

Unifying Worlds in Lifelong Learning through the Teaching of Maltese

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Abstract

Lifelong education fosters personal growth, adaptability, and societal resilience, equipping individuals with the skills needed to thrive in an ever-evolving worldwide context. This study examines the experiences of Maltese teachers involved in lifelong education initiatives focused on teaching the Maltese language to three key learner groups: native speakers aiming to improve their Maltese orthography, non-native speakers learning Maltese as a foreign language, and Maltese native speakers working to overcome illiteracy. With Malta's unique linguistic and cultural identity, teaching Maltese through lifelong education is essential for empowering individuals and fostering a sense of inclusion and community. The theoretical framework for this study is based on the principles of lifelong learning, which emphasise the importance of continuous education throughout adulthood as a means of personal development, cultural engagement, and social integration. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 educators teaching Maltese across diverse lifelong education programmes. The data were analysed using NVivo thematic coding, revealing three key findings. The teachers highlighted the significant impact of teaching Maltese to both native and non-native learners' personal and professional lives, noting how it fostered a deeper connection to Maltese culture and enhanced employability. They also identified systemic challenges, including resource limitations, diverse learner backgrounds—such as native speakers aiming to improve their orthography and non-native speakers learning Maltese as a foreign language—and the complexity of balancing Maltese language instruction with cultural education. Furthermore, the educators emphasised the importance of motivation and engagement strategies, such as personalised lessons, culturally relevant materials, and celebrating incremental progress. This study underscores the need for targeted investment in Maltese language education, professional development for educators, and adaptable programme structures to support adult learners effectively. By highlighting teacher experiences, this research offers critical insights for policymakers and stakeholders striving to strengthen lifelong education initiatives in Malta.

Keywords: adult education; cultural inclusion; lifelong education in languages; Maltese language education; professional development; teaching strategies.