

Culturally Responsive Education – What does it mean to Malta?

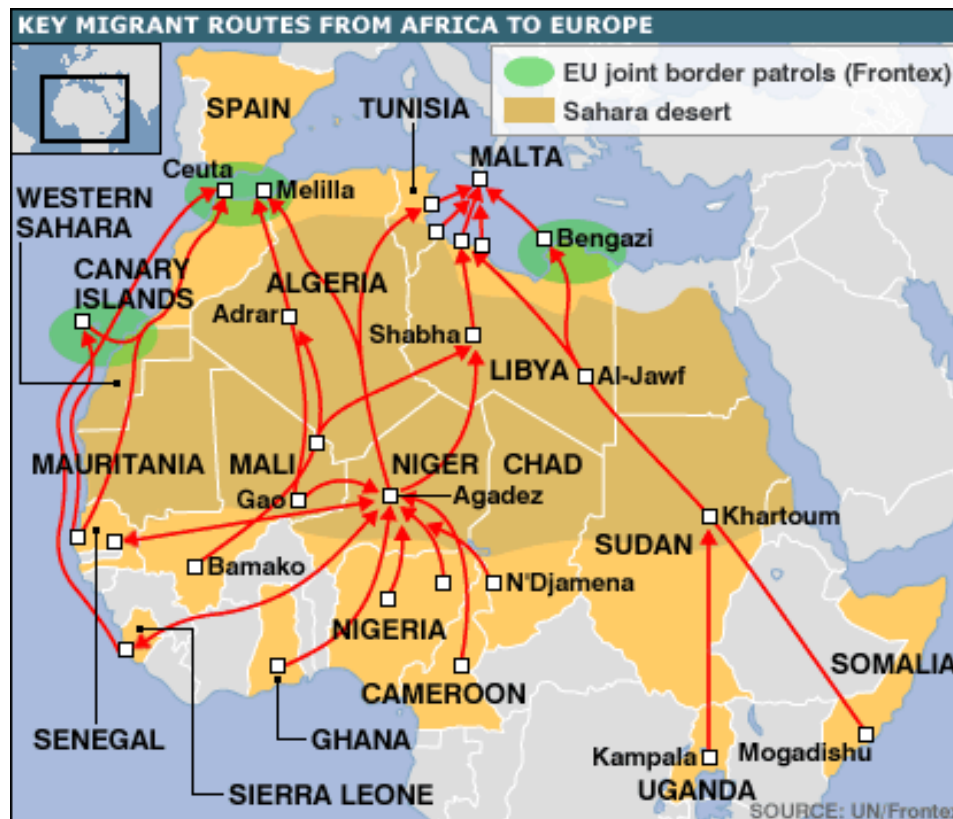
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Context - Malta

- Malta now and historically considers itself the gateway to Europe.
- Malta's Arab and Muslim roots are not properly recorded in history – the best evidence is our Semitic language.
- Maltese people are mostly Catholic.
- Malta was colonised by Britain for nearly 200 years.

Context – Migration to Malta

- Malta lies in a common migratory route.



(BBC 2007)



So far in 2008 2,400 immigrants arrived in Malta in an irregular way. They are mainly from Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan.

Times of Malta, (20th May 2008)

- Immigration is high on the political agenda.
- Malta is already overpopulated.
- Welfare system is already overstretched.
- Malta is continuously asking the EU for fair burden sharing.



Times of Malta, (8th May 2008)

Malta has a policy of detaining all irregular immigrants.



Times of Malta, (3rd June 2008)

Most of the immigrants apply for asylum.



Times of Malta, (14th Sept 2008)

Asylum Applications in 2007

Malta	3.4 per 1,000
Germany	0.2 per 1,000
Greece	2.3 per 1,000
Italy	0.2 per 1,000
Netherlands	0.4 per 1,000
Poland	0.2 per 1,000
UK	0.5 per 1,000

(UNHCR, 2008)

Educational Challenges

- Maltese schools are not adapted for a diverse student body.
- Most teachers are not prepared and have no previous experience teaching in a diverse classroom.
- The curriculum does not really consider “others” - non white, Maltese, and catholic.

Educational Challenges cont.

- Experience of irregular immigrants in the classroom varies depending on the goodwill of the teacher, services in that particular school, and the character of the student (Camillieri and Camillieri, 2008).
- Maltese students perceive classroom environment more positively than non-Maltese students (Vassallo, 2008).

Psychosocial Issues

- Experiences from back home, voyage via Sahara desert and sea crossing, and then detention upon arrival to Malta.
- Uncertainty about asylum status and hence their future.
- Stigma of being “klandestini” and racism.

Psychosocial Issues Cont.

On the voyage to Malta:

“Your life is at risk you don’t know if you’re going to arrive or not, but your will tells you to try, and not to give up.” (15 yr old male from Ethiopia) (Camillieri and Camillieri, 2008)

On arrival to Malta – on fingerprinting on arrival:

“I was very afraid. I think that when they take the hand, they were going to cut it off.” (11 yr old female from DRC) (Camillieri and Camillieri, 2008)

Psychosocial Issues Cont.

On detention:

“Detention is a like a prison.” (15 yr old male from Ethiopia) (Camillieri and Camillieri, 2008)

Improvements Necessary for a Culturally Responsive Education

- Teachers should be trained – all teachers in Malta are trained by the same department.
- More primary research on a larger scale is required.
- The government needs to listen and incorporate research that is being done in Malta.

Improvements Necessary for a Culturally Responsive Education

- A policy that takes an explicit stance on culturally responsive education
- A reflection of this in the curriculum and classroom.
- No detention and access to psychosocial services in schools.
- Immigrant friendly advertising to try and combat ignorance and discrimination in the population.

Change is Difficult

- There is a gap between research on culturally responsive education in Malta and what really happens in the classroom.
- In late 1980s/1990s, physical and verbal abuse were still common in the Maltese school system.
- Student voices in the classroom were not important and we were expected to passively learn.

Integration

- Integration has to be a long-term, two-way process of change (ECRE 1999).
- Maltese people do not necessarily want to change or understand the need to change.
- Integration can only happen if people are willing.

Not A Lost Cause

- In the last decade the education department introduced the policy on “equality for all”.
- Researchers at the University of Malta are taking the initiative.
- Jesuit Refugee Service started an outreach programme.



Conclusion

The EU should set minimum standards for education of all immigrants, regardless of status.