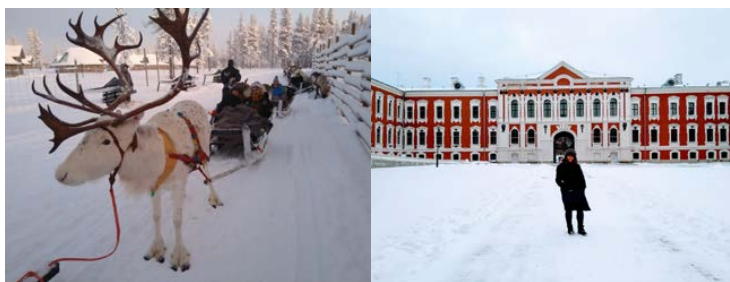
in Latvia. She was very welcoming and explained everything we needed to know.

A few days later, we had our first meeting with all the other Erasmus students, followed by a picture hunt which is an event organized by Latvian students who volunteered to make our exchange experience better. The idea was to visit important places in Jelgava and take pictures. We were paired with other people with the aim of making new friends. The ESN [Erasmus Student Network] members of Jelgava were very helpful and wonderful. In the very beginning, they had us put into a respective WhatsApp group with all the other Erasmus students, which proved to be very helpful and sometimes even entertaining.

Culturally I feel like I have learned a lot as well, but not just Latvian culture. We had times when we had to give a presentation on our country and cook specific foods. Through this I learnt about the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Germany, Kazakhstan, Morocco, the Netherlands, Spain, Slovenia, Slovakia and Turkey. We chose a really good year to go to Latvia, as 2018 marked a hundred years from when they got their Independence, so we got to attend lots of events, such as the Big Riga Fireworks and the Torchlight Marches for fallen soldiers, both of which were very beautiful.

We were also offered the possibility to go on school organized trips to Russia and Finland. Sadly, we had to miss Russia due to exams, but our teachers gave us the chance to go to Finland! The trip was magical, starting from when we set foot on the icy streets of Helsinki. We got to experience things I would not have dreamt of doing such as sledging, going to the Arctic Circle, cross-country skiing, going on a snowshoe adventure, seeing the Northern Lights [twice!], going on a husky safari, visiting a reindeer farm, driving a snowmobile and swimming in the icy seas. This made the exchange so much more memorable, that I cannot even describe how magical it was.

I think this has been the best thing I have ever decided to do in my life, and if I was ever offered the opportunity to go on another Erasmus+ I would accept without a second thought!"



Yanika Mifsud

"Erasmus+ in Latvia was a lovely experience which gave me new perspectives. This adventure required that I live independently and take care of myself, which is not easy at first. Although with each passing day, a new lesson was learnt. In fact, I now feel very independent and have more self-control.

Erasmus+ gave me the opportunity to study for a semester at LLU in Jelgava. I got to experience different teaching techniques and attended lectures in a palace. Lecturers were very helpful, English speaking and there were dedicated classes to Erasmus students. Two lecturers in particular also took interest in our Erasmus+ experience and gave us multiple tips of where to visit and what to do. There were a couple of times when I was a bit sick and found immediate help from them. Moreover, the international offices (both Latvian and Maltese) kept contact with us and replied to any queries we had. The experience might come off as a challenge but there were people backing us up plus I also kept contact with my family and loved ones by video calling, which kept me on the go.

Whilst living in the dorm, you get to share life with others and attend events together (really great fun) and socialise. The most cherished events were the trip to Sigulda where we spent a weekend in a lodge next to a bonfire whilst exploring the forest, the ESN trip to Finland which honestly was the highlight of my life (I got to see the Northern Lights and swam in the Norwegian Sea), as well as the Jelgava Palace Ball and the Halloween party where we danced the night away.

I explored parts of Latvia on my own and with fellow Maltese students as well. Transport services were easily accessible and affordable. I frequently caught the train which takes around 45 minutes to go to Riga, the capital city. Exploring Riga and other cities in Latvia, and planning my own adventures was a liberating feeling. When travelling to different places you get tastes of what traditions other people live by: different languages, traditional foods, fascinating history, skills and crafts, clothing styles etc. Something I picked up is that it is considered normal to have a sauna in your home if you live in Finland.

It was an experience I will always treasure and that I wish I had done before. I am truly grateful for the opportunity and its aftermath. Also, I feel very self-reliant and much more confident.

I definitely recommend it!"

Internships in the UK, Denmark and Finland



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY INTERNSHIP IN THE UK

Derek Fenech participated in an Environmental Sustainability internship in the United Kingdom from the 3rd of September 2018 to the 21st of September 2018 as part of an Erasmus+ Mobility.

Derek worked with Sustrans and was entrusted with two projects. The first project was to create a report to restore an abandoned train station in a way that cyclists passing through will enjoy the view and have somewhere to rest. Derek together with another student, cleared it from weeds and assessed what could be done to make it a better place. They came up with the idea of a public bench and a new wall to prevent the soil from spilling over.

For the second project both students had to design and budget a forest classroom for children aged between 7 and 12. They came up with ideas of what could be done so that the kids would have no harsh winds disturbing them, whilst also making it a fun and playful environment. All of this while keeping to the budget given. When everything was planned out, the students ordered the items and went on site and had everything built.

This Erasmus+ Mobility has been a great opportunity for Derek as he gained experience while working in a team on environmental sustainability.



CHILDREN'S CARE, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT INTERNSHIP IN FINLAND

Sarah Buhagiar participated in an internship in Finland from the 10th of September to the 28th of September 2018 as part of an Erasmus+ Mobility.

Sarah was welcomed by one of the tutors of the hosting college called 'Kpedu'. She was amazed by the behaviour of the cheering children who were playing and having fun without screaming or shouting. The class consisted of twenty-four children and four adults: one teacher, two practical nurses and one learning support educator for a child with special needs. The children's ages varied from four to five years old. The daily routine at a Finnish childcare centre was to some extent similar to a Maltese one. However, the difference between the Finnish and the Maltese child care routine is the time span of "free play". For instance if children spent eight hours at a childcare centre, six hours would be spent on "free play". It really helps children with their social development, communication skills and with their creativity skills besides their holistic development. Children communicated more during free play than during a planned activity as they knew that during a planned activity by the teacher, the children were not allowed to talk freely with one another. In addition, the children were taken outside to play either in the school yard or on outings which took place every Tuesday and they were always taken to new places. Sarah's Erasmus+ Mobility experience helped her to improve and gain various skills such as social skills, being more independent and communication skills. Sarah is grateful that she had the opportunity to go on an Erasmus+ as she did not only learn about the education system of the country but was able to be part of this education system for three weeks.

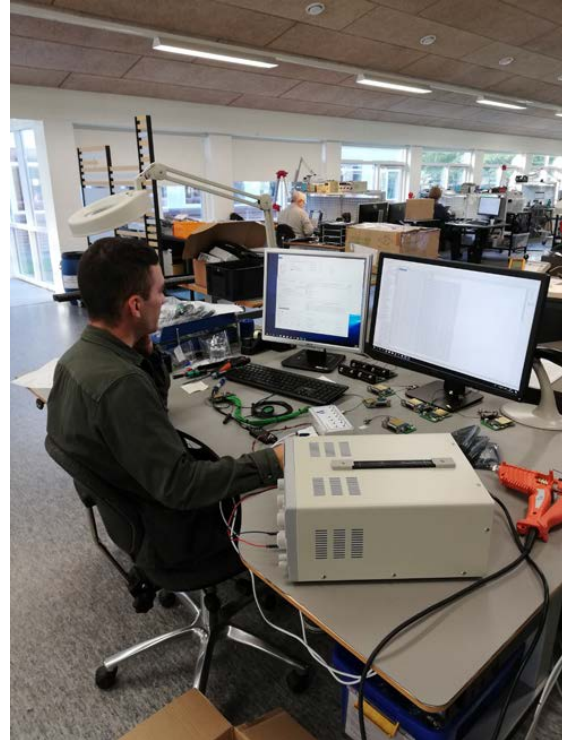


ICELAND EXPERIENCE

by Andrew Borg Carabott
BA (Hons) Journalism student

"Working with professionals at the International Film Festival was something I will never forget, not only because it was in such a beautiful country with its wonders but also because of the great knowledge and skills that I brought back with me. I was assigned various jobs while on the internship which included reviewing independent movies, merchandise photography, press conference photography, event videography and photography. Having done all these prior to my internship does not decrease the merit of how much I have learnt, since the scenarios were far different. There were the cultural differences and language obstacles which I had to overcome. I also learnt how to work under pressure due to the tight deadlines which we were given. All this led to this experience being a great fulfilling learning adventure."

Apart from the academic side of this experience, I had the opportunity to go around Iceland which is a beautiful country with beautiful people. I made loads of friends that are not only Icelandic but from all around the globe: friendships that I will cherish forever.



ELECTRONICS INTERNSHIP IN DENMARK

Ruben Fleri had the opportunity to carry out an electronics internship in Denmark from the 3rd of September 2018 to the 21st of September 2018. His placement was organised with partner vocational college Tradium in Denmark. At Poul Tarp the people that were working with Ruben were pleasant and keen to teach him. This made him gain a lot of experience and confidence. Ruben managed to work on new equipment and different electronic circuit boards. Ruben also managed to visit a few interesting places during his free time.



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