

**How Can Understanding Migrant Learners' Stories Assist a Vocational  
College of Further and Higher Education Effectively Support Migrants  
from Asylum Seeking Backgrounds: Migrant Learners' Perspectives  
in a Vocational College in Malta**

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## ABSTRACT

Significant social changes have taken place in Maltese Society over several years that have transformed the island into a multi-cultural and cosmopolitan Society. Considering its size, 316 km<sup>2</sup>, and population - 493,559 (NSO, 2019), the arrival of migrants contributed to these changes. In particular, 12,568 asylum seekers have landed on Maltese shores (UNHCR, 2019) during the past eleven years (2009–2019), with high hopes for a better future, and with complex needs that impact on diverse sectors of Maltese society. Maltese schools and colleges at all levels have attempted to be inclusive for migrant students whose home countries are often in a fragile state with significant levels of conflict and severe socioeconomic challenges.

This research fills a gap in the academic field as it brings forward the possible contribution vocational education can make in the integration process of asylum migrant learners. The study explored the life stories of asylum migrants who arrived in Malta between 2011 and 2014 and, at the time of the study were studying at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), a vocational college of further and higher education. The research sought to understand how the experiences of individual participants in their home countries, during their journeys to Malta, and since arriving in Malta have shaped their learning aspirations and needs. The purpose of the research was to give space to asylum migrant learners to share their experiences and voice their opinions and views on how MCAST, its structures, staff and wider learning community can support them as learners and also to re-examine the civic role of MCAST in this regard. Attention is focused on practices that occur prior to admission of these migrant learners to the college (their past - pre-migration), during (their present – transmigration), and beyond (their future – post-migration) and in developing more effective strategies to enable these individuals to achieve their educational aspirations.

A sample of six participants was included in the study with individuals hailing from Zimbabwe, Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan. The research endeavour has aimed to create safe spaces for the migrants to voice and have acknowledged their often traumatic life experiences and the challenges encountered. An analytical framework was applied to help identify themes from the participants' personal narrations, exploring and illuminating the migrants' experiences and their specific needs. Seven themes were identified: childhood, the journey, detention, insecurity, responses, aspirations and challenges. The study theoretically expanded on these themes with focus on the main challenges described by the participants.

Participants shared their wishes on the developments they would like to see happening at MCAST. The latter part of the thesis discusses the implications of the findings for improving practices at MCAST, which I hope to take forward in my pastoral role at the college. The research promotes social justice and enhances understanding of migrants' integration. It ends with an argument and some tentative recommendations for striving towards cohabiting peacefully in vocational colleges of further and higher education in Malta and beyond. This argument involves developing a culture that celebrates diversity and which gives all learners the opportunity to achieve their educational aspirations and to move forward towards a state of self-actualisation and transcendence.

## **Dedication**

*To my family*

*and*

*to all those souls who were aspiring for a better future but lost their  
lives due to the harsh conditions of their journeys.*

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## **Glossary of Abbreviations**

<b>APA</b> .....	American Psychiatric Association
<b>AWAS</b> .....	Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers
<b>CDA</b> .....	Critical Discourse Analysis
<b>CEAS</b> .....	Common European Asylum System
<b>CPD</b> .....	Continuous Professional Development
<b>EASO</b> .....	European Asylum Support Office
<b>ECRI</b> .....	European Commission against Racism and Tolerance
<b>ELF</b> .....	Eritrean Liberation Front
<b>EPLF</b> .....	Eritrean People Liberation Front
<b>ESL</b> .....	English as a Second Language
<b>GPA</b> .....	Grade Point Average
<b>HDI</b> .....	Human Development Index
<b>HRID</b> .....	Human Rights and Integration Department
<b>HRW</b> .....	Human Rights Watch
<b>HUMA</b> .....	Heterogeneous Unified Memory Access
<b>ILO</b> .....	International Labour Organisation
<b>IOM</b> .....	International Organisation for Migrants
<b>JRS</b> .....	Jesuit Refugee Services
<b>MCAST</b> .....	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
<b>MDC</b> .....	Movement for Democratic Change
<b>NCPE</b> .....	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
<b>NGO</b> .....	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NIF</b> .....	National Islamic Front
<b>NSO</b> .....	National Statistics Office – Malta

**OECD**.....Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**ORC**.....Office of the Refugee Commissioner

**P**..... Participant

**PTSD**.....Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

**SAR**.....Search and Rescue

**SPLA**.....Sudan’s People Liberation Army

**UNDESA**.....United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

**UNDOC**.....United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

**UNESCO**.....United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural  
Organisation

**UNHCR**.....United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**UN OHCHR**.....United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for  
Human Rights

**UOM**.....University of Malta

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## Prelude – ‘We and They’

A poem by Rudyard Kipling (1926) when he lived in Burma and India

Father, Mother, and Me  
Sister and Auntie say  
All the people like us are We,  
And everyone else is They.  
And They live over the sea,  
While We live over the way,  
But – would you believe it? – They look upon We  
As only a sort of They!

We eat pork and beef  
With cow-horn-handled knives.  
They who gobble Their rice off a leaf,  
Are horrified out of Their lives;  
And They who live up a tree,  
And feast on grubs and clay,  
(Isn't it scandalous?) look upon We  
As a simply disgusting They!

We shot birds with a gun.  
They stick lions with spears.  
Their full-dress is un-.  
We dress up to Our ears.  
They like Their friends for tea.  
We like Our friends to stay;  
And, after all that, They look upon We  
As an utterly ignorant They!

We eat “kitchen” food.  
We have doors that latch.  
They drink milk or blood,  
Under an open thatch.  
We have Doctors to fee.  
They have Wizards to pay.  
And (imprudent heathen!) They look upon We  
As a quite impossible They!

All good people agree,  
And all good people say,  
All nice people, like Us, are We  
And everyone else is They:  
But if you cross over the sea,  
Instead of over the way,  
You may end by (think of it!) looking on We  
As only a sort of They!

# Chapter One – The Research Context and Rationale

## 1.1 Introduction

The thesis examines a topic of significant contemporary interest by exploring the perceptions and experiences of 6 African migrants, with asylum backgrounds, who at the time of the study were enrolled at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), a vocational college in Malta. The study seeks to contribute to understandings of the role of the college in terms of policies and practices that could enhance support for these individuals' learning and their wider integration into Maltese society. The findings have a broader significance for the evolution of education and pastoral support for learners from asylum-seeking backgrounds as well as for reflection on the role of institutions, structures and processes in host communities in helping and hindering the development of community and integration of asylum migrants in society.

I work at MCAST and, in my pastoral care role, I meet students from asylum-seeking backgrounds and part of my role is to offer pastoral support and assistance related to admission, retention and progression within the college. My role and my desire to inform and enhance the support MCAST offers to students, particularly those from asylum-seeking backgrounds, has been a strong influence on my choice of research area. I wanted to understand more about the nature of an inclusive society, and how college experiences enable and constrain individuals in achieving their aspirations. I was aware from my professional encounters with students who had arrived as refugees seeking asylum status that they felt there were many challenges to overcome, for example, in accessing educational opportunities, in feeling part of a community and in achieving socioeconomic security. Hence, I was driven to explore phenomena related to the inclusion of asylum seekers in Maltese society and the challenges encountered, for example, when trying to access services, particularly education. I take the position that shedding light on these experiences and informing MCAST policy and practice, as well as disseminating my research to increase public awareness of asylum migrant students' lived experiences, can "*turn personal troubles and concerns into social issues*" (Wright Mills, 1959: 186) with potential to contribute towards a transformational change that enhances social justice. As Wright Mills argues,

*"What he (the individual) thinks and feels to be personal troubles are very often problems shared by others, and more importantly, not capable of solution by any one individual but only by modifications of the structure of the groups in which he*

*lives and sometimes the structure of the entire society” (Wright Mills, 1959: 187).*

## **1.2 Researcher Positionality**

As an educator, working mainly with teenagers and young adults, my sole ambition was always to support students to flourish. I always aimed to be an effective educator and help students become independent learners whilst encouraging them to maintain their motivation to learn, but most of all to help them become aware of their abilities and to enhance their self-esteem. This was done through the various roles I occupied in the educational support field. Presently I occupy the role of Director of Outreach Services and Student Affairs at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) where I regularly come across individuals faced with huge challenges in spite of their good will to pursue their studies and to train themselves in various vocational fields. I believe that my interest in this area is the result of my family background and upbringing. Born in a Maltese working-class family, I was brought up and lived in a Mediterranean culture, in an extended family setting with a staunch Roman Catholic religious influence particularly throughout my childhood and adolescent years. We were a family of ten, my sister the eldest followed by nine brothers, I being eighth in line. My sister was an early years’ teacher and she used to support me and encourage me particularly in my schooling. I still remember her encouraging words not to give up on anything in life and that I was as capable as all other students.

The philosophy that every person is valued with all his/her own potential is influenced by my exposure to the appreciation and respect to each and every human being, irrespective of who they are and what they do. Receiving family support helped me acknowledge the importance and value of support in life and how it can encourage self-confidence and self-esteem. I think that my personal interest in vocational education is influenced by the fact that I come from a working-class family. I acknowledge my personal history has a significant influence on my everyday pastoral care practice at work. Although I do not have direct personal experiences as a refugee or asylum seeker I have regularly, whilst driving on my way to College, witnessed scenes in an industrial area wherein around 100 asylum seekers living in the Marsa residential open centre (Figures 13 & 14), wait on the nearby main road and square for someone to hire them for the day. I learnt that apart from sustaining themselves, culturally and religiously, they may feel obliged, by transnational influences, to financially support their family members who might still be living in their birth country, particularly when the family would be in a state of financial crisis (Oliver, 2016). Therefore, their dire need to join the labour market

makes them more vulnerable to accept informal, unregulated low waged jobs in casualised sectors with limited rights, unprotected by trade unions and susceptible to exploitation or forced labour (Geddes et al. 2013; Craig, 2015).

### **1.3 Local Context**

Malta has become a key arrival point for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, a significant number of whom are asylum seekers. I have gained some anecdotal insights from my professional experience of working with students from asylum backgrounds over a number of years. I have found that several face some common challenges related to their studies. These include: how to acquire information on the local education system; negotiating the application and enrolment process which may be unfamiliar to them; achieving a level of language fluency that enables them to access the learning; overcoming stigmatisation and racial discrimination from Maltese peers, and occasionally from college staff. As a researcher I am committed to the pursuit and realisation of social justice for these people generally and, in particular, within my sphere of influence in the college where I work. Hence, I wanted to undertake a rigorous research study to move beyond my own reflections to a position where I can learn from asylum-seeking students themselves about how they experience the transition to Maltese society, enrolment and learning at MCAST and any steps I, and our wider institution, can take to support their education success in a supported, welcoming and safe environment.

In the absence of such structure, the educational journey for the majority of asylum-seeking learners may not be easy because, apart from the usual challenges linked with the task of accessing further and higher education and deciding on a programme that would suit their desires and aspirations (Brimrose & McNair, 2011), additionally, they could come across other potential hurdles such as discrimination and racism (NCPE, Think Equal, 2011; Gebre, 2008; Grove & Zwi, 2006). In a nutshell, migrants have to cope with all this in a foreign country sometimes without any host language skills (Prokop, 2013), knowledge, information and supportive networks (Hatton et al., 2003; Katbamna et al., 2004; UNHCR, 2019). Hence the need for a variety of adequate services to support their specific requirements demands specially trained support service providers to facilitate the integration process of migrant students during their educational journey (Bimrose & McNair, 2011; OECD, 2004).

## 1.4 Migration and Related Terminology

The term ‘migration’ covers a plethora of meanings related to both human and other species movement. In order to clarify the way this term and related concepts are to be used throughout this thesis, this section will critically address common terminology and nomenclature used to describe migrants. This will be followed by a discussion on the nature of human migration with respect to those seeking asylum.

The human *migration* phenomenon is a reality experienced in various ways by many people hailing from different nations. It is very common that people from all walks of life travel from one place to another for various reasons such as to earn their livelihood. Migration is not new for our world and of course it is not something exclusively for humans. It is interestingly observed in nature itself that even animals migrate to protect themselves from famine and harsh weather conditions. Historically, human populations migrated to different countries following pre-established patterns of people escaping conflicts, poverty, persecution, war or unemployment (Williams & Graham, 2014). Although it is not universally acknowledged, migration has been and still is an integral aspect to human experience, encompassing both human flourishing and human suffering (Harzig & Hoerder, 2009).

Moch defines migration as:

*“..... a change in residence beyond a communal boundary ..... migration includes moves from one village to another as well as those across national borders and oceans. Temporarily, migration may be short-term or permanent ...such as inclusive view of geographical mobility recognises the interconnections among regional, national, international, and transoceanic migrations and the necessity of considering them as a whole” (1997: 43).*

According to Hammar et al. (1997), migration is a worldwide, societal process that involves the movement of individuals from one country to another. The nature and extent of the social transformations produced by today’s migration reality are different from those of the past. Papademetriou (1983) states that numerous researchers believe that movement from one country to another occurs because of economic reasons, where individuals try to supply the labour demand present in the host country. However, the migrant’s status is dependent on the host country’s legislation and in the case of Malta’s legislation, this defines individuals’ eligibility for the right to work and to reside in the country.

Whilst immigration refers to the movement of people into a new country aspiring to settle there, emigration is the act of leaving one's own native country with the intention of settling elsewhere (Collins, 2002: 484). As such, both are acts of migration across national boundaries. In contrast to voluntary emigration, involuntary migration refers to groups that are forced to abandon their native country (Davidson, 2012). Social and political changes have shaped emigration patterns throughout the world. In the last few hundred years, millions of persons fled poverty, violence and political turmoil in Europe to settle in the Americas and Oceania during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (IOM, 2015). There are various factors that would 'push' people out of their native country such as unemployment, persecution, intolerance, lack of freedom, warfare, terrorism, famine or drought, failing economy and overpopulation. On the other hand, the 'pull factors' that would attract people to settle in a particular country may include quick wealth, chain migration (such as family reunification and/or relatives and friends who migrate following advice from someone already at the host country), employment opportunities, perceived better welfare programmes and schools, political freedom, cultural opportunities, prepaid travel and promise of higher pay. A variety of terms are used to refer to migrants seeking asylum and it is important to delineate how these terms are used.

### **1.5 Irregular migrants**

The term refers to individuals who travel without the necessary documentation such as passport, visa etc. It is estimated that 1% of the world population, which would involve 30-40 million individuals, are in an irregular migratory state (UN OHCHR, 2014; ILO 2015 as cited by Triandafyllidou & Bartolini, 2017). Other commonly used terms which according to UNHCR should not be used are '*Illegal Immigrant*' and '*Clandestine*' (2015: 2). Widely used in both official and public discourse, '*Illegal Immigrant*' refers to a person who has entered a country without a proper visa or any identity documents. They can be both humanitarian and/or economic migrants. However, the term is misleading as the nature of the detention/reception policy adopted by a number of countries, including Malta, is administrative and not criminal. The 1951 Refugee Convention also says that States cannot penalize immigrants and asylum seekers just because of an unauthorised entry. Furthermore, the term '*clandestine*' has a strong negative connotation, invoking a sense of criminality. Sometimes immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are referred to as '*clandestines*' even if they would have permission to remain within the territory of a country. Other terms which can be used are '*persons seeking protection*' or '*migrants seeking asylum*'. Strictly speaking

these terms refer to individuals who enter another country for any reason, without presenting the necessary legal documents for their entry and have not yet submitted their asylum application to the authorities concerned. Hence, although ‘migrants with an asylum background’ is used interchangeably with ‘asylum seekers’ they refer to different stages of status (Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security, 2015).

## **1.6 Asylum seekers**

The UNHCR defines Asylum Seeker as “... *a person who is seeking international protection.*” According to Bhurga & Gupta (2011), “*Asylum Seeker*” refers to “*someone who has left his or her country of origin, applied for refugee status and is still awaiting a decision on the application.*” Similarly, Philips defines Asylum Seeker as “*someone who is seeking international protection but whose claim for refugee has not yet been determined*” (2011: 2).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 1995-2011) defines an ‘Asylum Seeker’ as an individual who has travelled from one country to another for protection but does not yet meet the measures laid down by the 1951 Refugee Convention. In practice, this term is used exclusively to refer to those individuals who are still awaiting a decision on their application. In countries with individualised procedures, an Asylum Seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it.

## **1.7 Refugees**

Based on article 1 para. 2 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951: 16), as per Table 1, it states that ‘a refugee’ is a person who:

*“owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”*

The 1951 Convention was an attempt to establish an international code of rights and responsibilities for refugees on a general basis. An important feature of the Convention was its establishment of minimum rights for the refugees as an obligation incumbent on every signatory. Relating to the status of refugees, the 1951 Convention, article 31 provides that:

*1. "The Contracting States shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened in the sense of Article 1, enter or are present in their territory without authorisation, provided they present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence."*

*2. "The Contracting States shall not apply to the movements of such refugees restrictions other than those which are necessary and such restrictions shall only be applied until their status in the country is regularized or they obtain admission into another country. The Contracting States shall allow such refugees a reasonable period and all the necessary facilities to obtain admission into another country."*

The Convention is based on the recognition that an appropriate solution of the refugee problem is required to prevent their problems from becoming a cause of tension between states.

Conforming to the refugee definition of the 1951 Convention, the European Commission against Racism and Tolerance (ECRI, 2002) states that when asylum seekers obtain their refugee status, they have a right for schooling, training and work.

**Table 1: Salient Points from the Refugee Definition**

1. The definition is applicable if the individual had gone **outside his/ her country of origin**;
2. The individual must have experienced **fear of persecution** in his / her own country;
3. The fear of persecution has to be **well-founded**;
4. The definition gives also clear guidance as to the **source of persecution**. This should come from one or more of the five grounds mentioned in the definition i.e. race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion;
5. The individual must be unwilling or unable to seek **the protection of his / her own country**.

(Baldacchino, 2010: 6)

The Refugees Act offers another type of international protection – ‘**subsidiary protection**’ which is offered to asylum seekers on the basis of humanitarian grounds (Refugees Act, 2001: 8). This form of protection is not for an indefinite period for, unless the subsidiary protection is renewed, asylum seekers may be asked to leave Malta as the period of protection might have expired.

However, one should also distinguish between an ‘asylum seeker’ and a ‘refugee’ since the two terms have different legal definitions. If one had to literally translate the phrase ‘Asylum Seekers’, it would be *‘looking for a safe place, sanctuary or refuge’*. It can also be noted that not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee (or given another form of protection), but every refugee is initially an asylum seeker.

Hence, in my study, Asylum Seekers are conceived as those people who are looking for a safe place outside their country of origin and have submitted their application to the government through the Office of the Refugee Commissioner in Malta in an attempt to obtain the necessary protection and be recognised accordingly, whilst Migrants refer to the generic term of people moving to other countries.

Adelson (2004) distinguishes between the ‘economic migrant’ who uses asylum channels to seek economic improvement and what she described as ‘legitimate asylum seeker’ who only migrates to flee politically inspired persecution. The latter leaves his/her home country in search of a better life, usually due to the push factors of social divides because of civil and political unrest in his/her birth country as discussed above. However, it is argued that it is not clear cut as politics and economics are so intertwined that, attempting to extricate one from the other, or favouring political above economic circumstances, is a misjudgement between the two forces (Adelson, 2004).

It is noted that in the Maltese context, the term ‘irregular migrant’ already discussed in section 1.5 is used by authorities to describe:

- i. a person who has entered the territory without a valid/visa document,
- ii. over-stayed his/her visa,
- iii. has remained on the territory despite an expulsion request or order (UNHCR, 2011).

It is pertinent to state that according to Article 31 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, refugees who enter the destination country without prior authorisation shall not be treated as criminals who have breached the country’s migration laws (Bvumburah, 2017). In this context, one has to acknowledge that the effects of migration in the twenty-first century are causing huge global transformations. These are raising numerous questions about various issues such as identity, nationality, citizenship, the changing contemporary societies, cultures, community and neighbourhood. As it is a complex challenge for modern societies, migration can be perceived as the emblematic condition of this age (Castles & Miller, 2009), meaning that migration with all its effects can be seen as a key symbolic characteristic of this era. However, the impact of migration varies according to circumstances and factors such as: the reason behind the migration itself; influences on the country of birth as well as on the receiving country; culture and traditions; legislations, policies, access to services; influences on economy. This is evident in various areas such as the influence of residents of different nationalities on retail, entertainment, sports, food, customs and other areas of social life. Feller (2005) states that individuals who do not require international protection should not resort to asylum channels in the absence of legal migration options with the hope of gaining either temporary or permanent residency permit. She adds that when the line between ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ blurs, so does the distinction between migration control and refugee

protection. This lack of clarity contributes to the different interpretations and legal applications at national levels.

## **1.8 Prevalence of migration**

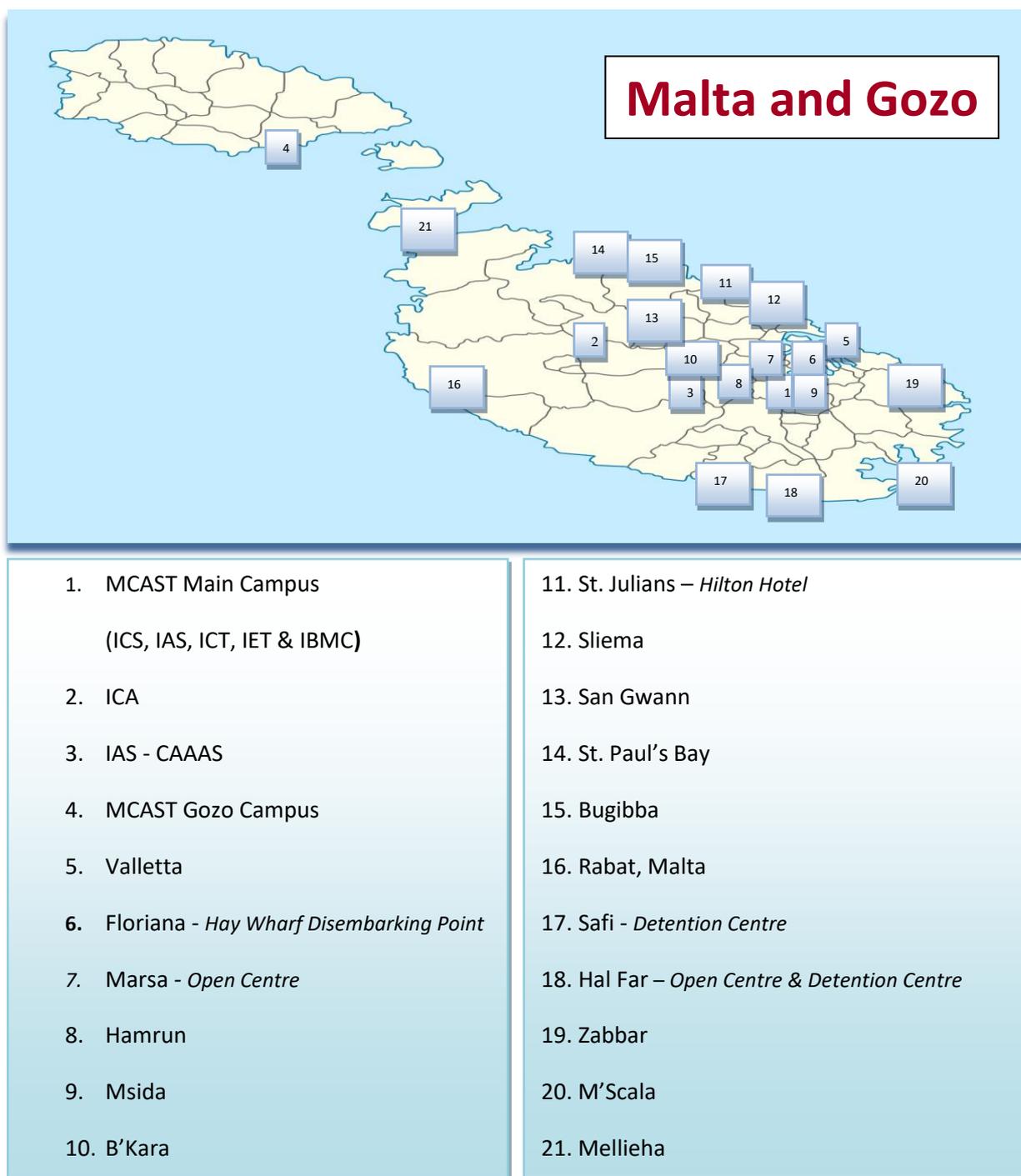
According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), it is estimated that 232 million people (3% of the world's population) live outside their country of origin. Although it is only a small proportion of the world's population, its impact is far greater than the numbers suggest. For instance, the Global North accounts for 136 million international migrants, compared to 96 million in the Global South. Seventy-four per cent of the total international migrants are of working age (20 to 64 years). Globally, half of all migrants are women who are particularly vulnerable to labour market exploitation, human trafficking and sexual violence (UNDESA, 2013). Migrants fleeing famine, persecution, conflict and natural disaster form a distinct category within this movement and constitute an estimated 79.5 million people worldwide (UNHCR, Trends at a Glance 2019). Unaccompanied minors, often traumatised by violence and war, arrive in country contexts only to find their rights as children subsumed to their refugee status. It is difficult to collect data on such minors but, in the EU alone, in 2012 there were just over 12,700 applications from unaccompanied minors (Eurostat, 2014).

## **1.9 The Maltese Immigration Context**

Malta's geographical position at the centre of the Mediterranean, in the South of Europe and close to the African Continent, makes the island more attractive than other European countries to the 'so-called' irregular migratory flow. The Maltese Islands are characterized by their limited size of 316 km<sup>2</sup>, a high population density of 1,261 persons per km<sup>2</sup> and a built-up area of 23% which makes the island the most densely populated EU Member State (Government of Malta 2005: 6).

Figure 1 shows the Maltese archipelago, Malta being the main island, Gozo, North West of Malta, and Comino is the tiny island between Malta and Gozo. The numbers on Figure 1 refer to different localities of interest to the study such as the MCAST campuses, whilst the lines on the map outline the areas of the different localities.

**Figure 1. Map of Malta and Gozo**



The country's total population at the end of 2019 (514,564) registered an increase of four per cent when compared to that of 2018. This increase was driven by a net migration (immigration less emigration) of 20,343 persons. The largest share of migrants was that of third-country nationals<sup>1</sup> at 12,355 followed by other EU nationals at 7,489. Migration is not

<sup>1</sup>Third-Country National refers to any person who is not a citizen of the European Union within the meaning of Art. 20 (1) of TFEU and who is not a person enjoying the European Union right to free movement, as defined in Art. 2 (5) of Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code).

new to the Maltese society. According to Smith (1981), numerous Maltese citizens emigrated to the North of Africa during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Australia during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Gullick, 1977) due to economic instability and new opportunities. *“In round figures, it is estimated that there are about 120,000 first generation and 300,000 second and third generation Maltese living overseas, making a total diaspora population of about 420,000”* (Council for Maltese Living Abroad, 2016). This gives a crude idea of the extent of 20<sup>th</sup> century emigration compared to the Island’s small population of 514,564 (NSO, 2020). It was by the 1980s that emigration had eased down considerably. Table 2 below depicts the trend of Maltese emigration after the Second World War.

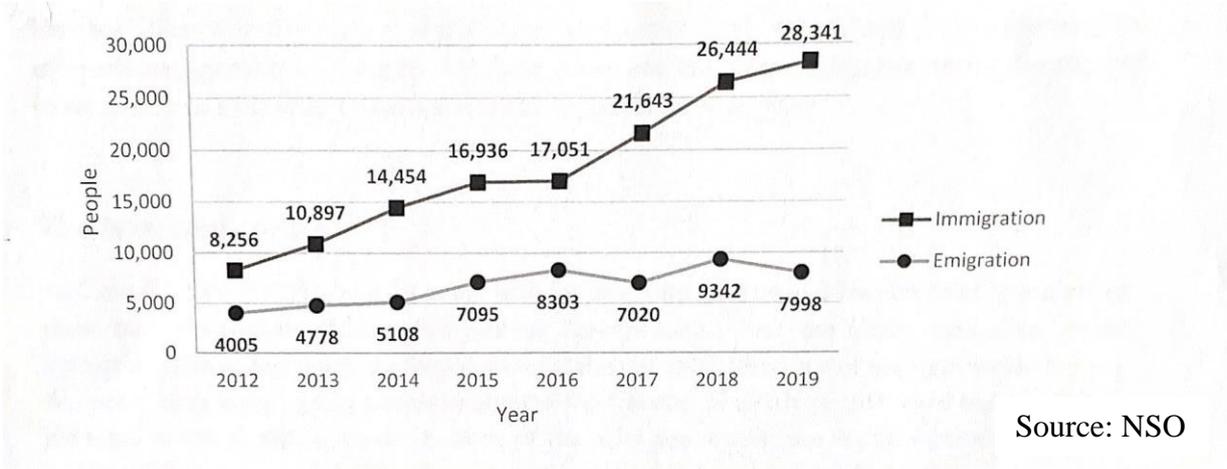
**Table 2: Maltese Emigration Trends**

Year	Maltese emigrants
1954	11,447
1964	8,987
1974	4,189

(E.P. Delia, Modern Emigration from Malta: A Liability? UOM, 1982).

Delia marked the emigration trend by three cycles of ten years’ duration with the peaks reached in 1954, 1964 and 1974. The three cycles indicate an emigration declining trend from Malta. From a country where emigration was a predominant social phenomenon, in the last two decades, Malta was transformed into a state of receiving an influx of immigrants landing on its shores. The net inflow of migrants (Table 3) is by far the highest per capita

**Table 3: Immigration & Emigration Trends (2012-2019)**



Source: NSO

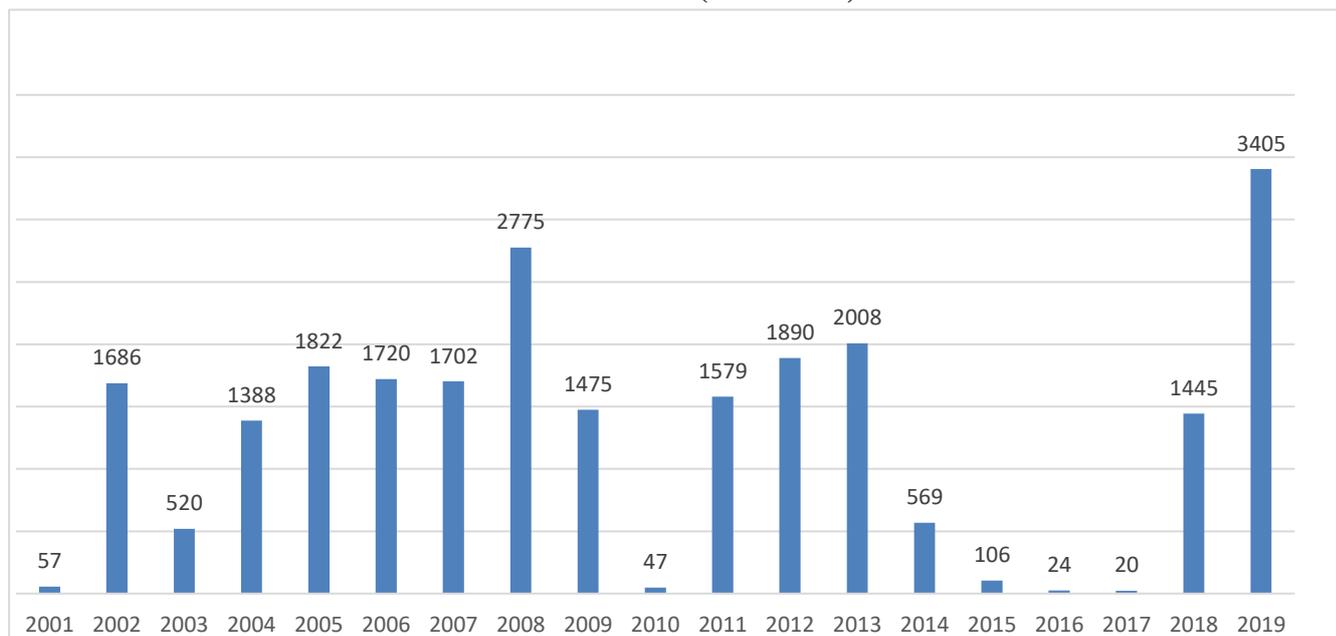
immigration rate in the EU, standing at 54.6 migrants per 1,000 population, ten times the EU average standing at 5.4 migrants per 1000 population.

According to NSO statistics (World Population Day, 11 July 2020), the data illustrates how in 2019, 9,883 other EU nationals migrated to Malta, while 2,394 other EU nationals emigrated from Malta. This migration from other EU nationals reflected economic growth rates. However, a summer 2020 Eurobarometer survey noted that immigration is a matter of concern for the majority of Maltese at national level (58%) and at EU level (61%). This stance may be attributed to a number of factors including concerns related to cultural barriers and the occurrence of crimes committed by foreign nationals in Malta.

This immigration phenomenon has been prominent for Malta and Southern Europe particularly since 2001, when a Refugee Act was passed in Malta replacing the Catholic Church-based Emigrant Commission, which had till then partnered with UNHCR. It was precisely in 2002 that rising immigration became more apparent in Malta with the arrival of 1,686 asylum seekers within one year (Sammut, 2011). The number of immigrants kept increasing particularly after the fall of Gaddafi's regime in Libya in 2011. At the time of Gaddafi's rule, Libya was a destination for foreign workers drawn by a strong economy (MPI. Kuschminder, 2020). As a controlling measure to the migration crisis, a 'friendship' agreement was signed by Gaddafi and Italy in June 2009, which involved joint naval patrols. Furthermore, Gaddafi created a warden system with internment camps and watchtowers on the Libyan beaches. With the fall of Gaddafi, migration smugglers in Libya flourished as migrants have used Libya as a transit point to set off for Europe (Murphy, 2015).

For the scope of this thesis, this research shall explore Malta's inter-country migration of asylum seekers considered as third-country nationals. Malta's ratio of migrants seeking asylum in proportion to population has constantly been among the highest, and very often even the highest among all EU Member States. In fact, Malta received a total of 20.2 asylum applications per 1,000 inhabitants between 2009 and 2013, compared to an EU average of 2.9 (Strategy for the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Irregular Migrants, November 2015). The majority of asylum seekers arrive in Malta by boat from Libya, having travelled in an irregular manner (UNHCR, Moving Forward 2018). Table 4 summarises the number of people arriving by boat recorded between 2001 and 2019.

**Table 4: Boat Arrivals (2001-2019)**



(Police General Headquarters – Immigration Section, News 2020\_101.xls.)

Most of the arrivals include adult men, women and children, who might be accompanied by a parent or caregiver, or unaccompanied. The lowest number of asylum migrants arriving in Malta annually in eighteen years was in 2017 with 20 asylum seekers, whilst the highest number was in 2019 with 3,405 individuals.

### **1.10 Search and Rescue**

The International Convention of Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR) applicable to Malta is the SAR Convention of 1979 which states that parties concerned - neighbouring countries, shall establish an agreement on the SAR region (2.1.4).

*“In case agreement on the exact dimensions of search and rescue region is not reached by the Parties concerned, those Parties shall use their best endeavours to reach agreement upon appropriate arrangements under which the equivalent overall co-ordination of search and rescue services is provided in the area” (SOLAS Convention 18, Ch. 2.1.5).*

Furthermore, the SAR Convention binds the state parties to ‘..... ensure that assistance be provided to any person in distress at sea ..... regardless of the nationality or status of such a person or the circumstances in which that person is found’ (SOLAS Convention 8, Ch. 2.1.10).

Whilst obligations are clearly specified, ambiguities in responsibilities and legal loopholes as well as the application of measures to sidestep SAR obligations can cause problems that may lead to a weakening of the SAR regime.

SAR in the Mediterranean is complex and allows a view of interconnections and power relations between local, national and supranational actors that acknowledge the complex phenomenon of sea migration (Klepp, 2014). Due to its position at the centre of the Mediterranean, Malta has an enormous SAR area of over 250,000 km<sup>2</sup> reaching from the Tunisian coastal waters almost to the Greek island of Crete (ibid.). There are no formal agreements and fixed mechanisms with the neighbouring countries to automatically delegate or regulate responsibilities. Actions taken by Italy in the Maltese SAR area are based on ad-hoc concurrences between the SAR forces of the two countries.

The Maritime Squadron of the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) consists of around 300 officers who are expected to cover the whole SAR area. Whilst AFM remains responsible for the provision of adequate and timely response to SAR associated risks, it requires a sufficient base of information in support of risk-prediction models for effective Maritime surveillance including prevention measures or in the case of emergency interventions.

The European Migration Dublin Convention (1990) that came into force in 1997, determined the EU Member States' responsibility for examining an application for asylum lodged in one of the EU Member States. The Convention was revised by the Dublin II (2003) and III (2013) Regulations which contain sound procedures for the protection of asylum applicants. The Regulations embodied a new mechanism for determining the State responsible for an asylum claim, backed with a common database for fingerprints – Eurodac. By comparing fingerprints, member states can determine whether an asylum seeker or a foreign national who is illegally in a member state has previously lodged an application for asylum in another member state. This measure controls the so called phenomenon of '*asylum shopping*'. The Eurodac regulations state that all asylum seekers over 14 years of age must be fingerprinted when submitting the application. Fingerprints are then digitally transmitted to the Eurodac Central Unit, within the European Commission, where they will be compared with those already stored in the data base. These measures are considered unfavourable for Malta and other Mediterranean states due to their geographical position. Several appeals were made to other EU member states for more burden sharing agreements in asylum issues, emphasising

the point that the country cannot handle the situation alone (Klepp, 2014). It was only in 2020 that the EU adopted a new pact which recognised that no member state should shoulder a disproportionate responsibility and that all member states should contribute to solidarity on a constant basis.

### **1.11 Consequences**

According to UNHCR's estimates, during 2014 over 3,500 people died trying to cross the Mediterranean and in the following year 3,771 died whilst making the crossing. Ibrahim, a 24 year-old Malian, who crossed from Libya to Europe in February 2015, explained to a UNHCR representative how he survived a shipwreck and how he managed to keep going under very difficult circumstances. *"At around 7.00pm the boat started to lose air and fill with water ..... People began to fall into the sea. With each wave, two or three were taken away. We clung to a rope with water up to our bellies"* (UNHCR, 2014: 5). A cargo boat eventually rescued Ibrahim and the only other survivor at about 3.00pm the next day. For the majority of migrants seeking asylum, the arrival in Malta or in any other country comes at the end of an arduous journey. Many asylum seekers have experienced war, ill-treatment, deprivation of liberty and other human rights violations in their country of origin as well as in the countries through which they transited (UNODC, 2009; IOM, 2006; Human Rights Watch (HRW) 2009; JRS Malta, 2009 & 2012; Amnesty International, 2013). Such negative experiences can severely impact the individual's identity, physical and mental health and well-being whilst producing conflict between past experiences and the realities of the receiving country's culture.

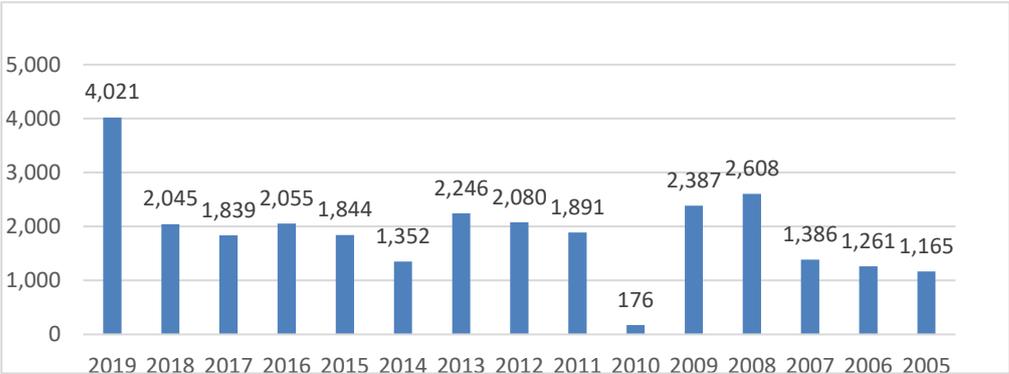
### **1.12 The Maltese Application Process and Statuses**

Under the remit of the Ministry for Home Affairs, National Security and Law Enforcement, the Maltese Government provides assistance to migrants through the Office of the Refugee Commissioner (ORC) that *"ensures a totally independent, fair, efficient and swift eligibility determination process for persons who seek asylum in Malta"* (n.d.); and through the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS), which assists migrants in search of accommodation, employment, housing, health services, welfare and education (2009). Two important milestones in this context were the launch of the 'Strategy for the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Irregular Migrants' by the MHSE in November 2015 and the setting up of the Human Rights and Integration Department (HRID) where a National Integration

Strategy together with a plan of action for the integration of migrants was launched in 2017. These agencies, together with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the EU agency set up in 2010 to provide the necessary support in order to translate in practice the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) of Equity and Fairness, as well as the intergovernmental organisation, the International Organisation for Migrants (IOM), together with a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) and Aditus Foundation amongst all others, all contribute in specialised sectors towards the enhancement of the integration process of migrants.

Having established the Maltese context of migration and the agencies involved, I will now turn to discuss how the rigorous processing of the migrants’ reception and application processes take place. This unfortunately adds to the turmoil migrants seeking asylum go through with all the psychological implications involved - the horrific experiences which make them flee from their home country, and the life-threatening events on their journey including their voyage across the Mediterranean Sea. Upon arrival in Malta, migrants seeking asylum are instructed to submit an application to the Office of the Refugee Commissioner. Those who have no valid passport or visa are required to fill in a ‘Preliminary Questionnaire’ which is the first step in the asylum procedure. This questionnaire must be submitted within two months of arrival, otherwise it is considered invalid. This questionnaire is not the formal application for protection - but since both are required, so both have to be filled correctly. Table 5 depicts the number of asylum applications submitted to the Office of the Refugee Commissioner between 2005 and 2019.

**Table 5: Number of Asylum Applications between 2005 and 2019**



(NSO News Release, European Statistical System 20/06/18; Asylum Information Data base, Aida, Ecre, JRS Malta 30/11/20)

Up to 2015, Malta maintained an automatic detention policy for those classified as ‘irregular immigrants’. Those individuals arriving in Malta without a valid passport or visa were held in closed detention centres for up to 18 months, living in a state of limbo, not knowing why they were being detained, generating a sense of suspended time and experiencing the so-called ‘slow violence’ (Griffiths, 2014). The detention duration depended on the application, its assessment and the outcome. With the launch of the new ‘Strategy for the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Irregular Migrants’ in November 2015, the Initial Reception Facility for irregular migrants was introduced. This facility offers accommodation within a contained environment in order for migrants to be medically screened and their requests processed by the pertinent authorities. The period of stay at the Initial Reception Facility is ordinarily limited to no more than seven days. Vulnerable people, minors and families were usually excluded from detention and now, once released from the Initial Reception Facility, they are offered accommodation at open centres. Before 2015, applicants who were granted protection were normally detained until a decision about their future status was taken by the authorities. Rejected migrants were also detained for a maximum period of 18 months. During the Detention period they were usually asked for an interview depending on the submission or otherwise of their preliminary questionnaire. The interview is crucial as its outcome would determine whether the individual’s asylum request would be accepted or rejected. During the interview, the applicant is asked many personal questions usually similar to those found in the preliminary questionnaire. Through such questions, the Refugee Commissioner would be looking for any inconsistencies or changes that would affect the applicant’s credibility and subsequently the final decision. The Office of the Refugee Commissioner collects and evaluates all available evidence after which it would proceed to decide on one of the following five different types of protection statuses as per Table 6.

**Table 6: Protection Statuses**

<p><b>Refugee status:</b></p> <p>1951 Geneva Convention - Granting full protection in which case the asylum seeker will get the status which is renewable every three years. The refugee is granted freedom of movement, residence permit and a personal convention travel document. However, the refugee is unable to return to his/her birth country due to fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. The refugee will benefit from access to employment, social welfare, appropriate accommodation, integration</p>
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programmes, state education and training and state medical care.

(UNHCR 2020 <http://www.unhcr.org> refugee-status)

**Subsidiary protection:**

EU Council directive 2004/83 - This is a form of international protection given to those whose application for refugee status has been dismissed but who still face a real risk of serious harm if returned to their country of origin. Serious harm is defined by law as: the death penalty or execution; torture or inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment; threats of life by indiscriminate violence in international or internal armed conflicts. Persons enjoying subsidiary protection are entitled to freedom of movement, residence permit, personal travel document and access to employment, core social welfare, appropriate accommodation, integration programmes, state education and training and state medical care. Such status is renewed every year.

<http://legislation.mt/eli/cap/420/eng/pdf>

**Temporary humanitarian protection:**

Established in 2008, temporary humanitarian protection is given to asylum applicants who do not satisfy the criteria for refugee status or subsidiary protection (international protection). This status offers a form of protection that is granted by national authorities in terms of national law or policy. Within the EU, these types of protection are referred to as ‘non-EU harmonised’ forms of protection, as they are particular to the country where they are granted and not regulated by uniform standards across the EU. In Malta there is only this form of national protection. Such status is renewed every year.

([tfal.org.mt](http://tfal.org.mt))

**Temporary Humanitarian Protection ‘new’ 2010:**

This is granted in terms of national policy on the recommendation of the Refugee Commissioner to asylum seekers whose application for international protection was rejected. The Refugee Commissioner may recommend the granting of Temporary Humanitarian Protection new: where the applicant is a minor; where he considers that the applicant should not be returned to his/her country of origin on medical grounds; where he considers that the applicant should not be returned to his/her country of origin on other humanitarian grounds.

This status of Temporary Humanitarian Protection New used to be granted to rejected asylum seekers who had been living in Malta for a number of years and had not been removed due to no fault of their own. Such status is valid for one year and renewed through an interview, assessing integration efforts.

(Government of Malta, Chapter 420, 2015)

The decision is then communicated to the asylum seeker who has the right to appeal to the Refugee Commissioner. Out of the 4,021 applications of 2019, 3,574 were still pending at the end of the year. 56 (4.5%) were granted refugee status, 352 (27%) subsidiary protection, 14 (1%) humanitarian protection and 874 (67.5%) were rejected (Asylum Information Data base, Aida, Ecre, JRS Malta 30/11/20).

Throughout this whole process asylum seekers are entitled to various forms of assistance according to two legal notices under the Refugees Act 2005:

1. Legal Notice 131 of 2005. Temporary Protection for Displaced Persons (Minimum Standards) Regulations;
2. Legal Notice 320 of 2005. Reception of Asylum Seekers (Minimum Standards) Regulations.

These two legal notices, amongst others, give asylum seekers entitlements such as access to the education system, free health care, access to the labour market after twelve months of their arrival, rent subsidy if they decide to rent property, reception conditions which include food, clothing and housing, provided in kind, or by vouchers or as financial allowances, and a daily expenses allowance (Appendix I, p. 241).

### **1.13 Accommodation quarters for migrants**

Following detention or the initial reception facility experience, migrants are offered accommodation by the local authorities at the open centres (Figures 13-16, p.135-139). These are managed by the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS), and the personnel target to avert any irregular behaviour and to verify that at the open centre the residents are personally maintaining the cleanliness of the location (Fondazzjoni Suret il-Bniedem, 2010: 33). Every resident is required to register three times a week at the office of the centre in which he or she is living (Fondazzjoni Suret il-Bniedem, 2010: 37). The signing is

compulsory in order to be granted shelter as well as to receive their financial allowance of 80 Euros a month (Appendix I, p. 241).

However, placement in open centres is not compulsory and some migrants choose to live amongst the Maltese community. These centres are a form of support to migrants, with the provision of temporary shelter until they settle down and are in a position of renting their own apartment. Usually they are not allowed to stay at the open centre for more than twelve months unless humanitarian considerations dictate otherwise (Ministry Strategy Document 2015).

### **1.14 The Asylum Migration Experience**

Asylum experiences can impact on the individual's identity whilst generating conflict between their previous life experiences and the realities of the host country's culture. It is a social shock for many asylum seekers when they experience a lowering of their standard of living and status in society, referred to as '*downward economic mobility*' (Oliver & O'Reilly 2010). Other factors that could aggravate the situation include a lack of proper housing and facilities; interruption in their education, and the hostile treatment from certain individuals at the receiving country (UNHCR & Aditus, 2012; NCPE, 2012; Weave Consulting, 2011; UNHCR, 2019). Above all, the absence of parents and family members and the loss of family members in their home countries or during their migration journey add further to the social shock. Such factors can contribute to asylum seekers' overwhelming experiences and traumas and thus one has to consider such factors when trying to understand the world of migrants seeking asylum.

On the other hand, the high motivation and perseverance of asylum migrants may lead them to access further education. However, deciding on a programme that would suit the individual desires and aspirations in a foreign country without any knowledge, information and supportive networks could be a tough and challenging journey (Brimrose & McNair, 2011). Apart from their past experiences, traumas and related distressing events, migrants may additionally come across other discriminatory and racist obstacles. Yet some of these migrant students study hard and strive to obtain good results while juggling with their part-time jobs to financially sustain their living. I cannot but recall a meeting I had a couple of months ago with an asylum seeker student who said that two years ago, he had an appointment with me to discuss his future career. He works during the day as a tile layer and in the evenings he studies. He managed to obtain his 'O'levels and now is studying to get his 'A'levels. His aim

is to study engineering at tertiary level. I still remember his words before leaving my office, *“I want to establish myself in life but in the mornings I need to work as I need the money to support my family.”*

Migrants who possess the basic means and required resources are more likely to stick to their aspirations and may find it easier to seek education and training opportunities. At the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), a constant increase of migrant students is noted, with around 75 migrants in the academic year 2015-2016 to 797 in the year 2020-2021. According to Baldacchino (2010), asylum seekers dream of acquiring some form of qualification that would lead them to employment, as stated in this asylum seeker narrative at the Jesuit Refugee Service.

*“Education takes away the obstacles in my way as a girl. With my education I can pay back what my parents have spent to bring me up. I will learn a trade when I finish school and become a responsible person in my community which is the most important thing for me.”* (JRS. Annual Report, 2011: 17)

Here one can acknowledge the role education can play in the realisation of migrants’ aspirations and its influence and contribution to their integration process in the host country community. In many nation states, migrant people are frequently characterised as existential threats (de Haas, 2008; Huysmans, 2005), rather than people wanting to gradually integrate themselves into new surroundings.

### **1.15 Post-Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities in Malta**

Post-Secondary and Tertiary Education in Malta is offered mainly by three providers: State, Church and Independent/Private institutions. Financial fees always apply in case of programmes provided by Private/Independent institutions. No fees apply to Maltese and EU citizens when following programmes at both State and Church education institutions. Although technically third country nationals seeking asylum in Malta are subject to education charges, they are instructed to submit an application to the Education Ministry to waiver their education fees. In the majority of cases their request would be granted.

**Table 7: Maltese Post-Secondary and Tertiary Education Sectors**

<b>Sixth Form</b>	<b>Entry Requirements</b>
Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary - State	Five/six passes at Secondary Education Certificate/'O'level subjects
Sir Michelangelo Refalo Gozo - State	
Junior College - University of Malta - State funded	
St Aloysius College - Church	
De La Salle College - Church	
St Martin's - Independent/Private	
<b>Vocational Education</b>	<b>Entry Requirements</b>
Institute of Tourism Studies - State	EQF level 3 - 2 'O'levels EQF level 4 - 4 'O'Levels. (Subjects vary according to the chosen vocational sector)
Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) - State	
Independent/Private Institutions offering Vocational Education	
<b>Tertiary Education</b>	<b>Entry Requirements</b>
University of Malta - State funded	University of Malta – Matriculation Certificate comprising of 2 'A'Levels and 4 Intermediates. <sup>2</sup> Vocational Degrees – 2 'A'Levels and 2 Intermediates or an Advanced Vocational Diploma
Institute of Tourism Studies - State	
Malta College of Arts Science and Technology MCAST - State	
Independent/Private Institutions offering foreign qualifications	

<sup>2</sup> Sixth form and University applicants who have lived in Malta for five years and over need to obtain a pass in Maltese language SEC/O'level.

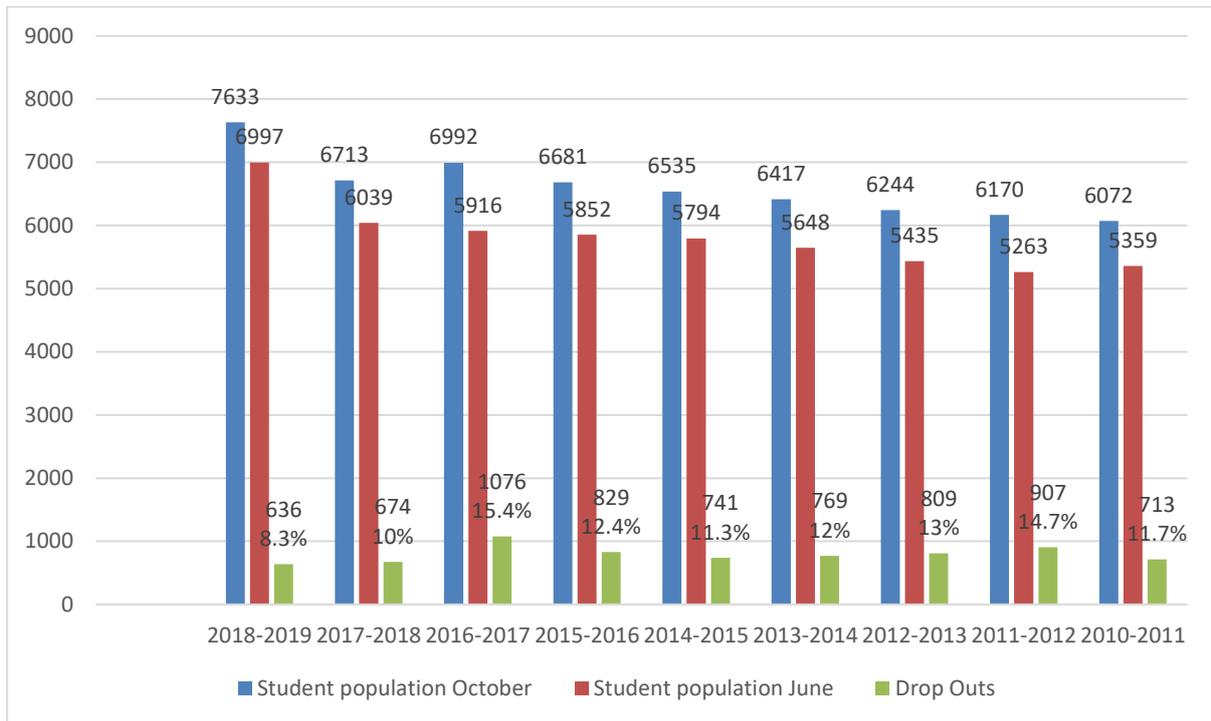
Since migrants seeking asylum from third country nationals usually are not in possession of any qualification' documents, it would take longer for them to obtain the necessary entry requirements to join the Sixth Form Programme. On the other hand, Vocational Programmes are more appealing as they usually are hands-on, lead to a specific job and allow students to join an Apprenticeship Scheme or work on part-time basis. Furthermore, there is a natural progression from post-secondary Vocational programmes to Tertiary Education.

### **1.16 The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)**

MCAST is a state funded education institution of further and higher education formed locally by six different Institutes and the Gozo Centre (Appendix II, p. 242). Since its inception in 2001, MCAST has been established as a Community College. Its Mission Statement is: *'To provide Universally Accessible Vocational and Professional Education and Training with an International Dimension, responsible to the needs of the Individual and the Economy.'*

These past twenty years MCAST has developed into a college community with its civic role and attracted the attention of thousands of individuals interested in both day and evening vocational education and training programmes. Through such training programmes which vary from European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Introductory level 1 to EQF level 7 (Masters), MCAST aims at equipping students with the skills, knowledge and competences necessary for a modern, flexible and entrepreneurial workforce functioning within a global and highly competitive economy. These qualifications provide the individual with the specific skills required for a particular job. The training programmes are held within a life-long learning concept and context, ensuring that the knowledge, competences and skills acquired by students at any specific level and in whichever area, will lay the foundation for any future personal development and career progression. Furthermore, the college is fundamental to providing the necessary re-skilling and re-training required by unemployed adults or by those who would wish to change their job or career, hence contributing to the civic enhancement of society. Table 8 below depicts MCAST student population growth during the past nine years as well as the student dropout rate which fluctuates from 8.3 to 15.4 per cent with an average of 12 per cent.

**Table 8: MCAST Population and Drop Outs**



The MCAST Mission Statement words - Universally, International and Accessible - clearly show the openness and commitment of the College to this international dimension of becoming a centre for international students and organisations which will consequently improve and enrich the diversity of the College. It is pertinent to note that in the academic year 2020–2021, 74 different nationalities of students were registered with MCAST throughout the different Institutes, levels and courses. (Appendix III, p. 243). Whilst providing these international students with relevant vocational education, the international experience has the potential to be beneficial to the local students too, as it can broaden their attitudes and thinking particularly when taking into consideration the insularity of Malta which is an island with its own culture, language and history.

### 1.17 Purpose of research

The research study is an inquiry about this migration epoch of third country nationals seeking asylum in Malta and joining vocational education. There are two overarching aims of this research. First, in my professional role I am keen to learn about how MCAST may be able to enhance its support for asylum migrant students. Second, it is useful to understand further the civic role of the college in supporting student integration in Maltese society. Related to these

overarching aims are two sub-aims: i) to understand participants' experiences prior to enrolling at MCAST (pre-arrival in Malta and since), learning about how individuals may be best supported educationally and pastorally; ii) understand individual aspirations and what is beneficial, particularly in relation to education and wider college activities, to enable aspirations to be transformed into reality.

### **1.18 Method**

I decided to further explore the experiences, and look into six individual life stories of MCAST asylum migrant students by offering them spaces both communally and individually to reflect and share their experiences and aspirations. As Wright Mills aptly suggested in his 'Sociological Imagination': "...we do not know much about man, and ..... all the knowledge we do have does not entirely remove the element of mystery that surrounds the variety as it is revealed in history and biography" (1959: 164).

My present administrative role at MCAST, that of director responsible for the provision of support services together with other previous roles specifically those of career guidance officer and counsellor, helped in sensitizing me to this asylum seekers' reality and their distinct needs. I wanted to listen to the asylum seekers' personal experiences to enable me to better understand their background and to work closely with the research participants and with their lecturers towards a better understanding of their perceptions and experiences. Starting with their Past experiences of leaving their home country, I sought through their narrations to understand and gain insight into their roots. This knowledge helped me in understanding their Present, which embodied their experiences since their arrival in Malta. It was interesting to explore the strategies adopted by the asylum students to pursue their education and hold on to their career aspirations. I wanted to study distinct and common characteristics in their histories, present situations and their future aspirations in an attempt to go behind events and to make orderly sense of them in an effort to answer the question 'Where are we going?' (Wright Mills, 1959: 153). Furthermore, identifying the challenges faced by asylum students during their learning journey would largely help in targeting support strategies in the right direction as well as sensitising lecturers and other professionals involved in the learning process of the migrants' needs. Additionally, I wanted to develop a critical engagement with the asylum students' perspectives of how the college can further support its learners and work in partnership to facilitate their integration in the college learning community. I wanted them to feel supported and empowered to lead an active participatory college life where they feel

that they truly belong. *“Integration processes are understood as being interactive and mutually created by both the actions and efforts of migrants themselves, as well as the legal, economic and social conditions they meet in the new society”* (Heckmann & Likien-Klasen, 2013: 1, as cited in Oliver, 2016: 2). It is understood that the integration and civic experiences at college would eventually lead to integration in the Maltese society.

In view of the presented topic of inquiry, the critical discussion on integration and my personal and professional experience, I identified the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences faced by learners, who arrive as asylum seekers in Malta, in feeling part of Maltese society and, in particular, of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) learning community?
2. According to these students’ perceptions, how might their experiences affect their aspirations?
3. How can MCAST, with its civic role, improve the provision of support for these learners’ educational experiences at the College?

## **1.19 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the context pertaining to this study, which is asylum migrants and the College itself – The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology. I presented the topic of inquiry and purpose of the research. I also discussed in depth relevant concepts, significant background and terminology. In the next chapter, I critically analyse the concept of integration and discuss several theories which provide the foundation to my research study. For principal themes that emerged during the research process, I turned to the literature, which helped me to move forward in my study. I begin with a critical discussion on integration drawing on relevant migration theories as the initial point of the literature inquiry. Focusing on the research participants’ Past, I look into political and economic theories. Multiculturalism concepts including Assimilation and Integration are discussed in the context of the Present together with Galtung’s and Maslow’s conceptualisation of human needs. Migrants’ responses to their personal life experiences including the psychological aspect feature in the reflection and analysis of participants’ present circumstances. The Future incorporates the Educational component that includes Aspirations, Translanguaging, Student Retention and A Way Forward.

## Chapter Two - Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

Several studies have been carried out on migrant students of compulsory school age in Malta (e.g. Bartolo & Symth, 2009; Calleja, Cauchi & Grech, 2010) and abroad (e.g. Candappa, 2000; Remsbery, 2003; Hopkins & Hill, 2008; NESSE, 2008). Other studies focused specifically on migrants in further and higher education (e.g. Matthews, 2008; Morris, 2013; Spiteri, 2014; Hughes & Oliver, 2018; Aerne & Bonoli, 2021). The primary purpose of this research study was to discover how vocational colleges like the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) can effectively support migrants of asylum background in their integration in the college as well as in the host country.

*“Vocational training and further education are thus usually considered as key aspects of integration to the extent that such measures foster employability either in general terms or through enhancement of specific language or work skills” (Ager & Strang, 2008:171).*

Through this quote, the role and contribution of vocational education to the integration process of migrant learners is being highlighted. Furthermore, *“full citizenship is an essential prerequisite for integration, and full participation in the civic life”* (Duke et al., 1999 as cited in Ager and Strang, 2008:174). Hence, one can acknowledge the civic role colleges can play in providing a place of contact where asylum migrant learners meet members of the local host community.

The findings of this study are built qualitatively upon the experiences and perspectives of migrant students. This is accomplished by pointedly narrowing the field of inquiry to the research participants, who are six migrant students. Adopting an iterative approach, the literature was concurrently reviewed with the process of data collection and the evolution of the research study.

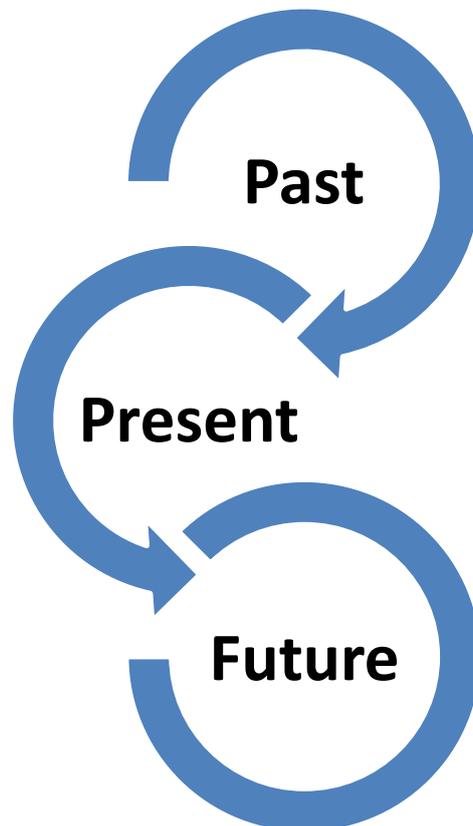
Therefore, in this chapter, I will be discussing literature relevant to the current study, namely the theoretical underpinnings of the integration of migrant students in vocational education. The theories were grouped in three sections with an introduction on migration theories and an academic overview of integration. Although, I do acknowledge that there is an element of

overlap between the three sections and theories being presented and the order follows a linear structure devised for the written thesis rather than as a multi-dimensional intersecting reality.

Figure 2 depicts the temporal aspect of asylum migrants' Past, Present and Future:

1. **The Past** - The social, economic, political and environmental theories of migration;
2. **The Present** - The psychological aspect of migration which includes Identity, Galtung's Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Responses – willpower and resiliency;
3. **The Future** - The educational aspect of migration – aspirations and the theory of survival of minority students in college.

**Figure 2. Temporal Aspect of my Theoretical Outlook**



My professional experience and awareness on this matter influenced my perspective on and my interest in the integration of migrant students. As an insider, my perspective may contrast considerably with that of other citizens who may, for example, perceive migrants as competitors for jobs and excessive users of social services. This perception could be the basis for the hostile attitude certain indigenous people show towards migrants.

*“Almost everywhere indigenous people are seen as the social norm and migrant peoples as exceptions, leading to social, cultural and political practices that draw fundamental lines of difference between people already established in a country or region and the new comers”* (Benhabib et al., 2007 as cited in Cox and Geisen, 2014: 159).

This leads Morrice to suggest that, *“Understanding the experience of migrants is multi-layered and cannot be fully comprehended without reference to the deep-rooted material such as the inequalities of globalisation and involuntary migration and the associated policy discourses”* (2013: 654).

Undoubtedly, the complexity of migration is there with all its effects and intricacies among all actors involved.

## **2.2 The Concept of Integration**

An aspect related to migration which merits specific attention, particularly for this study, is the concept of integration. It refers to the processes of receiving new individuals into societies' institutions and relationships. In the past these processes were seen as crucial elements to maintain social order and stability among society as a whole (Heckmann & Luken-Klasen, 2013). In this section I am going through some relevant statements, definitions and views on immigrant integration. Robinson (1998:118) has suggested that *“Integration is a chaotic concept; a word used by many but understood differently by most. The concept is individualised, contested and contextual.”*

Stating that the concept is complex, Robinson sees little prospect for a unifying definition. This is a sentiment echoed by Castles et al. as cited in Ager & Strang (2008:167): *“There is no single generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration. The concept continues to be controversial and hotly debated”* (Castles et al., 2001:12).

According to Favell, *“Integration is a Durkheimian theoretical, functionalist concept which cannot be used outside this particular theoretical framework. It implies a bounded system; internal differentiation, order, and abstracted values, specific to that system, internal progressive, organic complexity, leading to increased differentiation of the individual, as an autonomous subject”* (Favell, 2019: 2/3). Favell confirms integration's complexity and at the same time provided an exposition of the concept.

Interestingly, Willem Schinkel (2018) provides a controversial view of the concept of immigrant integration. He claims that his view is based on his research analysis of immigrant integration in Western Europe, specifically The Netherlands, which ‘measure’ integration. Schinkel states that the integration theory has weaknesses and although these could possibly be mended, the theory’s foundational principles are unsound and harmful. He therefore recommends that the concept should be immediately discarded (Schinkel, 2018). Adrian Favell, who to a great extent shares Schinkel’s position on integration theory, questions how, after the immigrant integration critique, society can move forward. He suggests that actually what is at stake are much broader issues around the production and reproduction of global inequalities. “*Historians will all tell us that ‘national integration’ never really happened as it was ‘imagined’; and if it did it was only ever in the context of (global) industrialisation and colonial exploitation*” (Favell, 2019:4).

I hold Favell’s view on global inequalities as very relevant and central to the concept of immigrants’ integration. Furthermore, in his observations and analysis on the assumed functions of immigrant integration research, Schinkel states that “..... *it plays a crucial role in the problematization of migrant others*” and “*it is part of the contingent way in which immigrant integration sustains a classed and raced form of dominance that is less precisely called ‘native’ or even ‘nativist’ than ‘white’*” (as cited in Penninx, 2019: 2). Fran Meissner (2019) also claims that integration research can contribute to harmful ‘otherings’ and is often based on a problematic conception of society. Moreover, according to Penninx, Schinkel’s critique conflates the use of integration concepts in integration policies with integration as it is used in research. This brings us to the question as to how different political and social actors perceive and frame immigrant integration (Penninx, 2019). According to Wynter, “..... *if we want to learn more, the only way is to listen to voices of those who, by fate or fortune, have had to liberate themselves from that position*” (2015: 20).

This is confirmed by Schinkel’s words: “*In order to be attuned to this violence, many of us must learn to learn, by bringing in voices that tend to be little heard in migration studies*” (2019: 8). In this way, giving voice and listening to the migrants themselves can shed interesting light on the concept of immigrant integration.

At this point one needs to look into defining migration. A number of definitions do prevail in the literature, four of which are outlined as follows: “*The inclusion [of individual actors] in*

*already existing social systems*” (Esser, 2004: 46). “A generations lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institutions, relations and statuses of the receiving society” (Heckmann, 2006: 18). Referring to the same term, one can notice its complexity. “The problem of migrant assimilation refers to more (and not less) than the conditions under which they succeed or fail to fulfil the conditions of participation in social systems” (Bommes, 2012: 113). Here, instead of ‘integration’ Bommes is using the term ‘assimilation’ and stated upfront that the assimilation of migrants is a problem. “Processes of interaction between migrants and the individuals and institution of the receiving society that facilitate economic, social, cultural and civic participation and an inclusive sense of belonging at the national and local level” (Spencer, 2011: 203). I hold the latter definition of integration by Spencer as generic and comprehensive.

Whilst through these definitions, one can notice the complexity of integration, I am more inclined to support Spencer’s as it gives the most comprehensive exposition of the concept. It is however interesting to point out that the notion of society is important as it is central in all these definitions. Furthermore, processes are seen as being interactive and mutually created by both efforts and actions of migrants themselves together with the legal, economic and social conditions (Heckmann & Luken-Klasen, 2013: 1). The prevalence and extent of integration can be measured by the level of parity or equality of outcomes with the inhabitants of the receiving society.

Ager & Strang (2004: 5), as cited in Oliver (2016), identify three indicators for the actuality of migrants’ integration. These are when public outcomes are achieved within employment, housing, education, health etc. like the inhabitants of the receiving country; when they are socially connected with members of the host community and with relevant services and functions of the state; and when they acquire sufficient linguistic competence and cultural knowledge as well as a sense of security and stability to actively join in that society with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship. Ager & Strang (2008) continue by suggesting that integration processes occur in multiple domains and can be conceptualised in terms of means and markers (employment, housing, education and health); facilitators (language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability); social connections (bridges, bonds and links); and foundations (rights and citizenship).

Integration may be effected by what Spencer & Charsley (2016) term ‘effectors’. These refer to facilitators and barriers of various forms that may help or hinder the process of integration.

The focus on effectors helps recognise the interplay of the different domains and stops the focus being entirely on the individual at the exclusion of the structural barriers they may face (Spencer & Charsley, 2016).

The term ‘Assimilation’ is a concept that many policies and governments use to denote their aspirations for the relationship of migrants in the host community. Although it may be comprehended as positive and beneficial for migrants, it refers to conformity to the existing cultural norms which over time become indistinguishable from native-born citizens. This can manifest itself in various aspects such as speech, dress, leisure activities, cuisine, family size and identities (Kymlicka, 2001: 153). Therefore, an assimilation policy tends to emphasize a homogeneous national identity and, to a certain extent, it also shifts full responsibility on newly arriving migrants during their transitory period from the sending to the receiving country, to do the adapting and assimilating, and not on the indigenous group. According to Kymlicka (2012: 65), those who do not belong to the privileged group have two choices – they can either assimilate by suppressing their identities or else become excluded. Ovando defines assimilation as a “*voluntary or involuntary process by which individuals or groups completely take on the traits of another culture, leaving their original culture and linguistic identities behind*” (2008: 43).

There are people who out of their own volition assimilate without encountering any personal difficulties, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. It is however with the support of a limited structure that migrants slowly get to know about everyday life and at times, basic things that one needs to know in order to be able to settle down and carry on with host country cultural practices, such as norms, values, and customs. Moreover, others may feel the pressure to assimilate despite their wishes not to in order to maintain their individuality. Bagby, (2009: 474) believes that there still remains a general lay theory that migrants and their children will inevitably assimilate with the host country practices and eventually move away from their own traditional culture, as they become integrated into the host country’s socioeconomic life.

Over time host countries become accustomed to the idea that their migrants might settle permanently and that it is acceptable to tolerate the differences. They start to pursue what Cohen (2006: 6) refers to as the rather more nebulous goals of ‘*multiculturalism*’, ‘*pluralism*’, or ‘*rainbow nationhood*’. In the Maltese context, it may be difficult for migrants to assimilate

themselves in the manner pointed out by these theorists since the Maltese language is widely spoken and this would serve as a barrier to nonmaltese speaking migrants. This is particularly applicable to first generation migrants as when their children are brought up in Malta, this barrier may be felt less as they grow similar to the Maltese within the various social institutions.

*“Migration scholars began to examine processes of settlement with reference to multiculturalism and analyse the extent to which groups can exist side by side whilst retaining some elements of their distinct cultures, sharing the same rights and responsibilities and critically examine multiculturalism in identity, social cohesion and conflict” (O’Reilly, 2015: 6).*

Some social groups and individuals often feel marginalised because although, in theory, every citizen is equal, citizenship as conceived by the hegemonic groups is never universally fair and just. This assimilationist stance proposes a form of universal citizenship based on the assertion that all individuals are born free and equal. Acknowledging that in an assimilationist policy, equality and sameness are interchangeable terms, the local state is oblivious to the structural inequalities that may result in discrimination or poverty and thus the state appears to be insensitive to the limited possibilities of success some people may have.

Other terms with less, or without theoretical baggage include ‘insertion’, ‘inclusion’ or ‘adaptation’. Integration policies tend to acknowledge multiculturalism which is a complex phenomenon that can be understood in a variety of ways and described as the *“response to a set of social and political circumstances”* (Kelly, 2002: 1). According to Hoffman & Graham (2006), it is debatable whether multiculturalism is a distinct ideology or a distinct strand in political theory or whether it is merely an application of more traditional political ideas and concepts to a new set of social circumstances. Political leaders see multiculturalism as an invidious and divisive approach to social and political integration or an attempt to achieve justice, equality and recognition within a diverse and ethnically plural society. It is argued that liberal individualist theories of justice are unable to provide the solidarity conditions that moral and political practices require. Thus, contemporary liberalism does not pay sufficient attention to social theory and the conditions of political community (Rawls, 1980: Nozick & Dworkin, 1983).

According to Taylor, (1989), out of this stalemate merged the sudden growth of interest in multiculturalism. Kymlicka (1989) attempted to put together the social thesis of communitarianism with a liberal egalitarian commitment to compensating individuals for disadvantages that are the result of brute luck or chance. Multiculturalism and its application in applied political theory had grown hugely particularly by the early part of the new century. Liberal theorists such as Barry (2000), critic of multiculturalism, did not reject the claims of groups but argue that these are best accommodated within the liberal theory of social and political rights. Such rights provide the sphere of personal control within which individuals can pursue their religious and cultural ends without interference from others. Liberals such as Barry also argue that individuals have to have real rights of exit so that groups cannot impose illiberal practices or unwanted cultural roles on individuals (Kelly, 2006: 11).

On the other hand, Kymlicka (1989) argues that integrated cultural groups equally deserve to be protected from the consequences of majority culture domination. They do not fall on the side of exclusive tastes, or sources of inequality, which can be laid at the choices of those who are made worse off relative to others as a result of cultural membership. However, this means that in spite of integration, cultural recognition can become an issue of distributive justice in societies where there is cultural pluralism and where there are already significant national minorities.

Nonetheless, it is noted that integration policies and practices tend to acknowledge multiculturalism which for Kelly “..... *is neutral in the way in which luck egalitarianism demands as it provides us with a reason to treat all extant societal cultures equally and protect them by means of compensation where necessary*” (Kelly, 2006: 17). Integration policies are therefore more attentive and open to issues related to citizenship; equal opportunities to education; employment (including with the civil service) and health; and to legal protection by an anti-discrimination law. This reflects Kymlicka’s argument on integration, where migrants are treated on equal terms as other citizens in attaining their life achievements, however migrants are duty bound as other citizens to obey laws and the cultural diversity that they choose to retain is supported rather than frowned upon. Hence, while integration tends to reflect a universal human rights attitude, it is by no means a straightforward feat (Kymlicka, 2001: 156). Furthermore, minority groups may have to go through a political struggle until they establish their right, for example in being allowed to wear the hijab and the burqa. Consequently, integration is a two-way process involving both the migrant and the host society where migrants are assisted and enabled to acquire the basic

knowledge of, inter alia, the host society's language which is essential to successful integration (Cholewinski, 2005: 713).

This highlights the facilitators' importance of the provision of language lessons to migrants in their integration processes so as to possibly widen their chances of embarking on educational training programmes of further and higher education alongside the importance of considering multi-lingual education resources. Hence,

*“to understand integration, it is important to recognise the full complexity of domains in which integration might occur, the non-linear and sometimes uneven nature of integration across those domains, the multiple actors involved, the multiple trajectories possible and the temporal and spatial angles”* (Oliver, 2016: 5).

I concur with Oliver's position on integration as the research participants' experiences support the development of understanding and not taking integration for granted. Furthermore, whilst acknowledging the importance of education in the integration process, attention must also be given to the other domains such as housing, health, employment and finance as they can all influence and leave their impact on the individual.

### **2.3 Theories of Human Migration**

Social scientists study international migration because it has the potential to change individuals and societies in diverse and interesting ways, the potential to exploit, to enrich, to bring about completion and to facilitate change. However, one can question those issues related to identity, belonging, social cohesion and divisiveness (O'Reilly, 2015: 25). International migration has increased significantly in recent decades and is in a state of constant flux in terms of shape, form, direction and content (Papasteragiadis, 2000). It is a normal feature of contemporary societies, a global phenomenon of flows and counter-flows attesting geographical fluidity rather than population shifts.

The economic theory is based on the behavioural assumptions that individuals migrate because it is in their benefit to do so. Hence the theoretical framework of migration studies addresses the factors determining the direction, size and composition of the migrant flow from the African continent to Europe; the adaptation process to the host country's cultural, political and economic characteristics which would lead to a successful assimilation, and the impact of immigration on the economics of the sending and the receiving countries.

It is interesting to note that according to Borjas (1989) no single unified theory of migration simultaneously addresses the three issues. This is likely to be because a number of theories or hypotheses have been developed to explore each migration as a human capital investment and hence imply that migration is more likely to bring higher returns and lower costs without concentrating on the past, present and future as presented in this work. Other theories explain “..... the ‘brain drain’ in terms of asymmetric information regarding the skill level of immigrants: the host country has more information about immigrant skills than the source country” (Kwok and Leland, 1982: 98). Additionally, “Some theories conjecture that the impact of migration on natives in the receiving country is likely to be small because migrants take, or have to take jobs that natives refuse to accept” (Piore, 1979: 568).

In summary, all these theories focus on extremely narrow topics within the economics of migration and may not even be logically consistent with each other. However, analytical developments make it likely that a comprehensive economic theory of migration can and will be developed. These models, based on the neoclassical principles of utility maximization for individuals and profit maximization for employers, have provided insightful interpretations of empirical observations.

Although as discussed above integration can take various forms and be interpreted differently, for the scope of this study I focus on the facet of feeling part of, full member in a society with all the rights and duties of local citizens. Acknowledging that within the integration process the players involved are unequal in terms of power, can create abusive situations for the migrants themselves. Integration is not a single process but takes place across economic, social cultural and political domains (Entzinger, 2000; Heckman et al., 2006). Moreover, for Warren (2006), migrants can be mediated by various factors including education. Hence education can be an effective tool in the integration process of migrants by preparing them for employment with the required knowledge and professional training in the specific field, making them no less than any other prospective employee.

## **2.4 The Past – Sociological**

### **2.4.1 Neoclassical Economic Theories**

Influenced by Ernest George, Ravenstein’s attempted to find laws of human behaviour through the observation of migration patterns. Economic theories hold favourable and

unfavourable economic conditions that serve to push and pull individuals in predictable directions. According to O'Reilly:

*“Push factors that compel people to leave their country of origin can therefore include political oppression, civil wars, poor living standards and low economic opportunities. ‘Pull’ factors, attracting migrants to a different place may include a demand for labour, the opportunity for higher living standards and also political freedom”* (2015: 3).

According to this rational choice model of human behaviour, individuals normally consider the advantages and disadvantages of various options before making their decisions (Ravenstein, 1989). Chiswick uses the economy of migration conceptual model to theoretical models against quantitative empirical data so as to address the question ‘*who moves and who does not*’ by comparing motives, ability and skills, that is, by looking at the supply side of migration. He concludes that all migrants tend “*on average, to be more able, ambitious, aggressive, entrepreneurial, healthier ..... than similar individuals who choose to remain in their place of origin*” (Chiswick 2008: 64).

Conclusively, holding a politically liberal view, the push/pull theories of migration postulate the notion that if left to its natural order of work, migration will be depending on the rational actions and choices of the individual. Consequently, the open migration market should see the poorer move to richer countries whilst those living in crowded areas move to less populated ones, achieving a natural equilibrium. Furthermore, motives that attract migrants, such as political stability and appealing economic conditions (pull factors), do encourage inward labour migration but can also change many migrant communities by becoming the focus of resentment and outright hostility, much of which would manifest itself in racism.

#### **2.4.2 New Economic and Dual/Segmented Labour Market Theories**

The dual/segmented labour market theories make reference to the dualistic or segmented nature of economics in the developed world. It is assumed that most of work in the primary labour market is secure, regular and well paid while the secondary labour market is insecure, temporary/seasonal work and is less well paid. However, as it often needs filling at short notice, it tends to be avoided by locals and attracts individuals from abroad, so much so that the dual/segmented labour market approach has been criticized for being one that is uncritical, simplistic and politically liberal. According to Gonzalez and Fernandez (2003:

46), liberal industrial economies are portrayed as having an “*insatiable thirst for cheap labour*” while migrants are free to exploit destinations for their own short-term gain. Philip Martin (2004: 99) states that push and pull factors are “*like battery poles; both are necessary to start a car or a migration stream. Once started, intervening variables such as networks influence who migrates to where.*” Furthermore, for Arango (2004: 23), the new economies of migration are little more than “*a critical sophisticated version of neoclassical theory*”. In the Maltese context, it may not always be the case that migrants are exploited, but this is a situation that could arise. Similarly, ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors are at play in the Maltese context: a chain effect may have a part to play since migrants may be advised to travel to Malta by other migrants who came before them.

### **2.4.3 World Systems Theory**

The Systems Theory views the world as a single capitalist system in which poorer nations in the periphery provide a constant supply of cheap labour to support the powerful and wealthy nations at the core of the system (Wallerstein, 1974 as cited in O’Reilly, 2015: 4). Referring to Marxist political economy, it highlights global inequalities and considers migration as a central feature contributing to the continuation of the system. This theory is not in opposition to the push/pull approach discussed earlier but injects a critical and global view to further explain the actions of individuals from a structural point of view. Migration here is an element in the domination of the third world and works hand in hand with military and economic control (Portes & Walton, 1981; Sassen, 1988). This approach attempts to explain why this was particularly prominent during the 1960s and 1970s when there was a lot of tension between the Soviet Union and the Western World. Gonzalez & Fernandez (2003) fear that world systems theory reifies the ‘agency’ of Third World elites whilst Faist (2000) points out the economic bias in world systems theory.

### **2.4.4 Migration Systems and Networks Theory**

The theories outlined earlier depict labour migration on a one-off move to a new destination. They offer somewhat simplistic explanations and favour either a structural or an action-centred approach. Castles & Miller (2009)

*“..... suggest that complexity is framed within migration systems or networks. The migration systems and networks theory acknowledges that moves tend to cluster, can be circular and take shape within wider contexts and systems. Understanding*

*migration processes involves moving out from the individual to the wider and interconnected sets of circumstances - the wider system or network within which an individual agent is located”* (Castles & Miller, as cited in O’Reilly, 2015: 5).

Practice stories go further than migration systems whilst providing the meta theoretical framework within which one can comprehend the production and reproduction of structures through actions and practices within communities and through networks.

#### **2.4.5 Migration Flows and Mobilities**

Recent scholars are developing new concepts and frameworks with which one could understand non-linear, circular and temporary flows whilst including diverse types of migrants such as the affluent ones and those seeking asylum as opposed to the linear and labour migration. Studies are thus examining the globalisation of migration inclusive of the analysis of the historical and global developments affecting or affected by the same globalisation (Massey et al., 1998).

Transnationalism is a relatively new concept and calls on researchers not to ignore things outside the state, and not to be ‘methodologically nationalist’ (Wimmer & Schiller, 2002). The concept of mobilities (Urry, 2007) injects the notion of flows and continual movement to migration studies and consequently posits a further challenge to the hitherto excessive attention paid to North America and Europe particularly as well as to the fixation on immigration. However, the vast majority never migrate even temporarily and so theorists are drawing attention to the existence of counter-flows to globalisation (Kivisto, 2001; Faist, 2000).

#### **2.4.6 A Unifying Migration Theory**

In ‘Worlds in Motion’, Douglas Massey (1998) and his colleagues evaluated and reviewed the vast theoretical work of international migration so as to understand the world’s main migration systems. Rather than attempting to devise an overarching theory of migration, Massey concluded that a synthesis of theoretical systems can provide an integrated approach to the study of international migration. A synthesis does not provide a structure for the study of social processes. In addition, the different systems separately employed and crucial elements such as culture and structuration processes can be ignored as a result (Morawaska, 2001). Such a synthesis can include serious contradictions, such as those between rational choice theory and world systems theory (Bakewell, 2010).

In view of this, Castles (2010) and Portes (2010) have argued that a search for a framework or unifying theory for migration scholars is unnecessary. Portes continues to point out that social theory in itself is adequate to understand social change without the need for a specific theoretical approach for migration. This is partly due to the fact that modern states in particular, are amply powerful to ensure that the induced change generated by migration does not challenge the core cultural and structural pillars of society (Portes, 2010: 1549).

Several theorists such as Goss and Lindquist (1995) and Moraswka (2001) have identified the key problem for coherent understanding of migration processes as being the inability to properly theorise the interaction between structure and agency rather than treat these separately. There are diverse attempts especially by Moraswka to present migration as a structured and structuring process (2001, 2009). It transpires that theories have tended to skirt around the problem of structure and agency, by paying either too little or too much attention to individual choices (Bakewell, 2010: 1670). Bakewell suggests that this approach will raise all sorts of challenges for methodology, yet is unable to fully explicate how this theoretical approach is operationalised in empirical work.

In her book 'International Migration and Social Theory', Karen O'Reilly (2012) draws her views from social theory for migration studies.

*"The meta theoretical framework outlined in this text is informed by strong structuration theory (Stones, 2005). The goal is to tell 'practice stories' of migration, that is, to describe some of the processes in a given migration in such a way as to respect the creative and processual nature of social life and to reveal the structuration processes involved as social life unfolds"* (O'Reilly, 2012: 7).

In this context, structuration theory was a social theory of practice proposed by Giddens (1984). He insisted that social life is neither determined by social structures nor the outcome of individual actions. Instead, social structures limit what people can and cannot do, or what they even try or wish to do, however agents do have some free will, so much so that the very social structures that enable or constrain in some situations, are made or remade by individuals in the process of their acting or their agency.

For Giddens, agency and structure are interrelated and always interdependent. Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1990) argued that one's tastes and preferences, choices, desires and actions cannot be separated from structural constraints, because people internalise what is possible

for them. He proposes the concept of practice as a way of thinking through these same processes that Giddens (1984) refers to as structuration, that is, the making and acting out of daily life. The practice of social life draws on the concept of habitus, “*which very crudely refers to the dispositions, habits, ways of doing things, of thinking, and of seeing the work that individuals acquire singularly and in groups, as they travel through life*” (O’Reilly, 2012: 8).

In fact, social beings are always in a practical relationship with the world and practise our reasonable and logical adjustments to the future rather than rational calculations of identifiable plans. However, Stones (2005) has developed a stronger version of structuration theory that builds on the work of Giddens. Stones draws attention to the situational knowledge that actors have about the conditions in which they find themselves at any given time. Stones further emphasizes the general nature of habitus, which he sometimes calls general dispositions, indicating that they are not tied or expressly linked to specific situations but have to adapt to its contingencies. These concepts enable a closer examination of how structure and agency combine dynamically in producing actions such as migration (O’Reilly et al., 2014).

According to Emirabayer & Mische (1998), individuals retain the ability to imagine different ways of living, and different ways of doing things, even if these sometimes seem impossible. It is this distinctive aspect of human agency that gives actions the power to change things. O’Reilly uses insights from Lave & Wenger’s (1991) description of communities of practice and Wenger’s (1998) concept of situated learning. Communities of practice are any social group that comes together and has to work out how to get on together such as families, work mates, social clubs and partnerships. It is through the communities of practice that individuals learn what the rules of ‘the game’ are and how much we have to adhere to them. Hence it is from people with whom we relate that we get fresh ideas about how things might be different and who has the power to change what. Lave & Wegner as cited in O’Reilly (2015: 31) call this ‘*situated learning.*’

Thus, for O’Reilly contemporary migration theories and perspectives acknowledge the existence of diverse flows and counter-flows. They analyse migration within wider systems and networks, are able to theorise processes, movements and mobilities rather than simply acts and effects, and are more likely than in the past to consider transnational phenomena. There have been attempts to contrast broad-brush theories or a synthesis of approaches for a

more unified approach to migration. The most comprehensive theoretical framework is the macro-theoretical framework of practice theory with the telling of practice stories for migration. Furthermore, to understand the structuration processes involved in migration both studies of broad scope, macro, historical studies, and close, intimate studies of daily life are required. Thus, these approaches cannot be accounted for separately but need to be examined together (O'Reilly, 2015).

#### **2.4.7 Political theories**

The just treatment of cultural groups, according to Kymlicka (1989), requires both a measure of self-government rights and also measures to compensate minority cultures that are disadvantaged by the dominant societal culture of the host community. This can be transformed by injecting initiatives that sustain cultural practices and institutions. These could include differential education arrangements or the protection of minority languages through community radio and/or television stations. Also, these can be claimed by minority cultural communities as a matter of social justice and equity treatment rather than as a matter of special treatment. Kymlicka argues that through such initiatives, multiculturalism and liberalism would prevail. He attempts to reinforce his case by stating that inequalities that can be traced to cultural membership are not an issue of exclusive choice but are rather unchosen circumstances for which one can claim compensation. The argument is that culture falls on the side of those things such as endowment deficits for which one can justly claim compensation - or a share of resources that departs from strict ambition-sensitive egalitarianism. For Kymlicka, culture in the relevant sense is societal culture, that is, a shared set of practices and beliefs, usually accompanied by a distinct language, which provides the contexts within which individuals make choices about meaningful lives. He states that,

*“The sort of culture that I will focus on however, is a societal culture – that is a culture which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres. These cultures tend to be territorially concentrated and based on a shared language”* (Kymlicka, 1995: 76).

Cultures are not simply life options that individuals can choose within the opportunity set determined by our share of resources. They are more properly comprehended as contexts of choice. They provide a range of meaningful ways of life as emphasised by Kymlicka. Our

life choices therefore take place against our specific background of societal cultures where decisions are taken on which forms of life have value and meaning. Without the context of cultures, it would not be meaningful for individuals to choose their own conception of the good life. Hence liberal choice requires a good cultural recognition. That is the reason why, Kymlicka argues, an adequate liberal egalitarianism must accommodate cultural recognition as a matter of justice.

Likewise, cultures are not chosen and neither are they presented as a choice. In fact, we will always find ourselves in a culture, even if it is the societal culture of western liberal democracy. Cultures also provide the context within which one makes meaningful choices about the best form of life. According to Kelly:

*“Where cultural diversity is a fact, we find that members of cultural groups are deeply attached to their cultural group and cannot without great difficulty detach themselves from their own culture..... The final reason why respect for culture is a matter of justice and not merely a ground for coercive integration is that the liberal state is supposed to be neutral between conceptions of the good life and the contexts within which the good life is to be found ..... Multiculturalism is neutral in the way in which luck egalitarianism demands as it provides with a reason to treat all extant societal cultures equally and protect individuals by means of compensation where necessary. The argument for differential rights for migrants and national minorities is complex, but part of the differentiation is based on the idea that migrant groups choose to immigrate into a host society, consequently they must bear some of the burdens of integration, such as loss of their language and the recognition and protection of cultural and religious practices” (Kelly, 2006: 16-17).*

For Carens (2002), Parekh’s theory embraces what liberalism fails to take seriously, namely the important political function of associations and groups in creating moral and political goods, adding on the ‘*cultural blindness*’ or false neutrality of liberal norms of justice and inclusion. The argument put forward by multiculturalist critics is that liberal norms of inclusion are already culturally biased in the sense that they prescribe ‘equality of opportunity’ in terms of having and exercising certain primary goods. The needs, whatever else it is that one wants, or values like civil and political rights, may be the minimum

conditions of self-respect and some level of economic well-being (Kelly, 2002). The privileging of liberal freedoms over cultural diversity can in no way be justified on the argument of '*this is how we liberals do things around here.*' Furthermore, in Caren's view, Parekh forcefully reaffirms the importance of traditional cultural communities based on ethnicity and religious difference. Parekh's 'operative public values' of a society refer to the public moral and political rules that bind a particular group of people into a common society. These constitute the overlapping common bonds of the various groups, classes and interests that make up a political society. They are, in effect, '*how we do things around here*', the unwritten terms of a common practice within which various particular forms of life are pursued and reconciled. They constitute and symbolise a shared form of public life. Parekh clearly suggests that we should turn to these '*operative public values*' as the means of establishing and negotiating multicultural inclusion. '*Operative public values*' are not static and Parekh emphasises that it is through dialogue that minority groups should convince the wider society about their practices and values. There is no other perspective from which one can construct a better way of dealing with group recognition and multiculturalism. It is evident that the pluralist legacy for multiculturalism is more apparent and evident in Parekh's theory than in Kymlicka's.

Multiculturalism and its circumstances arose because states and countries started losing their homogeneity and the resurgent statism of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century had masked the main issues that pluralist thinkers had sought to address, namely representation and self-determination in a community of communities. Multiculturalism also incorporates one of the difficulties that earlier forms of pluralism were never able to satisfactorily address. This concerns the basic respect of individual rights and the criteria for accommodating and arbitrating between conflicting associations.

This leads us to the question of who decides the appropriate terms of association and the limits of group autonomy. Furthermore, the argument bears the questions: who is going to regulate and what are the origins of the norms that regulate intergroup cooperation and accommodation? The pluralist discourse of self-governance seeks to provide a political answer to the question of the source of authoritative norms, but in so doing it has to address the problems of unequal bargaining power, precisely the issue Parekh faces in appealing to the operative public values of a society.

*“Utilitarianism sees the good life as comprising of one overriding duty, namely the obligation to maximise the greatest happiness of the greatest number. The intuitionists philosophers, such as H.A. Prichard (1949) and W.D. Ross (1930), amongst others, argued that this reduced all moral questions to the technical questions about welfare maximisation ..... The idea that ethical truth is embodied in diversity and not merely the practices of a particular universal moral culture has reinforced the multiculturalist aspiration to preserve the moral ecology of the human species” (Kelly, 2006: 32-34).*

Ethical pluralism is expected to offer a way of defending norms of inclusion that are not merely a function of power. The appeal to the operative public values of the host community in a multicultural society seems to recognise this problem as it allows that in the end the initiative is in the hands of the minority group to integrate into the practices and values of the majority. A case in point is that Muslims hosted in Europe are going to get used to the secularisation, satire and creed challenges posited by the present westernised Europe.

In view of the above discussion, Parekh’s theory could be seen as the latest restatement of the political theory in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, bringing forward themes with which it was preoccupied a century ago, by trying to develop a distinctively political response to the problem of multicultural inclusion. On the other hand, Kymlicka views multiculturalism as an application of liberalism and is applying some of the insights of liberal theories of justice to a new problem of unequal treatment. Critics of liberal multiculturalism, such as Barry (2000), argue that in the choice between equality and cultural recognition, liberal equality will always win out, so the appeal to culture does not seriously work. Hence it can be said that multiculturalism is the most recent variant of what looks like a perennial problem in political theory and its success or failure as a viable political theory will depend upon its ability to address this complex legacy.

Furthermore, multiculturalism, as seen in the previous section, seeks to appeal to a respect for individual rights. This implies that individuals adopt an identity that makes them amenable to reaching out to people from different cultures.

## 2.5 Present - Psychological

### 2.5.1 Identity

Identity is a cyclical process constituted by three factors: Knowing (Self-knowledge - Who am I?), Claiming (Who are they?) and Recognising (What is our relationship?) focusing on processes of Socialisation, Communication and Social Influence (Xenia Chryssochoou, 2003). Identity encapsulates simultaneously our self-perception and of the world in which we live. In this capacity it acts as an organising principle of symbolic processes and represents the relationship between cognitive organisations and social relationships (Doise, 1990). For migrants the cyclical process of identity can be problematic because of the socialisation and social relationships, communication and other social influence aspects.

Thus, identity is associated with social processes that are constantly evolving within the context of people's social interaction with one another. Identity is viewed as being subject to constant redefinition in view of emerging social, political and cultural processes and change (Hardy & Philips, 1999). The '*Who am I?*' question is particularly relevant to the manner in which individuals perceive themselves. The cultural construction of self may indicate as having what Malhi Boon & Rogers (2009: 261) described as '*a visible minority identity*' since the individual appearance might stand out in certain social contexts.

*“Taken overall, this appears to be consonant with a movement away from an ethnocentric worldview where the construction of identity requires the summoning of differences, the relativisation of the self as against the other imagined as separate, outside—and perhaps also as marginal, inferior and dangerous”* (Kennedy & Danks, 2001: 3).

However, contrary to this, the more ethno-relative worldview that migrants are adopting when experiencing aspects of their culture (particularly language) in the context of the host country cultures, so that all are given the mutual recognition and attributed equal importance as compared to others (Bennett, 1986, 1993, 2004), just points to their willingness to form part of different societies without abandoning their own identification with any of the host country citizens. Adopting such a worldview also acts to prevent them from experiencing over-reliance on support from people with similar cultural backgrounds, possibly bringing about alienation and isolation of the group that is thereby formed as the end result (Van Ngo, 2009).

*“The adoption of an identity that serves to transcend linguistic, national, or physical barriers can also be described in terms of hybridity. Hybrid or transnational identities, which allow migrants to interact and to be accepted in two (or more) cultures, allow aspects of different cultures assumed or imposed hierarchy. It is associated with social processes that are constantly evolving within the context of people’s social interaction with one another”* (Bhabha, 2004: 5).

According to Brah (2001), identities are not static, since they are constantly fluid and evolving. This fluidity enables migrants to form part (or to perceive themselves as forming part) of different cultural groups since they are able to correspond and influence the people with whom they interact. As they get familiar with others and come to be known by others as a result, they can thereby develop new forms of agency and develop further the language that they use to communicate their realities, even though alienation, exclusion and possibly even racially motivated violence can characterise inter-cultural encounters (Anthias, 2001: 631).

*“What remains certain, nonetheless, is that few of the world’s cultures over time, if any, singularly celebrate themselves, as all in the context of different political, social, cultural, and natural environments, are influenced by ‘the real phenomena of individuals interacting with one another”* (Sahlins, 1976: 95).

Within some contexts, however, the plurality of cultures appears to be imbued more readily in people’s everyday lives than may be immediately apparent in others. A case in point is that in certain African countries such as Nigeria, there are so many different tribal connections between different people that it is impossible to think of the country as a singular land in the same way that one could think of Malta as a single entity since Malta is relatively more ethnically homogenous.

However migrants are leaving their impact on the Maltese cultural context and the migration experience in itself implies that even though some of the participants might have adopted a hybrid identity (no longer seeing themselves as they were in Africa, yet are still aware that they are not Europeans but living in a Europe that they hardly know), the way they have negotiated complex and unfamiliar contexts and surroundings, might have involved their engaging in interpersonal relationships that they made meaningful (Walsh & Banaji, 1997).

### 2.5.2 Place-Identity

Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff (1983: 60) developed the original concept of ‘place-identity’ and defined it as *“a potpourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about specific physical settings as well as types of settings.”*

I concur with Kirkwood et al.’s view of place-identity when stating that:

*“In this regard they saw it primarily as a cognitive concept that was a ‘sub-structure of the self-identity’ (p.59) and worked to define a person’s broader identity through their relationships with place. Dixon & Durrheim (2000) critiqued this notion, holding that it ignored the rhetorical functions, discursive actions and political dimensions related to notions of place, and further developed the concept to address the relationships between notions of identity and the regulation of space. They based their argument on taking a discursive approach to place-identity by facilitating an understanding of the way that notions of place feed into notions of identity, as well as highlighting the way in which place-identity is social in origin, being co-constructed with others, and that these identities are practices that have individual functions” (Kirkwood et al., 2013: 2).*

Dixon (2001) developed this idea further and stated that *“The history of collective relations in many societies is, at least in part, a history of struggles over geography”* (p. 600).

In this context, Durrheim & Dixon (2005) illustrated how particular constructions of place could function to justify continued segregation in the context of official desegregation in South Africa. More recent studies have applied the concept of place-identity to further explore the way that constructions of place function to regulate social relations or reinforce notions of belonging (such as Bowskill, Lyons & Cole, 2007; Hugh-Jones & Mandill, 2009; McKinlay & McVittie, 2007).

Migrants are a group whose very identity and right to remain at the host country depend on constructions of place (such as Capdevila & Callaghan, 2008; Every, 2008; Every & Augoustinos, 2007; 2008a; 2008b; Lynn & Lea, 2003). Constructions of place and identity can work together to legitimise or criticize people’s presence in the specific country. Particular constructions of place could achieve this presence justification through

emphasizing a particular frame of reference such as in terms of economics or danger. This implies legitimate or illegitimate identities such as *'economic'* or *'genuine'* migrants.

*“Furthermore, particular constructions of place could be constitutive of people’s identities in the sense that portraying someone’s country of origin as a place of danger functions to construct them as a genuine refugee. Places of origin and places of residence can be mutually constitutive of each other (so that portraying a country of origin as ‘dangerous’ reinforces the host society as a place of safety, thereby justifying migrants’ presence”* (Kirkwood et al., 2012: 12).

Furthermore, people’s presence can be legitimised or delegitimised through the exposure of particular constructions of place that are either compatible or incompatible with specific identity categories. This shows the direct relationships between the notions of place and identity in relation to social regulation and movement across boundaries with political implications for action and the constitution of communities.

Constructing the host society as quite problem free and the migrants’ country of origin as full of problems or dangers, works in favour of constituting and contributing to their own identity as legitimate refugees. Constructing their situation through this approach may also contribute to portray themselves as having a legitimate place in the host society and having a sense of agency (such as Colic-Peisker, 2005; Verkuyten, 2005). As illustrated by Hugh-Jones & Mandill (2009), such constructions can function to minimise the existence of problems that people may confront.

However, in order to better understand migrants’ experiences, Clarke & Garner (2005), state that for the established and indigenous people, migration often leads to their being confronted by perceived ‘differences’ of migrant peoples, resulting in perceived greater competition in labour markets, for housing, education, or social benefits. This perception could be the basis of the hostile attitude certain indigenous people show towards migrants.

In a nutshell, the theory on social regulation of space and belonging through the ways in which constructions of place can constitute identities in specific ways, make particular types of identities legitimate or illegitimate (Kirkwood et al., 2012: 13). This mutually constitutive relationship between identity and place, the ways that migrants work together to justify or discredit the presence of certain groups or individuals, is important for understanding the

need of social relationships and the effect of movement of people both internationally and at the community level.

### **2.5.3 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

A theory which I found highly relevant to the study of the integration of migrants in further and higher vocational education is Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation, commonly known as hierarchy of needs. This hierarchical approach to Human Motivation theory had great influence on the field of psychology including the subfields of personality, social psychology, developmental psychology, psychopathology, and organizational behaviour, and it continues to be cited widely in textbooks (for example Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008; Myers, 2009; Nairne, 2003). Besides the hierarchy of basic needs, Maslow also proposed the hierarchy of cognitive needs, where he placed two needs, the need to know and the need to understand. With these two hierarchies, Maslow postulated a comprehensive outline of what humans need if they are to grow up to be healthy, happy and whole (Sosteric, 2002). Acquiring an understanding of the evolved motivational systems and their dynamic connection to environmental opportunities can be used to enhance human creativity, productivity, kindness and happiness (Kenrick et al., 2011: 3).

Maslow theorised that a person could not recognise or pursue the next higher need in the hierarchy until their currently recognised need is substantially or completely satisfied, a concept called prepotency. According to his original theory, Maslow suggests five classes of needs, hierarchically organised. Physiological and deficiency needs are on the basis followed by safety leading to, belongingness, esteem and self-actualisation needs.

According to Mathes (1981), each level is proponent to the next higher level and thus physiological needs must receive sufficient satisfaction before security needs emerge and so forth. In his theory, Maslow suggests that early in life one should establish a basis for physiological survival and once the basic physiological needs are met, safety needs become the next priority, and once these are accomplished one should seek friends, followed by achievement and finally self-actualisation. Sosteric emphasised the importance of meeting the basic needs and argued that *"completely meeting these needs is the only way to ensure a physical mind and body healthy enough to unproblematically align and connect"* (2020: 5).

Whilst acknowledging the importance of providing every individual with the opportunity to reach a state of a healthy mind and body to connect and even the state of self-actualisation and

transcendence, one can never assume that the very basic needs were/are met. These needs are both physiological and psychological and people hailing from any culture have these needs irrespective of their country of origin, meaning that these needs are universal.

Referring to our multidimensional need to align and connect with both our inner and outer selves, Sosteric (2020) emphasises the importance of being in tune with ourselves and with others. Our biological, psychological, emotional and spiritual inner beings constitute the inner self whilst the outer self emerges from our connections with various key groups in our lives, such as family, friends, community, nation, our ancestors and even the entire cosmos. Inner and outer connection are required if we are to grow up healthy and achieve our full potential.

An amendment on Maslow's theory, Table 9, is that on self-esteem and esteem from others. In view of rights and justice everybody deserves respect and everybody wants to be respected at least by those we respect. This leads to the individual's self-confidence, self-worth, strength, capability and adequacy as being useful and necessary in the world. Thwarting of these needs produces feelings of inferiority, of weakness and of helplessness (Maslow, 1987: 21). Adults usually realize their safety needs during chaotic and emergency situations. However, one has to contextualise these theoretical insights in the lives of migrants in Malta.

During their journey from their birth country, migrants may experience dangerous situations which would impinge on their physical and psychological state. Once asylum migrants arrive in Malta, they are provided with medical health services and with accommodation facilities either at the enforced reception centres or else at the open centres, depending on the case. One can argue that asylum migrants are provided with the very basic needs of food, shelter, water and a monetary allowance together with mobile cards to communicate with their family members at their home country. This indicates that Maslow's deficiency needs of Biological and Physiological and of Safety may be partially met. However, some who may have been in reception centres imply that very few further needs would be effectively met beyond the level of Maslow's deficiency needs. These needs can include the Belongingness, Self-Esteem, Cognitive and Aesthetic needs. The self-esteem of human beings depends on the level of belongingness, desire accomplishments, adequacy, aptitude and confidence. If the migrant students experience challenges in integrating themselves with their peers of further and higher education colleges, it is possible that they experience loneliness that could indicate that their social needs for outer self-connectedness are not being met. It is also possible that they go through an experiential crisis since they will not be able to see clearly a long-term

purpose for their studies or they will be insecure about whether they could complete their training programme. They may fear being deported or they may feel insecure if they do not know enough English to follow the training programme successfully. Competence needs follow safety needs and come before the needs for love and belongingness. Competence motivation developed by White (1959) emphasises the need we all have at certain stages in our growth to master certain skills and we work on this in quite an obsessive and resilient way until we achieve it. From human experiences we all have this need and strive to do something well in life. It is all about mastery and it is as real and important as any other basic need. The concept of competence in relation to mental health has been discussed by Smith (1974: 141):

*“Human ineffectiveness or fulfilment cannot be fully conceived or dealt with as a property of the isolated individual. It is rather a characteristic of behaviour that a person shows as a participant in the small interpersonal systems that frame their daily life.”*

According to Maslow (1968; 1973), a healthy personality paves way to the development of autonomy which would be the result of experiencing success in coping behaviour including mastery and competence. This human state is associated with the self-actualisation stage of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Such state includes freeing oneself of surrounding influences. This state may lead to the following one, that of Transcendence. A transcended individual whose behaviour and ideology are motivated by Maslow’s needs level of self-transcendence, will be typically bound by a common purpose, a global perspective and shared responsibility for the good of global society and mankind. Maslow defined self-actualization through examples involving creative displays: *“A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself”* (Maslow, 1943: 382).

Applying Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory to asylum migrants and their needs implies the importance of working in partnership with supportive agents and collaborating responsibly together in order to develop and move further towards higher levels of needs. To promote social justice where we can all grow up to actualize our full potential, irrespective of our background, culture, creed, collectively, we need to contribute and create spaces where we can meet all our essential needs. Here comes the role of education and, in the case of this research study, that of MCAST. Vocational education can contribute heavily to provide opportunities that would lead towards the individual’s essential needs. Acquiring the right

knowledge together with the provision of training in a specific vocational area would eventually pave the way towards a transition from education to employment and the fulfilment of a career aspiration. This would consequently lead towards satisfying the esteem needs. Another amendment to Maslow's theory dates back to the 1970s with the increase of more levels as stated in the Table 9 below.

**Table 9: Maslow's Expanded Hierarchy of Needs**

**Biological and Physiological needs** – air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, etc.

**Safety needs** – protection from elements, security, order, law, limits, stability, etc.

**Belongingness and Love needs** – work group, family, affection, relationships, etc.

**Esteem needs** – self-esteem, achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, managerial responsibility, etc.

**Cognitive needs** – knowledge, meaning, etc.

**Aesthetic needs** – appreciation and search for beauty, balance, form, etc.

**Self-Actualization needs** – realising personal potential, self-fulfilment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences

**Transcendence needs** – helping others to achieve self-actualisation

Another way of comprehending the basic human needs from a theoretical perspective is what John Rowan called the one-two-three infinity mode of counting. One is the basic needs, what Alderfer (1972) calls **existence**, two is the social needs, what Alderfer calls **relatedness**, three is the autonomy and authenticity needs, what Alderfer calls **growth** and everything beyond that is the realm of being (as Maslow names the spiritual or transpersonal realm). Alderfer's theory is sometimes referred to as the ERG theory.

#### 2.5.4 Galtung's Basic Human Needs Typology

Another insightful theory focusing on human needs, particularly suitable to this research focusing on migrants from an asylum background, is that of Galtung. In his work on 'The Basic Needs Approach', Galtung (1978) discussed the difference between a basic need and a want, wish, desire, demand, or something that is not really needed in the sense of it not being necessary for the particular person. Thus, one aspect of need is tied up to the concept of necessity. He holds that the common denominator of what human beings are striving for, the overlap of all needs' views may be a good guide to the basic needs. In his Typology of Basic Human Needs, Galtung identified four basic needs: **Security, Welfare, Identity and Freedom**. The Security (material) and Freedom (non-material) can be mainly dependent on the actors themselves whilst Welfare (material) and Identity (non-material) can be mainly dependent on structures. Consequently, when a basic human need is not satisfied, some kind of fundamental disintegration will take place. Thus, disintegration is a clear indicator of insufficient satisfaction of basic human needs. According to Galtung, people are willing to suffer both violence and misery (material), even the sacrifice of their own lives, when struggling for identity and freedom - this emphasises the importance of these two needs - however priority is given to the satisfaction of material needs until then the time may come for non-material needs. Galtung is not in favour of a hierarchical set of needs where the priorities are universally given in advance. He holds that "*People should work out their own priorities, and the self-reliant ones will always have the courage to do so in dialogue with others*" (Galtung, 1978: 21).

This shows that Galtung's model is not deterministic in the sense that it gives leeway to the individual's own capabilities, interests and motivation. I find Galtung's model as very relevant to comprehend the world of an asylum migrant. It moves away from the rigidity of the hierarchy of needs and offers the flexibility that goes round with circumstances and experiences. Galtung holds that the most salient needs to understand social conflict are identity, recognition, security and personal development (2015).

#### 2.5.5 Personality

Since the 1960s three different major approaches have dominated the investigations of individual differences: type theories, trait theories and psychoanalytic theories (Mischel, 1984). One of the personality trait theories is the psychobiological model by Cloninger (1986; 1987). Allport's (1937) definition of personality claimed that personality represents a

dynamic organisation within the individual based on psychophysical systems which in turn determines its unique adjustment to the environment. Cloninger's (1998) personality model is comprised of temperament and character; individual differences are dependent on distinctions within temperament and character. Temperament traits are defined as basic emotional response patterns such as fear, anger and attachment. According to Goldsmith et al. (1987), temperament is supposed to be mainly genetically inherited and relatively stable during the life span. The four temperament dimensions identified by Cloninger and colleagues are individual differences in four basic emotional responses: Harm Avoidance, Novelty Seeking, Reward Dependence and Persistence, whilst the three character dimensions are Cooperativeness, Self-Directedness and Self-Transcendence (Cloninger, 1998). Personality affects and influences the decisions and actions taken by the individual.

Having identified and reviewed the focal theories on migration and human needs, one could perceive migrants from a different perspective beyond the economic point of view related to the opportunity for cheap labour. Whilst structural inequalities can bring about poverty and discrimination, a legitimate place in the host society can minimise difficulties faced by migrants of an asylum-seeking background to integrate in the host country society. Through theory one can understand the importance of operative public values, respect for individual rights, justice and the structuration of the asylum-seeking migrants' daily life and awareness of their basic needs. Theories can eventually contribute to inform research on how vocational education and life on campus can support and assist migrants in their integration process.

### **2.5.6 Responses and Impacts**

For the scope of this study, I am going to focus on some of the migrants' different responses to the realities and life experiences they come across. However, the result of different responses may be the outcome of the personality and temperament of the individual.

### **2.57 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

PTSD was first published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1952 and was called 'stress response syndrome' deriving from 'gross stress reaction' (Ghazinour, 2003: 18). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was defined as '*syndrome*', that is, a collection of symptoms, used and placed under a sub-category of '*anxiety disorders*'. The term describes the delayed and often chronic reaction experienced by people exposed to particular kinds of intensive negative emotional demands encountered in war zones, natural disasters and other

catastrophic situations. Such heavy stress reactions often include: startle responses, irritability, impairment in concentration and memory, disturbed sleep, distressing dreams, depression, guilt, phobias, psychic numbing and multiple somatic complaints (Ghazinour, 2003: 18). The change from ‘*syndrome*’ to ‘*disorder*’ in 1994 was done by taking into account new investigations and new attitudes in psychiatric care (Van der Kolk et al., 1996). PTSD was then described as a psychological condition experienced by a person who had faced a traumatic event that was caused by a catastrophic stressor outside the range of usual human experience. This definition separated PTSD stressors from the ‘ordinary stressors’ that were characterised as ‘*adjustment disorders*’ such as divorce, failure, rejection and financial problems (Keane et al., 1994).

Traumatic life events and their consequences are not unknown phenomena to migrants. Exposure to experiences such as wars, torture, natural disasters and life-threatening events can all lead and contribute to PTSD.

Several volumes of research have been completed on refugee trauma (such as Mollica et al., 1993, 2007; Mollica, 2006; George, 2009; Porter & Haslam, 2005; Steel et al., 2004, 2006; Schweitzer et al., 2011; White, 2004). A systematic review by Fazel et al. (2005) of 7,000 refugees showed that those resettling in Western countries could be approximately ten times more likely to have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) than age-matched general populations in those countries. PTSD can result from undergoing or witnessing torture, combat, or violent personal assault as well as structural barriers (Schweitzer et al. 2011; Westoby & Ingamells, 2010). Unique psychosocial problems, such as loss of social role and social networks, loss of property, acculturation stress, anger, language problems and socio-political factors can complicate the diagnosis of PTSD (Mollica, 2000).

However individual responses to psychosocial problems, sometimes of a severe nature, can vary depending on several factors such as self-confidence, determinism, personal attitudes, personality traits and persistence.

### **2.5.8 Resiliency**

Boyden & Berry (2004), in their edit collection ‘*Children and Youth on the Front Line*’, argue that asylum-seeking and refugee (ASR) youth should not be defined by the trauma they have experienced but by their resilience, agency and sheer courage in the face of extreme circumstances.

Rutter (1990) defined resilience as the positive end of the distribution of developmental outcomes among individuals at high risk. A definition of resilience that appears to incorporate the literature is:

*“Resilience is a universal capacity which allows a person, group or community to prevent, minimise or overcome the damaging effects of adversity. Resilience may transform or make stronger the lives of those who are resilient. The resilient behaviour may be in response to adversity in the form of maintenance or normal development despite the adversity, or a promoter of growth beyond the present level of functioning. Further, resilience may be promoted not necessarily because of adversity, but, indeed, may be developed in anticipation of inevitable adversities”* (Grotberg, 1997: 2).

Through the theoretical framework of resilience, one can understand how, despite the tremendous obstacles encountered, individuals persist in reaching their personal goals. Resilience is contextual as it changes over time in response to the situation, the successful (or non-successful) completion of tasks and the complexity of tasks (Gordon, 1996). In her work with Hispanic youth, Gordon (1996: 63) defined resilience as *“the ability to thrive, mature, and increase competence in the face of adverse circumstances or obstacles.”*

Masten’s work with war trauma and disaster survivors formed the basis for the definition where both Rana et al. and Reynoso used for resilience: *“successful adaptation of an individual in the face of adversities and trauma”* (Rana et al., 2011: 2085; Reynoso, 2008: 394).

It is interesting to note that resilience is a protective mechanism developed by an individual and utilized to reduce risk (Winfield, 1991: 8). It is generally divided into three categories of resources: self-concept, relationships, and environmental factors. In a situation of risk, the resilient individual draws upon all of these resources. Moreover, Winfield believed that self-efficacy is a key protective mechanism. Self-efficacy *“concerns individuals’ self-concepts and their feelings about their environment, their competence in handling life’s obstacles, and their perceptions of control in determining outcomes.....[which] develop in inter-personal relationships throughout the life span and through successfully completing tasks”* (Winfield, 1991: 8).

The first category of resources or protective factors is the self-concept. Self-concept includes the individual's personal attributes and a strong personal belief in his/her own abilities. Common attributes of a resilient student include a positive outlook on education, the willingness to ask for assistance, maintain optimism despite set-backs, autonomy, motivation, goal-setting behaviour, an internal locus of control and strong cultural values (Gebre, 2008; Gordon, 1996; Rana et al., 2011; Reynoso, 2008). The second category of resources or protective factors is relationships. A resilient individual develops multiple relationships at different levels of intimacy. These relationships are not only with peers and family but also with officers, professionals and support service providers at colleges and universities (Reynoso, 2008). The third category of resources or protective factors relates to environmental factors. Environmental factors can be thought of as community resources and opportunities such as social organisations and extra-curricular activities (Rana et al., 2011). Suárez-Orozco, Suárez Orozco & Todorova (2008) suggested that strong ties to an ethnic community or to a religious organization promote resiliency. Environmental factors can also be specific to an educational institution (Rana et al., 2011; Gordon, 1996). This is discussed in the next section focusing on Education. Both Gordon and Rana et al. suggested that a school which is accepting of a student's culture and is in fact socioeconomically and ethnically diverse, assists in the development of resiliency. Other supportive factors may include an appropriate curriculum that holds the students to higher standards, provides counselling services, an administration encouraging mentorship and a staff that fosters a sense of belonging.

## **2.6 Future - Educational**

The third section of this chapter tackles the migrants' future with a spotlight on education since, during its process, it can provide good opportunities for integration. Although education is not the only aspect of the migrants' future, for the scope of this research study, the focus is education which can subsequently lead to employment and to other related areas.

*“Schools can play a pivotal role in providing asylum seekers with not only a new beginning, but also a very real sense of the future. Inadequate or inappropriate provision runs the risk of compromising the future life chances of asylum seekers ..... who fought so hard to hold on to those chances”* (EMAS bulletin, Greenshire, 2004, as cited in Arnot et al., 2010: 110).

### 2.6.1 Bilingualism and Translanguaging

Rutter (2006) writes of the migrant student identikit, as opposed to that of other students, as being unannounced, traumatised, transient and insecure, with no choice, no support and little cash. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge of the country's culture and information on how to access basic services that they are entitled to puts them in a very disadvantaged position as compared to citizens of the host country. Contextualising Rutter's statement to the Maltese context, migrant students may face more challenges when compared to their Maltese peers. One of the main educational challenges presented by transnational migration is that of language and language education (Li Wei, 2013). This is a common factor among several studies carried out in different countries/continents and with levels ranging from primary to post-secondary and tertiary (Arnot et al., 2010; Prokop, 2013; Matthews, 2008; Vertovec, 2007; Morrice, 2013; Cholewinski, 2005). Ofelia Garcia (2009a) introduced the concept of dynamic bilingualism as a general and holistic concept of which translanguaging is a process. Other similar terms, such as '*metrolingualism*' (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2011), '*polylinguaging*' and "*polylingual languaging*" (Jorgensen, 2008; Jorgensen, Karrebek, Madsen & Moller, 2011), '*heteroglossia*' (Bakhtin, 1981), '*codemeshing*' and '*translingual practice*' (Canagarajah, 2011; Blackledge, 2011), '*multilinguaging*' (Nguyen, 2012) and '*hybrid language practices*' (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López & Tejeda, 1999) have tried to capture a perspective on bilingualism that is more complex but also grounded in daily language usage in communities. '*Languaging*' is regarded as the holistic process through which we gain understanding, make sense, communicate, and shape our knowledge and experience through language (Swain, Lapkin, Konuzi, Suzuki & Brooks, 2009).

For Li Wei (2011a), translanguaging and the idea of translanguaging space derive from the psycholinguistic notion of languaging, which moves from language as a noun to language as a verb, thus stressing an ongoing psycholinguistic process. Translanguaging incorporates different modalities such as speaking, writing, signing, listening, reading, remembering and what goes beyond them. Linguistic performances include systems of the transmission of information and their representation of values, identities and relationships.

*"The act of translanguaging then is transformative in nature; it creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, beliefs and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity*

*into one coordinated and meaningful performance and make it into a lived experience” (Li Wei, 2011a: 1223).*

According to Garcia & Kleifgen (2010) and Blackledge & Creese (2011), translanguaging is more than just the concept of ‘*multicompetence*’ as proposed by Cook (2002) and ‘*holistic bilingualism*’ (Grosjean, 1985). Each of those latter concepts was primarily psychological and linguistic, while Garcia & Kleifgen and Blackledge & Creese portray translanguaging as essentially sociolinguistic and ecological.

*“It can only be properly understood as negotiated and interactional, contextualised and situated, emergent and altering and with ideological and identity constituents, all of which are enacted in the classroom” (G. Lewis et al., 2012: 656).*

This translanguaging viewpoint also challenges the concept of ‘*diglossia*’ where the two languages of a bilingual have different uses and functions such as at college and at home. Translanguaging calls the concept of diglossia into question as:

*“Unlike diglossia, languages are no longer assigned separate territories or even separate functions, but they may co-exist in the same space. Another difference is that languages are not placed in a hierarchy according to whether they have more or less power” (Garcia, 2009a: 78-79).*

There are no strict divisions between the languages and translanguaging characteristics most encountered among bilinguals. Focusing on the learning process per se, when educators are faced with internationalised contexts where learners bring with them more than one language, it is very likely that teachers and learners use various linguistic resources (Li Wei, 2013). B elenger (1994) claims that teaching and learning in the language of the community allows the learners to continue to develop their ‘*linguistic experience*’ as well as gain reinforcement during every day interactions.

*“The plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person’s experience of language in its cultural contexts expands from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental*

*compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. In different situations, a person can call flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor” (Council of Europe, 2001).*

Wei describes what he dubs the translanguaging space, “*a social space for multilingual language user [that brings] together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, beliefs and ideology, their physical and cognitive capacity into one coordinated and meaningful experience” (Wei 2011: 1223).*

Thus, an important aspect to be emphasised about translanguaging both as an act and a stance is that it is more than a selectively drawn upon register, but rather an integral reflection of students’ social learning experiences. According to Poza (2018), as such, translanguaging strongly comprises students’ perceived identities and plays an important role in their social relationships and integration. Additionally, such approaches contribute to the school’s ethos and agenda around social inclusion which encourages notions of integration by celebrating diversity and difference, linked to rich notions of culture and a celebration not just of the school but of the cultural communities it serves (Arnot et al., 2010).

### **2.6.2 Student Persistence, Retention and Attrition**

This section deals with the theoretical reasons why students persist in further and higher education, or conversely why students drop out. “*Whole-school approaches highlight preparedness to address pre- and post-displacement issues that make the present acceptable and provide hope for the future” (Hek, 2005b; Rutter, 2006, as cited in Matthews, 2008: 40).*

Undoubtedly, whole-school approaches are important to settlement as they reduce vulnerability and build resilience (West, 2004), whilst promoting independence. Hence, although practical and emotional support measures are required, it is crucial not to overstate vulnerabilities and helplessness, but build on strength, empowerment and resilience.

In 1975 Tinto published a model developed from the research previously conducted on student attrition, to explore why students in further and higher education drop out. He examined the interaction between the individual learner and the educational institution. Tinto drew heavily from Durkheim’s theory of suicide and from the field of economics. Durkheim’s theory created the connection between the student’s integration into the academic

and social systems of the institution and the likelihood of drop out. Economics provided the cost-benefit foundation of the student deciding on whether the value of further and higher education is worth the time invested. Tinto discovered various factors that affect the individual's commitment to his/her educational goals and to the institution. These include familial support, level of parental education, socioeconomic status, ethnic background, academic ability, pre-college schooling and own attributes. The student's commitment to his/her educational goal affects the intellectual development, which in turn influences the student's academic integration. Likewise, the student's commitment to the institution affects his/her interactions with peers such as friends, mentors, other support systems, extracurricular activities and others, showing that everything is interrelated. This in turn impacts the student's integration into the school social systems. All this contributes to the decision to persist or drop out. In view of this, Tinto (1975: 97) stated that "*individual decisions with regard to any form of activity can be analysed in terms of perceived costs and benefits of that activity relative to those perceived in alternative activities.*"

This can be understood to mean that the individual determines whether the benefits of further and higher education outweigh the costs of persistence. Often the current economic climate and employment are important factors in the decision to drop out as well. After realising that his original model had several limitations, in 1982, Tinto published an article addressing four shortcomings, Table 10, which he believed needed to be explored in further research.

**Table 10: Four shortcomings in Tinto's original theory of 1975**

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The different roles finances play throughout the student's educational career</li> <li>2. Institutional drop out may in fact be a transfer to a different institution and not a complete withdrawal</li> <li>3. Inaccuracies of not differentiating between the educational experiences stemming from student demographics, gender, ethnic background and/or socioeconomic status</li> <li>4. Did not take the specific attributes of two-year colleges into consideration</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: right;">Tinto, 1982: 689-692</p>
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Thus, when taking into consideration these shortcomings, the circumstances determining the variations in student behaviour leading to either drop out or persistence were overlooked.

### **2.6.3 Student Attrition Model**

Bean & Metzner (1987) found that although there is a growth in the numbers of non-traditional students attending higher education, there is also a growing attrition rate among this same population. Bean & Metzner realised that all the distinctive student groups had one outcome in common: there is a lessened social interaction with peers and instructors. As a result, Bean & Metzner (1987: 489) defined a non-traditional student as a student who:

*“is older than 24, or does not live in a campus residence, or is a part-time student, or some combination of these three factors; is not greatly influenced by the social environment of the institution; and is chiefly concerned with the institution’s academic offerings (especially courses, certification and degrees).”*

Bean & Metzner, (1987) found several variables that have an effect on drop out decisions: the background and defining variables such as age, hours enrolled in classes, educational goals, high school performance, ethnicity and gender. The background and defining variables directly affect academic (such as study habits, advising, absenteeism) and environmental variables (such as finances, employment, familial responsibilities). Academic variables impact the student’s academic outcome (GPA) which directly affects both the intent to leave and the decision to drop out. The academic variables as well as the environmental variables affect the student’s psychological outcomes such as satisfaction, goal commitment, stress, which again directly impact both the intent to leave and the decision to drop out.

Although some of the variables listed may be attributed to asylum migrants dropping out of college, Bean & Metzner (1987) found that the decision to drop out was a direct result of an individual student’s academic performance and commitment to the institution. However, one cannot deny the conditions including the lack of basic needs asylum migrant students may experience which would contribute to their decision of dropping out of college and abandoning their educational training.

### **2.6.4 Theory of Survival of Minority Students in College**

The theory of Survival of Minority Students in College (Nagasawa & Wong, 1999) led to the development of several models to understand the students’ college persistence and attrition. These models can be categorised into five types: Psychological (Marks, 1967; Waterman, 1972), Environmental (Karabel, 1972; Pincus, 1980), Economic (Jensen, 1981; Voorhees,

1984), Organisational (Richardson & Bender, 1987) and Interactional (Bean, 1982; Spady, 1971; Tinto, 1987). Campus climate on issues pertaining to racial conflicts and discrimination is of significant importance (Hurtado 1992). Another important aspect is that of Ethnic Subcultures and Academic and Social Integration (Antrobus, Dobbelaer & Salzinger, 1988). The structure of Social Networks and their role in providing Social Support to minority students was studied by Culbert, Good & Lachenmeyer (1998). Referring to ethnic student networks, Nagasawa & Wong state:

*“The formation of ethnic student networks serves: (1) to provide a niche or enclave for minority students on campus; (2) to help its members meet the social and academic demands of college; (3) to facilitate integration into the social and academic systems on campus for survival. For minority students, then, ethnic social networks are likely to maximise success in college”* (1999: 83).

The theory is made up of four axioms:

1. **Barriers, The problem.** Minority students are more likely to face barriers of cultural/racial hostility, lack of college preparation and social isolation in college.
2. **Ethnic Subculture and the Formation of Social Networks.** If minority students are faced with barriers, they will form and relate to social networks rooted in ethnic subculture.
3. **Social and Academic Integration.** If actively engaged in viable social networks, they are likely to be integrated into the college social and academic systems.
4. **Success in College.** The integration of students into the social and academic system would more likely help them to overcome barriers and succeed in college.

Another aspect which is influential in the success and integration of minority ethnic groups is the adaptive behaviour as a response to the challenging experiences at college. The four types of adaptive behaviours listed in Table 11 are based on critical mass and social network of minority students on campus.

**Table 11: Four Types of Adaptive Behaviours**

1. **Loner** – Navigates the social and academic systems alone.
2. **Ethnic Islet** – In the absence of critical mass, minority students of the same ethnic group are likely to hang out together and support each other during their navigation of the academic journey. They insulate themselves from negative and social and academic effects.
3. **Isolate** – A situation where critical mass of minority students is present but campus social networks are absent. Aware of other groups, this type of social networks will evolve for isolates to participate.
4. **Ethnic Core** – Presence of critical mass and campus social networks. The ethnic student subcultures serve as the major support group for minority students on campus.

Nagasawa & Wong, 1999: 84

Hence, ethnic social networks on campus can play a major role in integrating minority students into the college social and academic systems as well as to provide critical social support to protect them from the effects of the challenges and stresses they are faced with in college. However, at MCAST the ethnic networks tend to be informal. Spiteri (2020), in an upcoming unpublished work, explains that migrant students at MCAST tend to integrate themselves mostly with Maltese students in MCAST informal spaces. While this is something that favours inclusion, it may also detract from intra-ethnic friendship building.

### **2.6.5 Student Retention**

Cabrera, Castañeda & Nora developed their theoretical model for practitioners to understand “*the interplay among individual, institutional, and environmental variables in the college persistence process*” (1993: 136). They suggested that planned interventions in enrolment management must take into consideration the complex relationship of the student support services to address student attrition and not consider the variables individually as a means for retention.

On the other hand, Tinto (2010) asserted that retention is not the mirror image of departure; in the sense that why students stay is not the same as why students leave. Persistence may be the result of leaving the institution whilst departure may be the transfer to another institution

and not necessarily the complete withdrawal from further and higher education. Persistence, when defined as qualification completion, may not occur in its entirety at a single institution. Tinto also maintained that much of the current research focuses on events which are external to the institution when examining student retention.

Tinto suggested that assistance to students in persisting academically must encompass the educational community's retention efforts in four key areas: **Expectations, Support, Feedback and Involvement**. He stated:

*“Students are more likely to succeed and continue within the institution when they find themselves in settings that hold high expectations for their success, provide needed academic and social support, and frequent feedback about their performance, and actively involve them, especially with other students and faculty in learning. The key concept is that of educational community and the capacity of institutions to establish supportive social and academic communities, especially in the classrooms that actively involve students as equal members”* (2010: 73).

Tinto warned that absence in any one of the four areas: expectations, support, feedback and involvement, weakens the effectiveness of the other three. This shows the connectedness between the four and is especially relevant when working with non-traditional and under-prepared populations such as asylum migrants. Tinto concluded by suggesting that the theoretical scaffolding is still being constructed.

### **2.6.6 Funds of Knowledge**

When educators are acknowledging the ‘funds of knowledge’ in their classes, they are valuing the learners. The term ‘funds of knowledge’ is defined as *“the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for households and individual functioning and well-being”* (Amanti et al., 1992: 133).

Funds of knowledge facilitate the learning process and the construction of linguistic and cultural identities. Migrant learners together with local ones should be encouraged by the lecturers to bring into classrooms rich cultural and cognitive resources which are meaningful to them. This would render the teaching more effective because when classroom experience is closer to the real-world meaning-making practices and identities of our learners including migrants, engagement and integration are more likely to occur (Schultz & Cloeman-King,

2012). Besides, such recognition and acknowledgement will boost the self-confidence and enhance the self-esteem of the asylum migrant learners after their traumatic experiences. Furthermore, lecturers need to develop appropriate materials, topics, activities and campaigns to link asylum migrants' issues, specifically to the promotion of democracy, social justice and human rights (Arnot et al., 2010).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Through this research of exploring how a vocational college can further support and facilitate the integration of migrants with an asylum background, in this chapter, I discussed the main background theories on the subject and the terminology used for irregular migrants, the nomenclatures used in this research and the application process and the different statuses they may be given. Acknowledging the complexity of the subject under investigation, the literature review chapter commenced with a discussion on the concept of integration and presented migration related literature in three sections, the Past, the Present and the Future. The social, economic, political and environmental theories of migration were presented in the first section – The Past which dealt with the sociological aspects of migration. Grouped under the Present section, the psychological aspect of migration included a discussion on identity, Galtung's theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, responses, will power and resiliency. The Future section incorporated the educational aspect of migration, aspirations and the theory of survival of minority students in college. Although migration is becoming a rather popular topic among researchers, few studies have researched it in relation to vocational education. The study's original contribution in drawing attention to the limited research on asylum migrants in further and higher education, and in particular vocational education is valuable. This study fills a gap in the academic field and highlights the contribution vocational education can make in the integration process of migrants in the host country's society. Through the iterative approach that was adopted, certain themes which are not traditionally associated with asylum migrants and refugees were discussed. Hence the study tackled various themes that were raised by the participants themselves, themes coming from a range of disciplines such as sociology, psychology, education and linguistics. The study's contribution to knowledge is based on the understanding of migration and integration as well as on insights of how vocational colleges of further and higher education like MCAST can truly support migrant learners in their integration process in its wider sense.

One can conclude that education can stimulate knowledge and understanding of the conditions and circumstances of those most vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion. This concurs with Zorica Mrsevic's (2000) argument that the opposite of war is creativity - not peace, and education is a creative endeavour that strikes in a myriad of ways to address conflict and sustain settlement. Moreover, education provides lecturers and students with tools to craft the future in memory of an unsettled past and unsettling present (Matthews, 2008: 42). Likewise, education has the capacity to dispel ignorance about the historical precedents and contemporary politics of global and local inequality and injustice and it can work towards activity challenging disadvantage, discrimination, oppression, underdevelopment, conflict and violence (UNESCO, 2003, as cited in Matthews, 2008: 35). In Chapter 3, I will discuss the methodology adopted and the methods I used to develop and conduct my research study.

## Chapter Three – Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

My choice of a research topic is centred on the integration of asylum migrant students at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). This has been my place of work since 2001. As discussed in chapter one, for the past eleven years I have occupied a senior leadership role with responsibility for student support services. During my time in this post, I have come across asylum migrant students who in spite of their motivation, potential and abilities, feel they are facing multiple barriers to their educational achievements and success. Some of them are susceptible to experience racism and discrimination in their everyday life both at college and beyond (NCPE, 2011). Furthermore, they may feel ignored by the national systems, including education, and are not provided with the much needed support to help them integrate into society and lead an independent decent and flourishing life. Key to better integration of asylum migrant students is education with the possibility of providing them with the required services and assistance to embark on a fulfilling and meaningful future career trajectory that encompasses long term empowerment to realise their aspirations. They may easily end up in a state of frustration and poverty (NCPE, 2011) without the required support to access services and assistance in order to achieve their aspirations. These experiences fuelled my curiosity to explore this further by addressing the following research questions and to give asylum migrant students the opportunity to, on one hand voice their experiences, and on the other hand share their views on what they feel they need, as learners, to experience integration and success in their studies.

#### Research questions

1. What are the experiences faced by learners, who arrive as asylum seekers in Malta, in feeling part of Maltese society and, in particular, of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) learning community?
2. According to these students' perceptions, how might their experiences affect their aspirations?
3. How can MCAST with its civic role improve on the provision of support for these learners' educational experiences at the College?

### 3.2 Developing my Research

Directing our focus on Education and Research, Nisbet suggests that educational research has changed in the last hundred years and the role of the researcher has changed from that of “*an academic theorist, to an expert consultant, to a reflective practitioner*” (Nisbet, 2005: 42).

Thinking on the myth that everyone is free to follow personal plans, access services to follow own potential and that human rights are respected, drove me to research six distinct life experiences of asylum migrant students in vocational education. “*The strategy, plan of action, process or design*” that shapes the choice of particular methods and instruments are considered as the methodological assumption of research (Crotty, 2003: 3). Describing and justifying the use of particular instruments and procedures for this qualitative research is the aim of exploring methodological assumptions (Wellington, 2000). It is important to note that the choice of instruments and procedures for this research are crucial to explore asylum migrant students as a disadvantaged, marginalised, heterogeneous, multicultural and rarely researched population in the field of vocational education.

### 3.3 Paradigms

In terms of research paradigms, it is essential for researchers to start from what they know about themselves and about the world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The research inquiry can provide insights to better control ourselves, not to create generalisations that would dominate others; and the surest path to self-governance lies in reaffirming Socrates’ realisation that genuine wisdom begins with the recognition of how little we really know (Alexander, 2006: 278).

Within the context of this research, an inquiry has been carried out in order to explore further a subject that merits empirical research. Following that, as a researcher, I need to beware of what Maturana & Varela (1992: 18) called, ‘*the temptation of certainty*’, described thus: “*We tend to live in a world of certainty, of undoubted rock-ribbed perceptions, our convictions prove that things are the way we see them and there is no alternative to what we hold as true.*” However, truths held by individuals need to be uncovered and unpacked in order to shed light on multiple, and often competing realities (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2010).

Ramaekers (2006) has marked recent discussions related to the issue of ‘truth’ in educational theory and research. These two main paths were in the recent past associated with the two main paradigms namely quantitative paradigm (*scientific, positivist, objective*) and qualitative

paradigm (*interpretative, naturalistic, subjective*) respectively. Very often ‘*non-scientific*’ approaches to educational research are questioned because they do not revolve around the main intent of the quest for truth, but they tend to shift their focus to other questions, thus ultimately showing different interests. Very often these kinds of studies do not offer answers or solutions to dissolve the problems encountered in education but as stated by MacLure, they set themselves “*the work of taking that which offers itself as commonsensical, obvious, natural, given or unquestionable, and trying to unravel it a bit – to open it up to further questioning*” (2003: 9). In this research, a qualitative method has been chosen in order to acquire an in-depth understanding of the asylum migrant students’ perspective on integration in the Maltese post-secondary, vocational educational context.

### **3.4 Understanding of Truth and Knowledge**

An opposing view from the side of the positivists is that once the search for ‘truth’ is abandoned we are very likely to settle for ‘beliefs’ which may well be false. As stated by Phillips & Burbules (2000: 3), “*questing for truth and knowledge to settle for beliefs will almost certainly be defective.*” Moreover, according to Ramaekers (2006), the researcher’s ‘imprint’ does not signify the abdication of truth and knowledge but an acknowledgement that in understanding the world, human involvement is always present. Furthermore, as stated by Hammersley (2004: 70), “*we should treat ‘knowledge’ as referring to what we take to be beyond reasonable doubt.*” Thus, what we consider to be the ‘truth’ may not necessarily be the one absolute ‘*truth*’.

Wellington (2015) argues that, doing educational research differs from conducting research in the physical sciences in that while the former has to do with studying ‘*human beings*’, the latter deals with ‘*inanimate, idealised entities.*’ As stated by Sikes (2004), in any research study that involves people in social settings, multiple perspectives and interpretations are almost inevitable. For Bakan (1996), the most significant truths about human beings inhere in the stories of their lives. Yet, they need protection for making their life stories available to others. For this reason, it is important for the researcher to take into consideration how the participants would be affected by the research. They need to be protected and the researcher must take into consideration all possible effects and consequences both during and after the research so as to prevent any possible harm being done to the participants. Ethical issues should be observed throughout the study, right from its outset to the dissemination stages. This will be discussed further on in this chapter, in section 3.7.1. Thus, the choices of

methodologies, and eventually research methods, have to be made with care. Moreover, deciding on what research methods to adopt is highly influenced by the researcher's underlying ontological and epistemological position (Greenbank, 2003: 796)

This is quite subjective in itself because a researcher's philosophical assumptions and the perception of a particular topic or issue (ontology) and his/her position as to what constitutes 'knowledge' (epistemology) is very much influenced by his/her values which are the set of principles or ideals that drive one's thinking and behaviour. It is this system that gives one structure and purpose to determine and consider what is meaningful and important. Family values, the upbringing, personal experiences, environmental and cultural influences amongst others, contribute to the researcher's own structure which would leave its impact on the choice of research subject, methodology, research processes and methods.

For McLeod (2001: 55), "*the process of knowing involves using practical method, that is derived from epistemology which is in turn grounded into an ontology*" (McLeod, 2001). Values are inevitable and play an important role in educational research since research information would not come value free for "*all facts and information are value-laden*" (Griffiths, 1998: 46). From the pluralist perspective of Brannen, using multiple methods imply tensions between different theoretical perspectives and at the same time the researcher has to consider the relationship between the data sets produced by the methods adopted. He stated that he was able to see with a sudden clarity and freshness those "*deep down things - the main issues of the research endeavour, namely the relationship between theory, method and data*" (Brannen, 1992b: 32-3).

For Sikes (2004: 18), the major influence on the choice of methodology is "*where the researcher is coming from*" with regards to their views of the social world, their epistemological assumptions and their views about how people in general relate to and interact with their environment. Thus, it is inevitable that the way a researcher makes sense of the world will not only shape their values and beliefs but will also incline the researcher towards particular research methods more than others. However, it is very important and 'ethical' that researchers acknowledge the values that permeate their research and make them clear in order not to negatively affect the validity and reliability of their research study. Even if the researcher is implicit in the research, it does not mean that in that research there are no values embedded within because implicitness is a value in itself.

Parahoo (1997) describes the research process as the tasks and actions carried out by the researcher in order to find answers to the research questions. These are influenced by the thinking process, ethical and theoretical stance and assumptions made by the researcher. Depoy and Gitlin (1998) maintain that the first step to an effective research process is identifying the philosophical foundations of the study. Thomas (2009) states that the interpretivist approaches in research are much more orientated to understanding human nature and the researchers tend to get close to the research participants. This can provide vital information on attitudes and satisfaction and this kind of information can eventually be used to improve social situations (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). The use of an interpretivist approach rests on the value of the subjectivity of social realities; therefore, research based on interpretivist thinking includes getting the viewpoints of the individual. Some interpretivist researchers also take a social constructivist approach and focus on “*the social, collaborative process of bringing about meaning and knowledge*” (Kell, in Allen, 2004: 45).

An interesting observation on knowledge made by David Bakan in Ruthellen Josselson (1996: 5) is that the hope of humanity has to rest with the power of human beings and that power is necessarily enhanced by advances in knowledge. He continued further by stating that if one perceives danger in knowledge, one should not consider it as an enemy but on the contrary, knowledge is to be seen as the only reliable way to counter the hurt and harm that can come from knowledge. I agree with Bakan’s position on knowledge as it holds the idea of encouragement to face reality.

Thus, one has to keep in mind that it may be painful for the informants to go through their past experiences. However, many young asylum migrant students have rarely told their stories of skills and strengths in their previous interview experiences that aimed only at ascertaining their asylum migrant status (Abkhezr & McMahon, 2017). Previous research highlights the power of storytelling for asylum migrants (Mollica, 2008). It is interesting to note that through the telling of life stories, many survivors of torture and trauma or those who have been through silencing and marginalising experiences have improved their capacities for healing their wounds and dealing with current life challenges (Abkhezr et al., 2018). Hence, although the aim of this research was not therapeutic, telling their personal stories can leave a tangible positive impact on the asylum migrant participants and along the process, participants were continuously offered psychological assistance including counselling as explained in the briefing session. It is the fundamental goal of qualitative investigation to uncover and illuminate what the participants’ own experiences mean to them. It is also

through verbal personal accounts and stories about their lives and their experienced reality presented by the individual participants that learning about the ‘*self-inner world*’ takes place. People’s lived experiences are central to qualitative data and fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes and life’s structures, their perceptions, assumptions, prejudgements, presuppositions and also for connecting these meanings to the social world around them (Miles & Huberman, 1991: 10). At the same time, telling life stories about difficult times in our lives creates order and contains emotions, allowing a search for meaning and enabling trust and connection with others (Kohler Riessman, 2008).

*“The word qualitative implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined or measured (if measured at all), in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situation constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry.”* (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 4)

This quote helped me to reflect on the social construction reality in this research study. Throughout the research process, I sought to understand the lives of the participants and how their world is constructed. The quote also highlights the importance of the intimate relationship between the researcher and the subject researched. Through reflection I realised that amongst others, my work experience influenced the choice of research. Along the process, I was fully aware of my dual role, the researcher and my position of power at college. However, I was cautious not to let the roles negatively influence or in any way tarnish my relationship with the participants which I hold central to this study. The next section will deal with the design of the research study.

### **3.5 The Research Design for this Study**

The methods chosen for my data collection are two-fold. An initial focus group with students as participants was facilitated to set the context. This was followed by three successive interviews with each student participant. In order to fill in my potential gaps in the data gathering process, the use of a focus group with lecturers working at MCAST complemented the narratives.

Due consideration was given to both positivist and interpretivist paradigms, however, the interpretivist design was deemed the most appropriate to answer the research questions pertaining to this study. Also, to carry out such research on asylum migrant learners, it was deemed better to be more specific and to go deeper into the process and the feelings of the informants involved, rather than dealing with numbers and statistics.

For this research study, I sought the involvement of asylum migrant learners and I wanted their direct narratives, their voice, to be the basis of my research inquiry in order to give depth to the participants' perspectives (Ward, 2003). Furthermore, exposing the stories of those who are at the margins of society is given value and is important because it can lead to social justice. For Abbott (2002: 1), "*We engage in narrative often, with unconscious ease*" So, through this study, migrant learners were given a safe environment and a free opportunity where to voice their thoughts and feelings on their experiences, aspirations, barriers encountered and interpretation of them being included in society. Pinkola Estes, a Mexican American 'cantadora' or traditional storyteller, points out that among her people questions are often answered with stories. She declared that the first story almost always evoked another, which summons another until the answer to the initial question would be several stories long. She argues that a sequence of tales is thought to offer broader and deeper insight than a single story alone. I agree with her statement that "*the most significant truths about human beings inhere in the stories of their lives*" (Pinkola Estes, 1993: i).

Personal narratives link together historical past, present and future and acknowledge that while the individual may be influenced by social structure and culture, each individual has the capacity for interpretation and action and thus lives a unique history (Sikes & Goodson, 2010). Personal narratives help us to respond to 'why' and 'how' aspects together with the 'what' dimension of empirical data and address the interactions that ultimately direct the participant's line of thought and subsequent courses of action, enabling the researcher to identify and comment upon the genesis of the directions being reached (Ward, 2003: 28-29).

This however implies that participants still need protection for making their stories available to others and ethical considerations are to be taken throughout the whole process. It also necessitates a professional research relationship between the researcher and the researched which implies that researching disadvantaged, underprivileged and marginalised populations is an ethical responsibility of researchers (Hewitt, 2007; Liamputtong, 2007). Moreover, ethical responsibility must also reflect the researcher's attempt to contribute to the

amelioration of aspects related to such populations (Smith, 2005) by generating new knowledge. This ethical duty entails that a social justice approach to research is fundamental when exploring the integration process and educational trajectories of disadvantaged participants (Josselson, 2007) such as young asylum migrants. A social justice approach in this research is reflected through its exploration of research and practice in the field of asylum migrants' integration and vocational education. That could ultimately inform and improve educational services required by asylum migrants in vocational education.

The primary criticism of interpretivism is that "*it does not allow for generalisations because it encourages the study of a small number of cases that do not apply to the whole population*" (Hammersley, 2010: 23). However, others have argued that the detail and effort involved in interpretive inquiry allows researchers to gain valuable and wide-ranging insight into particular situations that require such specific methods (Macdonald et al., 2002; McMurray et al., 2004). Although all research methods have their strengths, weaknesses and limitations, educational research should not be about randomised experiments and generalising results, but more on the appreciation of information through tangible circumstances focusing on subjectivity and individuality.

Having better quality research in the education sphere to inform and influence policy and practice would eventually help in bringing about the required changes in practice. In this work it is believed that these changes would make vocational education more appealing to the present needs of asylum migrant individuals and eventually society at large.

My research study aimed to provide insight into the lives of asylum migrant students through their narratives having the importance placed on their individual experiences as stated by the same individual (Gorard, 2013). In this design subjectivity is seen as having the most value and lends itself more to the purpose of describing and theorising on an issue. Flexible design methods are generally semi-structured or even unstructured with a base of holistic perspective and inductive reasoning (Elliott & Lukes, 2008).

### **3.6 The Use of Narratives**

Considering that asylum migrants are the experts of their own experiences (Hynes, 2003: 1), an important and effective method that can be used to obtain data from research participants as aforementioned is that of narratives. Stories can mobilize others into action for progressive social change. Twentieth century civil rights movements were born as individuals narrating

their stories about small moments of discrimination (Kkohler Riessman, 2008). According to Somers & Gibson (1994: 38-39), people make sense of their life experiences by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate their experiences within one or more narratives. People are guided to act in certain ways on the basis of the projections, expectations and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately connected repertoire of available social, public and cultural narratives.

Narrative analysis refers to a family of approaches for interpreting diverse texts which have in common a storied form (Riessman, 2008). It offers a '*natural*' and powerful means of understanding how individuals experience life events and the capacity to resist the compartmentalisation of experience and maintain the meaning ascribed to them by the participants. The analysis (meaning-making) occurs throughout the research process rather than being a separate activity carried out after data collection (Gehart et al., 2007). Connelly & Clandinin (1990; 1994; 2000) illustrated the research value of narratives of personal experience, while Holland et al. (2001) and Lassiter (2005a) among others demonstrated how narrative approaches facilitated the consciousness of embodied experience, as this filters through memory and later experiences, to become visible and serve as a mediator during discussion. Eventually, through discussing and interpreting the story of their experiences, participants would be able to author their identities.

Connelly & Clandinin (2006: 375) defined the methodologies of narrative as both an experience and a study about experience, adding "*to use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as the phenomenon under study.*"

Research participants would have full voice to construct meaning from within the systems of belief, their attitudes, values and ideas that shape sense of self and identity. As found in Polkinghorne (2006; 2010), the data in this study would be the stories and the process that creates them. Experiences cannot be isolated and fragmented as '*pieces of data*', as their meaning lies within the person who experiences them and the part played in the whole story. Thus, the process requires trust, openness in the research relationship as well as mutual and sincere collaboration (Etherington, 2013).

According to Walker & Unterhalter, Table 12, the narrative approach points to education in various ways. It gives importance to subjectivity and experience and may serve as an opportunity to learn through the life experiences of others with the possibility of utilising pedagogy of care, compassion and concern. Listening to the narratives of others can produce

trustworthy accounts and offer an opportunity for further understanding and innovative learning that may result in accountable knowledge.

**Table 12: Narrative Approach in Education Research**

1. *Subjectivity and experience are acknowledged, celebrated and recognised to be powerful and compelling, allowing us to learn moral truths.*
2. *It can be utilised as part of pedagogy of care, compassion and concern in which we ask questions regarding what it means to be taught by the lives of others and enabling us to learn how to act morally through others' experiences. (This is central to this study as it aims at discovering what asylum migrant learners hold as necessary for their integration at college which will ultimately result in a form of social justice.)*
3. *The reconstruction of learning through new ways of seeing. Whilst listening to others, we might produce more accountable and more responsible knowledge.*
4. *Narratives might produce trustworthy accounts which can enlarge the scope for understanding.*

Walker & Unterhalter, 2010: 1.

In addition to the benefits of the innovative educational aspect through narratives as listed above, the participant can further learn along the whole process. Telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. When telling stories people tend to select details from their stream of consciousness. According to Seidman (1991:1), the process of selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order and making sense of them, makes telling stories a meaning-making experience.

Furthermore, Clandinin & Murphy (2009: 599) emphasised that *“as narrative researchers work with their field texts it is the experience of the participants with the researcher that remains the primary concern.”* Hence throughout this research, the participants were given

the opportunity to interpret their transcribed experiences in text as part of the ‘*whole*’, adding to and transforming the story with each discussion. In this way it is believed that it is their voice that would articulate the narrative (St Pierre, 2008; Holland et al., 2001).

Thomas (2009) states that the research process includes multi-faceted aspects and it is rarely straightforward. There was preparation before data collection, the data collection per se and the analysis following the data collection. Each and every research study carried out with emarginated/vulnerable groups, in this case the asylum migrant learners in vocational education, is fraught with ethical considerations. Janesick (2010: 146) stated that, “*Without a doubt, all qualitative researchers ..... deal with ethical issues by virtue of working with real people in real settings face to face.*” As researcher I had the responsibility to keep the participants safe during the research process and moreover, to strive to make the experience a positive and useful one.

### **3.7 Research Methods**

The section below presents a discussion on the research methods used in this study. This section deals with the ethics involved and examines the use of focus groups as well as semi-structured interviews as qualitative data collection methods. The methods adopted for the research were strongly influenced by the research ethics.

#### **3.7.1 Ethical Considerations**

An essential aspect of every research study is ethics. What every researcher has to bear in mind throughout the research process are codes of ethics such as honesty, sensitivity, respect and confidentiality towards the participants. As Peach (1995: 13) explains, there is a difference between “*doing good research and doing ethical research.*” The principle of ‘*primum non nocere (first do no harm)*’ (Liamputtong, 2010: 37) was seriously taken into consideration to avoid any emotional or physical harm that could jeopardise the social well-being of the participants. It was imperative that the research relationship between the researcher and the participants reflected this principle throughout the whole process and that the participants reassured themselves that the researcher was considerate, empathic and supportive of them, so that they could trust the research relationship. Additionally, to produce a research which is more transparent, valid and reliable, I practised ‘*active and methodical*’ listening (Bourdieu, 1996), and at the same time adopted a rigorous ethical reflexivity that recognizes the inherent risk of ‘*symbolic violence*’ (Block et al., 2012) through misunderstanding or misrepresenting research participants.

Being ethical involves taking personal ownership of the responsibility for acting ethically. Guillemin & Gillam (2004) distinguish between ‘*procedural ethics*’ which involve formal processes and ‘ethics in practice’ which is ongoing over the course of research. Therefore, before the study actually started, I started with the formal processes of obtaining the clearance and ethical approval from the University of Sheffield (Appendix IV, p. 256) as well as from MCAST (Appendix V, p. 257). To find the participants for the research, I forwarded an invitation letter (Appendix VI, p. 258) to the MCAST Registrar to be forwarded to all asylum migrant students over eighteen years of age. Aware of the disparities in power between the researcher and the research participants (Block et al., 2012), I refrained from asking potential participants to join the research but sent a generic email through the registrar’s office. I adopted an iterative approach in this regard where participants were free to leave at any time along the project process. Furthermore, I never used my office for the interviews and the focus groups, so as not to portray the message of power imbalance. In order to invite lecturers, I sent an email to all lecturing staff that had students from an asylum-seeking background in their classes and invited them to attend an individual briefing session followed by a focus group session on the research (Appendix VII, p. 259). All participants, both students and lecturers, were over eighteen years of age and all were capable of giving their voluntary, informed consent. For McLeod (2006: 171), “*Informed consent depends on the fulfilment of three criteria: competence, provision of adequate information, and voluntariness.*”

This research had a non-probability sampling. The inclusion exclusion criteria adopted is as follows: MCAST students, over eighteen years of age, non-Maltese hailing from sub-Saharan countries with an asylum seeking background, informed through a mail shot, one attrition and another one who was not within the set criteria.

During the briefing session, eight students turned up; one was from an eastern European country accompanying a friend and immediately left as she realised that the study was meant for students hailing from sub-Saharan countries. Another student immediately stated that he was not ready to accept to be part of the project due to course commitments considering that he was in his last year of the degree course. The remaining six students, four males and two females, showed interest to participate in the research study. I explained in detail the purpose of the study, what their involvement would entail, how the data collected would be used and that they would be free to leave the research process at any time until the process of data collection was completed. As a pre-requisite they were asked specifically to respect

confidentiality at all times throughout and after the entire research process. I worked in partnership and participants had the possibility to discuss analysis, findings and interpretation before the study was submitted. All transcripts were given to participants for their approval. The participants were proudly committed to their project of sharing their experiences and views whilst passing on their messages to make MCAST and possibly other similar colleges more welcoming particularly to asylum migrant students. Participants were promised a copy of the thesis once finalised.

Confidentiality was one of the ground rules discussed at the beginning of the focus group session. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in place of the participants' names although four out of the six participants offered to use their own personal name. Since two participants were not in favour of using their own name, it was agreed amongst the whole group to use pseudonyms for all the participants' names in the research.

Grinyer (2002) cites Barnes' (1979) rule of the thumb implying that data is presented in such a way that participants remain anonymous to the public but they can recognise themselves in the data provided. Although there is a certain amount of data on each individual participant, it is very difficult to recognise and identify the participant among the MCAST student population. According to Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, "*if researchers are maintaining the principle of beneficence, overseeing the potential consequences of revealing participants' identities is a moral obligation*" (2000: 95). In fact, ethical issues permeated my decision-making at every stage of the research process. I realised from the initial phases of the entire research the sensitivity of the topic with potentially vulnerable participants. I made use of my counselling skills portraying genuineness, empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard whilst maintaining open posture and eye contact with the participants. Consequently, as a researcher I had to take steps at all stages to accurately report and convey the feelings and perceptions of the protagonists of the study. I wanted to ensure that the participants do not suffer any trauma either during the research process or once the study is published. Hence tact and sensitivity to mitigate any discomfort were very important especially in this kind of research among potentially vulnerable participants.

### **3.7.2 Focus Groups**

A focus group can be defined as a group of individuals chosen by researchers to meet, discuss and comment on the topic of the research (Powell & Single, 1996: 499). I chose to convene both student and lecturer focus groups to enable me to obtain further data in line with

Krueger's argument that, "*a focus group is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment*" (1994: 6). Parker & Tritter (2006) assert that the main purpose of focus group research is to draw upon people's emotions, attitudes and life experiences in a way that is not possible with other methods, such as observations and questionnaires. Nierse & Abma (2011) proclaim that focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context and compared to observation, a focus group enables the researcher to gain a larger amount of information in a shorter period of time.

Morgan & Krueger (1993) maintain that focus groups are particularly useful when there are power differences between the professionals and participants when the interest is on everyday use of language and the culture of particular groups, and when the researcher wants to know the degree of consensus on a particular topic.

Furthermore, Morgan's preference of a focus group definition is one of an inclusive approach that broadly defines focus groups as a research technique that gathers data through group interaction on a pre-determined topic chosen by the researcher. So basically it is in the researcher's interest to provide the focus to the group and the data itself would come from the group interaction (Morgan, 1996: 6).

Focus groups were particularly important within this study to elicit two discussions, one between asylum migrant students and another one between lecturers. It is to be highlighted that the focus group with students as participants was carried out to set the context bearing in mind that this was pivotal to facilitate the interviews that followed, even more so since each participant was asked to sit for three successive interviews. The focus group with the participants was an introduction to the research discussion (Appendix VIIIa, p. 260). In summary, the students as participants' initial focus group session was held to introduce and get to know the research participants and to generate a dialogue at the beginning of the research to identify the issues which are salient and which should be focused upon during the study. Through the focus group's personal sharing, individual participants' biographies were compiled and presented in the next chapter. Since participants were hailing from different countries experiencing political turmoil, I was fully aware of the eventuality of having participants whose countries were at war with each other or having national disputes with countries of other participants. Focus group participants were guided with a set of introductory questions (Appendix VIIIa, p. 260), and were totally free to open up and divulge

information as much as they wanted. The focus group paved the way for the one-to-one interviews that followed. It served its purpose as when the interviews were held, participants were already familiar with the research subject.

Morgan (1997) states that focus groups elicit information in a way which allows researchers to find out why an issue is relevant to a particular group. Interaction in the group also enables participants to ask each other questions and re-evaluate their own perception of their realities (Kitzinger, 1995). However, focus group research also has its limitations. Some can be overcome by careful planning and moderating, but others are unavoidable and particular to this approach. Morgan (1997) stresses that the researcher has less control over the data produced than in either quantitative studies or one-to-one interviewing. The researcher has to provide a free and safe environment to facilitate interaction between participants. It should also not be assumed that participants in a focus group are expressing their own view but are still subject to external influences which may affect what they say (Van den Berg, 2005). They are speaking in a specific context, within a specific culture, and so sometimes it may be difficult for the researcher to clearly identify an individual message. According to Cook & Inglis (2009), this may mean that within a focus group, participants may be more liable to echo what leading speakers say rather than offer their own opinion. However, it is pertinent to mention that some of the participants felt very much at ease to open up and share deep personal experiences during the initial focus group. Even though this put certain pressure on me as facilitator of the focus group, I had to see that the atmosphere during the session remained conducive and made them feel that they were empathically supported.

### **3.7.3 Interviews**

Interviews are the most widely used method of data collection in the human sciences (Riessman, 2008). Interviews provide in-depth information about a particular research issue or questions. Whereas quantitative research methods such as experiments collect a small amount of data from many subjects, interviews gather a wide range of data from a few subjects. *“A good interview is the art and science of exploring the subjective knowledge, opinions and benefits of an individual”* (Suler, 2002: 324). The knowledge, experiences, opinions and beliefs of that person can be seen as a system and so the scope of the interview is to explore that system and all of its elements. When one analyses the results from an interview, the hermeneutic method would be used. Gadamer (1960) describes how in this interpretation we look at how all the personal narratives made by the interviewee are

interrelated, analysing any contradictions and consistencies. The interview is a holistic research method, which in essence means that all the bits of data from the interviewee provide a '*big picture*' that goes beyond individual excerpts of data.

An interview can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Thomas, 2009). The structured interview consists of a list of fixed questions. The interviewer strictly adheres to the questions word for word. The unstructured interview, on the other hand, allows for more freedom and flexibility in questioning and in an informal atmosphere since the style is more conversational. It involves a direct and collaborative interaction between me as the researcher and the research participants. Denzin (2001) states that, interviews are part of the dialogic conversation that connects all of us to the larger moral community, as they attempt to understand the world from the subjects' point of view and to unfold the meaning of their lived world. The researcher adjusts the questions according to how the interviewee is responding. One may even inject their own opinions or ideas in order to stimulate the interviewee's responses. Berry (1999) is of the opinion that the unstructured interview requires much more skill and is much more complex than the structured one. The semi-structured interview includes both rigid specific questions and others that can be answered in depth and at length. Young asylum migrants have faced traumatic experiences such as torture, loss, rape, displacement and other uncommon experiences which have denied them opportunities to access and manifest their voices leading to self-silencing and a sense of voicelessness (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertsch, 2003; Wessells, 2004). Furthermore, they may have been to extensive and repetitive interviews focusing on detailed stories of fear, hopelessness, helplessness and trauma that have led to their status (Amnesty International, 2013). Therefore, an opportunity to voice their stories freely without any authoritative pressure linked with their status and residency but with an aim of improving vocational education services for asylum migrants was favourable. According to Kissoon, (in Moran & Temple, 2011) research has demonstrated that 'affective' indicators are profoundly significant to integration (Ryan & Woodill, 2000; Bloch, 2002; Korac, 2002; Zetter at al., 2002) and are knowable through in-depth interviews and a research process that creates room for participants to voice the evolution of their circumstances and their personal satisfaction.

Barbour & Schostak (2005) state that within a qualitative approach, the most popular interview is the unstructured because it obviously allows for more depth and gives more control and power to the participant. Though I had some initial and core questions, I did not adhere to set parameters or ideas as I attempted to use non-directive, open-ended questions.

(Appendix VIIIb, VIIIc & VIIIId, p. 261-3). I believe that this enhanced the space available for the voices of the interviewees, consequently leading to potentially capture unique narratives as expressed by and explored with participants.

However, in my research, through the complementing one-to-one interviews, three with each participant, the student migrants had the opportunity to voice their own personal views without being influenced by others. During the interview sessions with them, I intended to help them link their historical past with their present and future (Appendix VIIIc & VIIIId, p. 261-3). While I acknowledge that the individual may be influenced by culture and social structures, I believe that everyone has the capacity for interpretation and action and thus lives a unique history (Sikes & Goodson, 2010). Individuals carry with them both a private and public life that cannot be separated (Bullough, 1998), hence participants would have the opportunity to recount their experiences as they lived them and look at the interplay between these experiences and other life forces both within and outside college.

Aware that it may have been rather tough for some of the participants, having to go through and relive the rough phases of their lives, such as the time when they had to leave their birth country together with all the unique experiences they went through, I listened attentively and made sure that they were understood, respected and appreciated.

### **3.8 Data Collection**

The methods chosen for this research study were the focus group and the semi-structured interviews. The initial meeting, focus groups and interviews were all held in one academic year, 2016–2017, and I must say that the participants' commitment was there throughout the whole process. As agreed in the briefing session with the participants, the focus group session was held in December 2016. Dates and time for the interviews were set in agreement with the individual participants according to their availabilities. Assessment periods were avoided upon request from the participants. The three sets of interviews were held between February and May 2017. No interviews were held before the completion of the previous set, meaning that all interviews about the participants' past experiences were concluded before starting with the second set concerning their present experiences. To avoid contamination of data, the six interviews per set were all carried out in a span of not more than three weeks. The lecturers' focus group was held in July.

### **3.8.1 Students' Focus Group**

Starting off with the first focus group session, personalised issues emerging from the focus group session were followed up and further discussed during the one-to-one semi-structured interviews. During the focus group discussions, I was cautious not to portray a position of power but extended myself in a less directive and domineering role. My role was more of a moderator/facilitator. Moreover, I encouraged participation through empathic comments and contributions to the discussion on the areas deemed by the participants to be most important to the research. This enhances agency (Drewery, 2005) and voice, consequently leading to unique narratives as expressed by and explored with participants. I agree with Krueger (1994: 121), when stating that "*the moderator should remember that s/he is a visitor in the world of the participants, and for a brief time s/he is sharing the reality of the participants' environment.*"

During the introductory focus group, participants were asked to introduce themselves by discussing some aspects of their timeline and key events in their life. This served as the initial sharing of their experiences in the group. They were totally free both on the level of sharing as well as on their participation in the research project. Themes that emerged from the discussion served as catalysts to the generation of new experiences. Whilst similarities helped to build a sense of community at college, differences triggered new interests and more questions to be answered. Furthermore, injustices helped us to become more critical and to reflect on action needed in an attempt to bring about change. I highlighted the point that they will have the opportunity to discuss further during the one-to-one interviews.

### **3.8.2 Students' Interviews**

Through the other method of data collection, the one-to-one interviews, asylum migrant participants had the chance to narrate their personal experiences in an informal and confidential setting. These interviews were semi-structured in order to enable participants to be free to express themselves whilst explaining their personal experiences with the interviewer. These interviews built on the initial focus group session and gave the participants the opportunity to delve deeper and in more detail into their experiences. I was fully aware that during the interview my role was to facilitate the narration in an empathic way as stated by Mitchell (1993: 55), "*The informed researcher's voice no longer provides an authoritarian monologue but contributes a part to dialogue.*" I agree with Mc Crachen

(1998: 17) when stating that, *“individual interviews are not to survey the terrain but to mine it and are to suit a process which is much more intensive than extensive in its objectives.”*

### **3.8.3 Lecturers’ Focus Group**

The third source of data collection was the focus group session carried out among a group of six lecturers who had experience in teaching migrant students. This focus group session helped me to acquire a wider perspective on the asylum migrant students at college from the lecturers’ perspective as opposed to that of the students themselves.

All interviews and focus group sessions were recorded and reheard by the researcher as many times as necessary when transcribing. Although an argument against the use of audio recorders is the inhibitions it might create to participants, I believe that once the relationship was established with the researcher, participants did not object to being recorded. With their consent I also jotted down short notes during and directly after the interviews as a back-up of the points brought up in the interview in case something went wrong with the recordings.

It was also helpful to take note of the mood, expression and body language of the participants while speaking about the different experiences and issues both in the focus group session and in the interviews. These were followed up and also added to the transcriptions which then facilitated the analysis.

English being officially the language of instruction at MCAST, it was unanimously agreed with the participants that the language used throughout the project would be the English language. In other words, since students as participants follow their courses being delivered in English, language is not considered a barrier. This is the taught language used in all post-secondary and tertiary education settings in the Maltese islands.

### **3.9 Data Analysis Approach**

*“By our interviewing and transcription practices, we play a major part in constituting the narrative data that we then analyse. Through our presence and by listening and questioning in particular ways, we critically shape the stories participants choose to tell. The process of infiltration continues with transcription, for language is not a perfectly transparent medium of representation”* (Riessman, 2008: 50).

The unit of analysis in this research study were asylum migrant students hailing from five war-torn and/or politically unstable countries in Africa following a vocational education programme at a specific institution. The research content was the participants' narratives on their past, present and future together with their perspectives on how they can be better assisted to form part of the college community throughout their vocational journey at MCAST.

Analysis of content usually involves fitting the evidence and information of data chosen by the researcher into a framework which may take the form of categories, classifications or concepts (Goodson & Sikes 2010).

Starting with the transcription of focus groups and interviews, I then moved on to the analysis procedure as follows: In the analysis I rigorously went through the data collected from the focus groups and interviews of both asylum migrant students and lecturing staff. I listened to the recordings once again while reading the transcripts to ensure my writing was accurate. I made sure to alter the participants' names in the course of interviews to protect the participants' identity. I engaged myself in a close reading to gain a better understanding and a coherent sense of the participant narratives. Referring to the research questions, I summarised the general findings and looked for certain similarities and differences. Then, I elicited the emerging themes and grouped them in three lists, one for each set of interviews. Then, the initial conceptual groupings were reviewed and organised into main and subsidiary themes.

I concur with Virginia Braun et al. when stating that: "*Analysis becomes a creative rather than technical process, a result of the researcher's engagement with the data set and the application of their analytical skills and experiences, and personal and conceptual*" (Braun et al. in Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2017: 24).

Over all my attention during the analysis was on 'what' was said, what was transcribed, and secondly 'how' it was said. Focusing on the act of the narrative and its effects on the individual, I realised the importance of reflexivity (Shaw, 2010) as a crucial element of qualitative research analysis.

### 3.9.1 Validity and Reliability

The trustworthiness of the qualitative research refers to the researcher's honesty in reporting the findings and the integrity of the findings (Schram, 2006). Reliability and validity coupled with trustworthiness are the measure of good practice in research. Reliability, a prerequisite of validity (Cohen, 2001), is a trustworthiness of the observation of data, whereas validity is a trustworthiness of results (Stiles, 1993). By using the aforementioned methods of data collection, I used a strategy that provided more strength and accuracy. According to Woods (1986: 87), "*in social scientific research, the use of three or more different methods or bearings to explore an issue greatly increases the chances of accuracy.*"

Qualitative researchers analyse research questions from multiple perspectives to check and establish validity. Cohen, Manion et al. (2011) clarify that through the different tools used to gather data, the researcher tries to explain the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint. This attests why I opted to use focus groups with professionals to enrich the data gathered from the interviews with asylum migrant students. Maxwell (1992) suggests five categories, Table 13, that should be applied to examine the validity of qualitative research.

A safeguard against the researcher's bias was the use of respondent validation which Woods (1996: 40) defines as "*insiders confirming the correctness of analysis.*" I did my best to pass on the transcript of each focus group session and interview to the participants for their approval or amendment. Through their feedback they were articulating their narratives according to their own preferences, understandings and meanings.

In order to enhance the trustworthiness and authenticity of this study, I ensured that appropriate measures were taken throughout the project. The researcher, being a key instrument of the project, practically cannot distance himself from personal concerns, experiences and understanding of what goes on in the research. Hence, being part of the research world he cannot be objective because "*nature as-the-object-of-human-knowledge never comes to us "naked"; it comes to us only as already constituted in social thought*" (Harding, 1991: 147). Thus, I employed critical examination of my own and the participants' perspectives as these are uncovered through this study.

**Table 13: Validity of qualitative research**

1. *Descriptive validity refers to the credibility or accuracy (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Walsh, 2003) of the participant's narratives.* Hence the transcriptions must be accurate including non-verbal elements that would inform the data. All interviews and focus group sessions were transcribed.
2. *Credibility features highly in the way data is interpreted.* The researcher must take into account and interpret participants' words and actions including body language and clues in transcripts.
3. *The theoretical validity is the result of theories generated from the interpretation and analysis developed if the study is to be considered credible and defensible (Thomson, 2011).* Reference to the literature review chapter.
4. *In qualitative research generalisability can be problematic since findings might be only applicable to similar groups (Auerbach & Silverman, 2003; Wainwright, 1997).* However, patterns of behaviour may be observed across multiple and potentially contrasting research objects indicating how and why the behaviour occurs.
5. *Evaluative validity draws on the assessment of the evaluations carried out by the researcher.* According to Aguinaldo (2004), the crucial question for every research study is "*What is it valid for?*"

Maxwell (1992)

### **3.10 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the methodology upon which this research is based has been explained and supported by a theoretical discussion. According to the researcher's opinion, the research methods chosen for this study were best suited to allow flexibility and at the same time provided an opportunity for the research participants to express themselves freely, clearly and honestly on their experiences both outside and at college. As a researcher, when collecting and analysing data, as a researcher, I adopted a flexible approach of partnership with the participants and was open to any new ideas that stemmed from the original data. I felt it my responsibility to respect the participants and their views, collect the data with great caution,

understand the given data, convey it in a clear and understandable way and make it accessible to others. Through such data, one can have a wider overview and appreciate better the tribulations migrants face when fleeing from their country of origin and their settling in the completely new environment of the host country.

The next chapter provides pen portraits of the six participants. Full transcripts of the interviews are available (Appendix IX, p. 264) together with the tabled selected extracts (Appendix X, p. 392).

## Chapter Four – The Participants’ Pen Portraits

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the six student participants interviewed for this study. The pen portraits of the six participants are presented in order to convey the complexity of the life experiences of asylum migrant students. This chapter starts with a brief contextual statement on the political landscape of the countries participants are hailing from. The main factors included relate to conflict, political instability, displacement of people and the Human Development Index (HDI) as an indicator of the well-being of the general population as a whole (related to health, education and economic factors). I decided to focus on the political aspect as from the participants’ interviews it transpired to be a relatively common theme for the participants’ countries of origin. Furthermore, the political element directly influences other aspects such as stability and conflicts, economic and social security, human rights, future prospects etc. I acknowledge that there could be an element of bias but my aim is to give context to the ‘drivers’ of fleeing migration according to the participants’ views. Reference is made to the Human Development Index (HDI), ranking of the research participants’ countries. This ranking is based on an assessment of the economic, health and educational factors of the country. I included maps depicting the participants’ journeys from their home country to Malta. The approximate distance from their country’s capital city to Malta is calculated through [www.distancefromto.net](http://www.distancefromto.net) Following the maps are pen portraits of the six participants whose stories provide the basis and essence of this study. These pen portraits provide brief information on the six participants and their families. The responses to the physical and psychological experiences of the six participants will be discussed in the next chapters. The transition into Education at MCAST will be presented in detail in the Education section of the Discussion chapter, including how they enrolled at MCAST and who assisted and informed them on where and how to find the right support. The details in the pen portraits are all drawn from the introductory focus group and interviews as well as from the notes taken during the sessions with the participants and their depiction and perspective of life events. Participants’ statuses remained the same during the time of the study. Participants are introduced and identified by their pseudonym.

## 4.2 Stefan's Country of Origin – Political Background

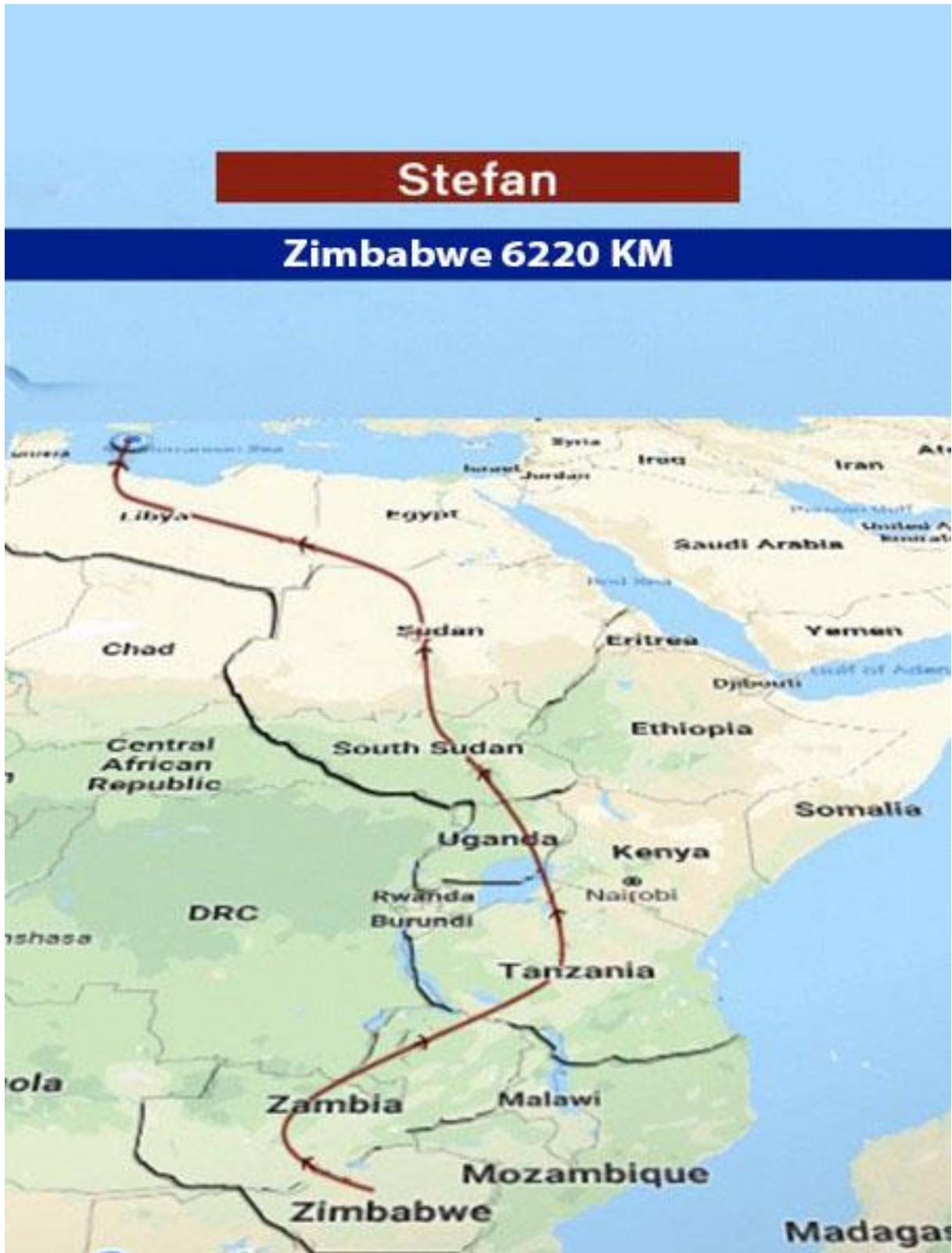
**Zimbabwe:** Zimbabwe was declared an independent state from the British rule in 1965. Following a lengthy guerrilla war, in 1980, the ZANU party won the election and Robert Mugabe became Prime Minister. It is believed that he won a series of elections by manipulating the situation in order to retain power (Rotberg, R., 2010). “*The ruling party's violent intolerance and narrow vision of the nation was increasingly noted in the first decade of independence but came into stark relief in the 1990s as the extent of the violent repression of ZAPU.....*” (Alexander & McGregor, 2013: 751).

Verheul (2020) found that the rule of law was deeply compromised by the politicisation of ZANU's judiciary together with the economic hardship, the increasing corruption and the partisan distribution of resources in favour of ZANU's loyalty.

In 2008, Morgan Trsvangirai, a trade unionist, led the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The vicious government of Mugabe is reported to have killed more than a hundred MDC officials and supporters. Thousands were also submitted to politically motivated beatings, while up to 200,000 people were displaced (Bratton & Masunungure, 2008).

According to the Human Development Index Report 2019 (2018 HDI data), which measures the average achievements in three basic dimensions of human development - a long and healthy life, education and a decent standard of living - Zimbabwe ranked 150 out of 189 countries, thus placing it at the very low end of the Medium Human Development.

Figure 3. Map of Stefan's Migration Journey



### 4.3 Stefan's Pen Portrait (participant 1, Zimbabwean)

Stefan's status: Temporary humanitarian protection, new

Stefan recounted that he is a single, 35 year-old man from Zimbabwe. He narrated that he was brought up together with his two brothers by both parents and he followed his primary and secondary schooling in Zimbabwe. Stefan proudly stated that he obtained his 'A' levels and wanted to further his education but unfortunately at that time his country was going through political turmoil under the long-time dictatorship of Robert Mugabe. Stefan witnessed his father's assassination and due to this devastating loss and the political unrest in Zimbabwe, he fled and made his way through the desert ending up in Libya. In 2008 the hatred between the African tribes as a result of the abhorrent strategy adopted by Mugabe and his followers made him lose his brother, while the fall of the former Libyan Prime Minister and revolutionary leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, and the political chaos of 2011 in Libya drove him to cross to Malta. He was detained for one year in Malta and was released in April 2012, meaning that he was granted the liberty to freely move around and settle anywhere in Malta. Meanwhile he was still entitled to his grant until joining the labour market. However, in October 2012 Stefan opted to start following a Foundation course in Mechanical Engineering at MCAST but then he moved to a training programme in Applied Sciences also within MCAST. Determined to continue with his studies, he reverted back to Mechanical Engineering and progressed to read for a degree.

Stefan divulged that he shared an apartment with friends in B'Kara and worked part-time as a cleaner in one of the most renowned hotels in Sliema. When he started the course, his employer gave him the opportunity to keep his job for the evenings and weekends. As part of the course training he started to work as a Graphic Design Assistant Technician. Financially he found it a struggle to pay the rent, food, transport, course material and internet services.

Stefan recounted that he was still in contact with his mother who at that time was living in Ghana, and with his younger brother who lived in Nigeria. He emphatically stated that, "*In the future I want to go back to my country to liberate people and maintain democracy all over the place and freedom of speech across the land and freedom of movement.*"

Stefan came across as a very reserved person and, at the time, he mentioned that his life revolved only around school, work and studying.

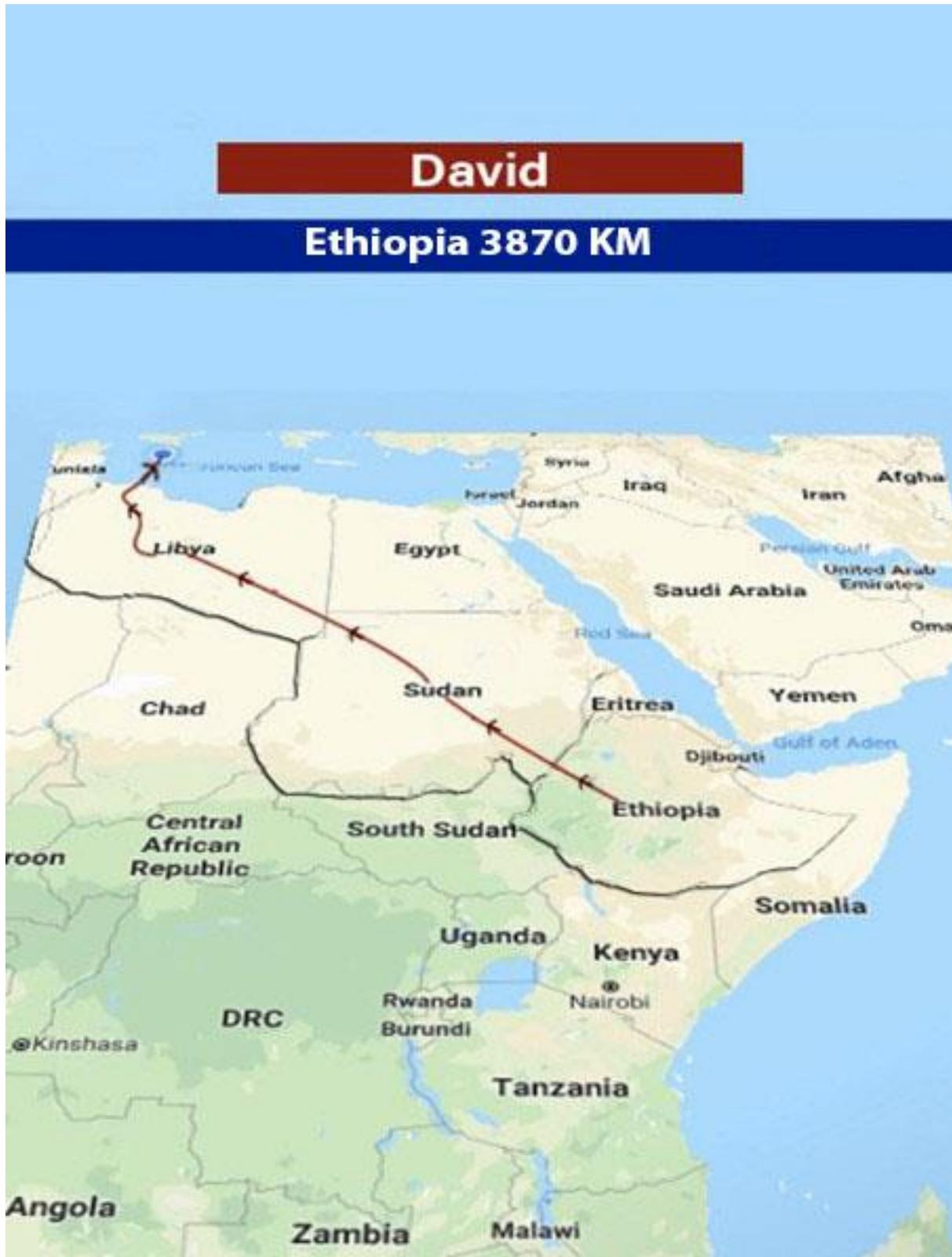
#### 4.4 David's Country of Origin - Political Background

**Ethiopia:** After a history of invasions, wars and dictatorships which produced over 350,000 refugees (Keller, 1995: 128), in 1991 the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) captured the capital city Addis Ababa with the promise of "*multiparty democracy, respect for human rights, a decentralized system of governance and a liberalised economy*" (Gudina, 2011: 664) and forcing president Mengistu to flee the country. The new Constitution of 1994 divided Ethiopia into ethnically based regions and in 1995 Meles Zenawi assumed the post of Prime Minister. In 2004 nearly 200 people were killed in ethnic confrontations in the isolated western region of Gambella and tens of thousands of inhabitants had to flee the area. The Ethiopian ruling political party (EPRDF) was declared winner by the election board in 2000 and then again in 2005 amidst protests and riots that led to the death of many Ethiopians. Van de Walle (2005) observes that "*vote fraud is common*", while "*violence against the opposition goes unpunished*" and "*civil society and the press are repressed.*" This adds up to what Van de Walle terms "*elections without democracy.*"

In February 2006 about 119 people faced trial, including journalists for defamation and the opposition party leaders for treason. According to the US Department of State 2009 human rights report, there are hundreds of political prisoners in Ethiopia. The ruling EPRDF declared another victory in the 2015 general election which was widely criticised by the opposition. Following months of violent anti-government protests, in 2016 the government declared a state of emergency. The continuation of anti-government protests led to the resignation of Prime Minister Desalegn (Migration Profile Ethiopia, EU Commission, 2017). According to Tronvoll (2010), several key factors contributed to the outcome, including the restrictive laws enacted between 2005 and 2010 that hampered the opposition while giving government the authority to act against opposition groups.

According to the Human Development Index Report 2019 (2018 HDI data), Ethiopia ranked 173 out of 189 countries, placing at the lowest range, that of Low Human Development.

Figure 4. Map of David's Migration Journey



#### 4.5 David's Pen Portrait (Participant 2, Ethiopian)

David's status: Subsidiary protection

David is a single 26 year-old man from Ethiopia. During the interviews he stressed the fact that he was brought up by both parents together with his three sisters and two brothers. During the interview his language indicated that he is very proud of his parents, his father being a pharmacist specialising in natural medicine while his mother is involved in charitable organisations. He said that he is the third oldest sibling, after a brother who has passed away and a sister. He used to play football and practise athletics and mentioned that he still dreams of starting running again. At the age of fifteen David proudly said that he started his own business, a small shop which he opened in the afternoon after school. With great passion he narrated that his business flourished rapidly and he had to work long hours in the evenings and during weekends.

During his interviews he stated that he left his birth country Ethiopia in 2012 because of the lack of democracy and the static depressive environment. He crossed from Ethiopia via Sudan to Libya and then by sea to Malta. At the time of the interview, he was still in contact with his family through telephone conversations, which always ended with his family crying, *"I still wish to get time to stay with them, to spend time with them,"* he said while admitting that he would like to visit them, but it was not the right time because of his studies and the expenses involved.

In one of his interviews, David clearly stated that he is sociable, altruistic and values education. In Ethiopia, David was studying nursing and in Malta he started a Foundation course in Applied Science. At the time of the research interviews, he was staying in a Church home for the homeless in Sliema and in his free time he was helping with the running of the home as a carer.

#### **4.6 Nagi's Country of Origin – Political Background**

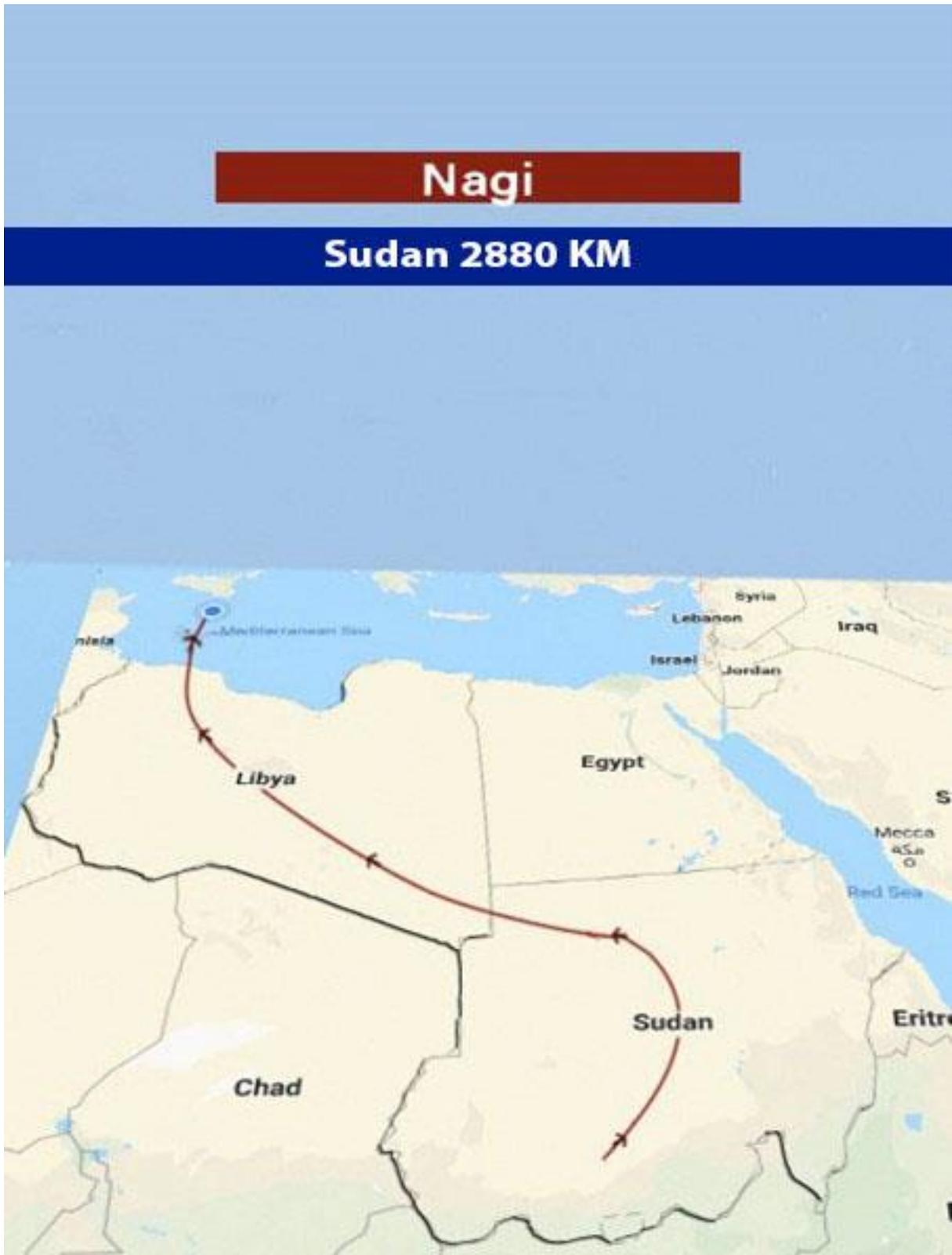
**Sudan:** In 1956 Sudan was proclaimed an Independent State from Egypt's and Britain's rule. Referring to the civil war, Suliman & Omer (1994: 23) concluded that disputes were most remarkably along the ecological borders that divide richer and poorer ecozones. In 1989 the National Salvation Revolution took over in a Military Coup led by Omar al-Bashir and ousted the government of Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi. In 1993 Omar al-Bashir was appointed president of Sudan. He dissolved the National Assembly in 1999, declaring a state of emergency following a power struggle with parliamentary speaker Hassan al-Turabi. Between 2003 and 2008, at least 300,000 Sudanese people were killed and another three million displaced during the Darfur conflict - fighting between rebel groups and the government (Kramer et al., 2013).

Located in Western Sudan, Darfur region had a population of over 90 diverse tribes and sub-clans. Black African rebel groups initiated the conflict by attacking government property, accusing the government of neglecting Darfur in favour of the Arab population in Sudan. The rift between the Arab north, the seat of the government, and the Black African animists and Christians in the south contributed to the civil war between the National Islamic Front (NIF) and the Sudan's People Liberation Army (SPLA).

According to the United Nations Human Rights Council, over 400 villages were completely destroyed forcing some 300,000 civilians to be displaced from their homes. Backed by al-Bashir, the Arab Militia known as Janjaweed destroyed the houses and buildings within the community, shot the men and gang-raped the women and children. The United Nations called the Sudan/Darfur genocide the worst humanitarian crisis and human rights abuses of modern times. (18/06/2013). For Thomas Reuters Foundation, levels of violence have increased since the start of 2013. Approximately 400,000 individuals were displaced from their homes during the first half of 2014 alone as the Darfur crisis persists (Lewis, 2016).

According to the Human Development Index Report 2019, (2018 HDI data), Sudan ranked 186 out of 189 countries, placing at very Low Human Development.

**Figure 5. Map of Nagi's Migration Journey**



#### 4.7 Nagi's Pen Portrait (Participant 3, Sudanese)

Nagi's status: Refugee.

Nagi is a single 23 year-old man from Sudan. He narrated that his father got married twice and he comes from the second marriage. His family of thirteen lives in Sudan and Nagi is the youngest of the boys. He has two younger sisters. Nagi left his country at the age of seventeen and said rather sadly, that the time he left his country was the hardest moment ever and even today he is still homesick. He left his country because of conflicts and war and said that the international media is blocked by the local government so as not to report what is happening. He still has bad memories of his village burning down and he had to move to a family refugee camp in another area of Sudan. Nagi fondly stated that before the war, families in his neighbourhood lived together in love and peace and that this loss of neighbours and friends affected him negatively.

Nagi stated that he started working at the farm with his father at the age of seven. His eyes shone as he said that, when he was young, he was an intelligent mature student and from a very young age he was interested in engineering but then, sadly his life changed on account of the problems he encountered. When he left his country, he moved to Libya where he stayed for seven months until he came to Malta. He arrived in Malta in July 2014 and after detention time in a centre, he walked out and said, *"my first impression of Europe, maybe this is an opportunity I cannot miss."* He joined an MCAST Foundation level 2 course and during the time of interviews he had progressed to level 4 in engineering, always aspiring to read for a degree. The language of communication was a problem for Nagi, but with some support, courses and practice he managed to overcome this problem and acquired the necessary English language skills.

Nagi shares an apartment with his friends in San Gwann and works part time in the field of electrical installation. Although he longs to visit his family, he knows that he cannot do so because of his Refugee status according to the UN Dublin regulations. During the interview it transpired that Nagi is a very sensitive young man, yet he still plays football, basketball, practises swimming and likes to travel.

#### 4.8 Hans' Country of Origin – Political Background

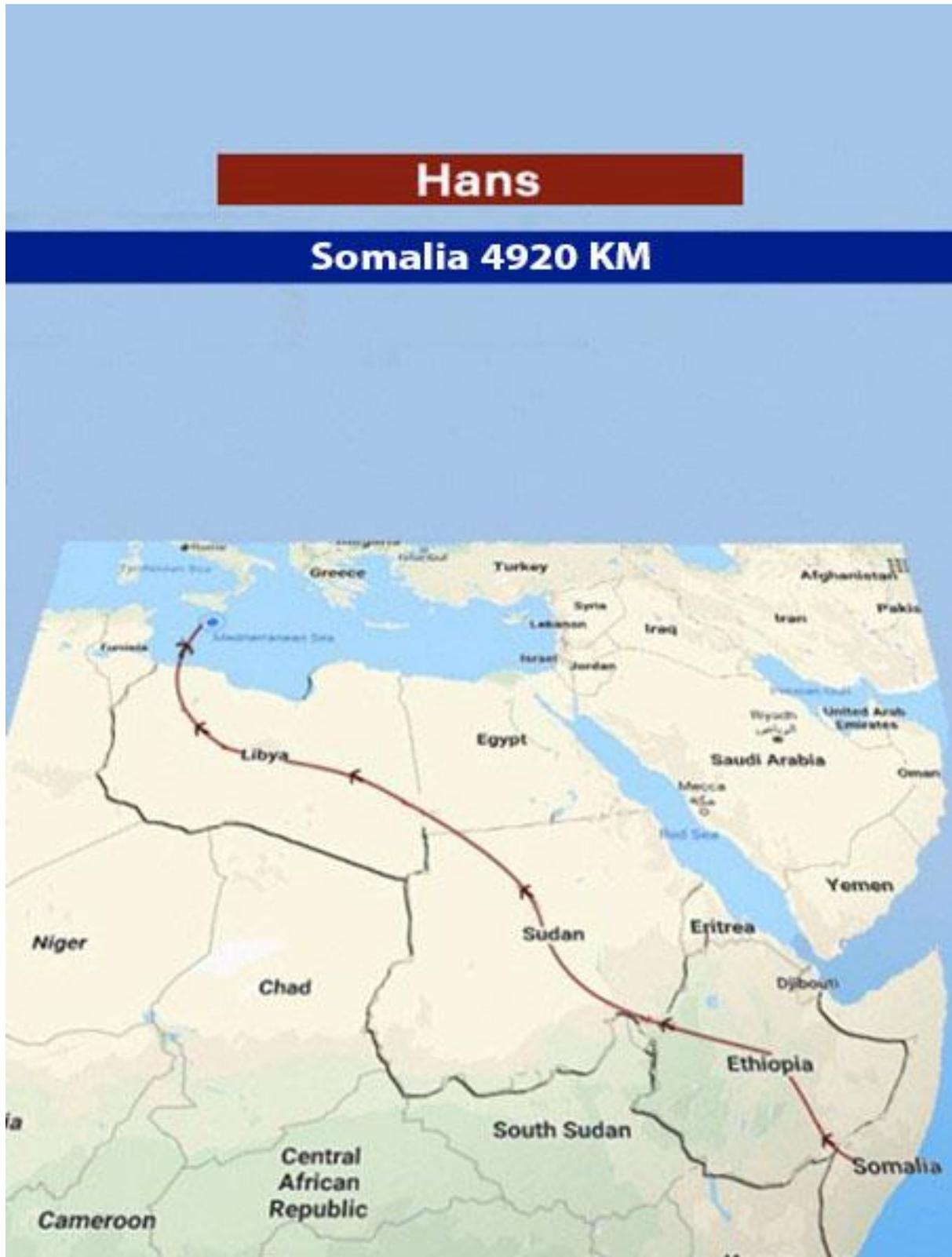
**Somalia:** Both the Italian and British Somaliland became independent in 1960 and formed the United Republic of Somalia. In 1969 Siyad Barre assumed power in a coup after the assassination of Shermarke, the elected President. Siyad Barre declared Somalia, a Socialist State and during his rule nationalised most of the Somali economy. According to Adam (1995: 72), only three of Somalia's numerous clans – that of Barre, his mother, and his principal son-in-law dominated the country's politics (Akokpari, J.K., 1998: 217). By the latter half of 1977 full scale war was in progress and, together with serious drought, this drove away the Ogaden Somalis from their traditional pastures. Over 800,000 fled and were then housed in refugee camps on the Somali-Ogaden borders, set up by international relief organisations and the UN (Griffiths, 1984). The ousting of Mohamed Siyad Barre in 1991 precipitated decades of civil war between rival clan warlords and the disintegration of central authority. The civil war grew further out of resistance to the Military Junta. As a result, thousands of civilians were wounded and even killed (Haji Mukhtar, 2003). According to Guha-Sapir D. & Ratnayake R. (2009: 1):

*“Over a million people have been internally displaced since fighting resumed in 2006. The Food Security Analysis Unit of Somalia (FSAU) closely monitors livelihoods, and estimated 3.25 million in need of the most basic emergency food aid, a 77% increase since early 2008, concerning nearly half of the population.”*

Attempts to stabilise the political situation in Somalia started to make substantial progress in 2012 with the constitution of the first formal parliament in more than 20 years and the holding of the first Presidential Election since 1967. In 2013 further violence broke out with various attacks by Al-Shabaab in several areas including the Presidential Palace and the UN Compound in Mogadishu. The violence continued and further escalated when in October 2017 a double truck bombing killed 350 people in Mogadishu with Al-Shabaab as the prime suspect (BBC Somalia profile, August 2019).

According to the Human Development Index Report 2019 (2018 HDI data), Somalia is not ranked in the list of 189 countries but placed below the very Low Human Development ranking.

Figure 6. Map of Hans' Migration Journey



#### 4.9 Hans' Pen Portrait (Participant 4, Somali)

Hans' status: Subsidiary protection

Hans stated that he is a 23 year-old man from Somalia, married and lives with his wife who is an Asylum Seeker. He said that she has a Maltese working permit and works as a cleaner but has her finger prints in Switzerland and is not in possession of any documents. He is very proud of his wife but rather concerned about his marital relationship in the future due to the irregularities of his wife's status.

He recounted how at the age of fifteen he escaped from Somalia together with his uncle as it was not safe to live there because of the civil war. His eldest brother had to escape too because his life was at risk. His father escaped to Kenya but he was not sure whether his mother was still living in Ethiopia. He stated that he has not been in contact with any of his family members. From Somalia he travelled to Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya and then crossed over to Malta. He added that he witnessed wars at borders of different countries. His uncle who used to help him was hit by a car and killed in Libya, "*Actually, I do not know if they killed him accidentally or they wanted to kill him.*" In Libya he was arrested and sentenced for one year in prison because he had no documents but managed to escape. When he arrived in Malta, he was detained for one year, yet 2014 was a turning point as he was freed from detention and granted the liberty to go round the island with entitlements such as employment, education and health services.

During the time of the interviews, his aim was to work in the field of medicine. In fact, in Somalia he had started a course in nursing but has no accreditation and access to documents of the two years he had already spent at university. He wants to earn a living and at the same time continue with his studies. After detention he joined a carpentry course at MCAST to learn a skill but he found it uninteresting, so the following year he changed to electrical installation. At the time of interviews, he was also working as a part time cleaner in the evenings and during night shifts while following the MCAST level three course in electrical installation. He likes to play football to practise athletics, specifically participating in the ten kilometre event.

#### **4.10 Lara's Parents' Country of Origin – Political Background**

**Eritrea:** Being an Italian colony, the country has been liberated from Italy's occupation and rule since 1890. Claimed as part of the Ethiopian Empire, Eritrea was divided between Eritreans who wanted unity with Ethiopia and those who wanted a separate Eritrean State. In order to try to find a compromise to satisfy both sides, in 1950 the United Nations General Assembly decided to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia. Eritrea became a Constituent State of the Federation of Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1952. Following that action in 1961 the discontented Eritreans founded an independence movement led by the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). The Eritrean people voted almost unanimously in favour of independence in a referendum supporting the Eritrean Independence, with formal international recognition of an independent, sovereign Eritrea (Keller, 1992).

The Eritrean-Ethiopian border conflict emerged out of a series of incidents and resulted in the Eritrean Ethiopian War of 1998-2000. *“Relentless fighting caused hundreds of thousands of deaths on both sides - about 120,000 Eritreans were injured or killed”* (Belloni, M., 2019: 98). The struggle continued for the past 30 years with the Eritrean People Liberation Front (EPLF) guerrilla leaders, now rulers of the country who were economically and politically supported by Eritrean emigrants in Europe and Middle East. Internally all young Eritreans are obliged to undertake military training and serve in one of the ministries in need of labour force for a paltry wage for as much time as required in the name of the freedom and development of the country (Hirt & Mohammad, 2013). The crippled economy, the compulsory military service with its poor wages, deprivation and lack of freedom, all contributed to the exodus of young Eritreans seeking refuge and hoping for a better future in the neighbouring countries and in Europe.

Eritreans are the seventh-largest group of asylum seekers in Europe and the third-largest group of people crossing the Mediterranean into Europe. More than 95% of application cases submitted from Eritreans were accepted and granted refuge by European governments in 2017, the fourth-highest percentage accepted. Between July and December 2018, it is estimated that over ten thousand Eritreans, mostly young people, crossed into Ethiopia seeking asylum (Belloni, M. 2019: 145). This approach serves as a pull factor for a reason as to why Eritreans are choosing to come to Europe.

According to the Human Development Index Report 2019 (2018 HDI data), Eritrea ranked 182 out of 189 countries, placing at very low Human Development.

Figure 7. Map of Lara's Migration Journey



#### **4.11 Lara's Pen Portrait** (Participant 5, Saudi Arabian – Eritrean parents)

Lara's status: Subsidiary protection

Lara stated that she is 21 years old and was born in Saudi Arabia from Eritrean parents. She recounted that sadly her parents had to leave Eritrea because of the political situation and the lack of democracy and freedom. They are eight family members, four girls, two boys and the parents. Lara is the third in the family after a sister and a brother. The family visited Eritrea several times and Lara fondly remembers the visits to her grandparents and other family members. However, in 2011 their residency permits in Saudi Arabia expired and they were deported but the father met someone who had suggested Malta as a solution.

Upon arrival in Malta the family was taken to the detention centre by the police. They were shocked with the hostile attitude of the Maltese security officials. Lara stated that she was disappointed as they had very high expectations of Europe but on the contrary, upon arrival she felt like a criminal surrounded by police. Referring to the detention place, Lara stated that *"nothing was safe in there – I feel sorry because there are still people living there."* After the detention period they rented an apartment in the south of the island. Both parents are unemployed.

The brothers and sisters all continued with their education according to their level: University, MCAST, and compulsory schooling. Lara joined the MCAST Foundation Applied Sciences course level 2 with an aim of joining the nursing course. Lara heartily believes that discrimination and racism are the top problems of the Maltese islands. She likes to play basketball but because of the hijab she had to leave the team. She feels that the coach was discriminating against her and was not allowing her to play because she refused to take off her hijab. However, she is determined to keep on wearing it and longs to move to another country such as England or the USA.

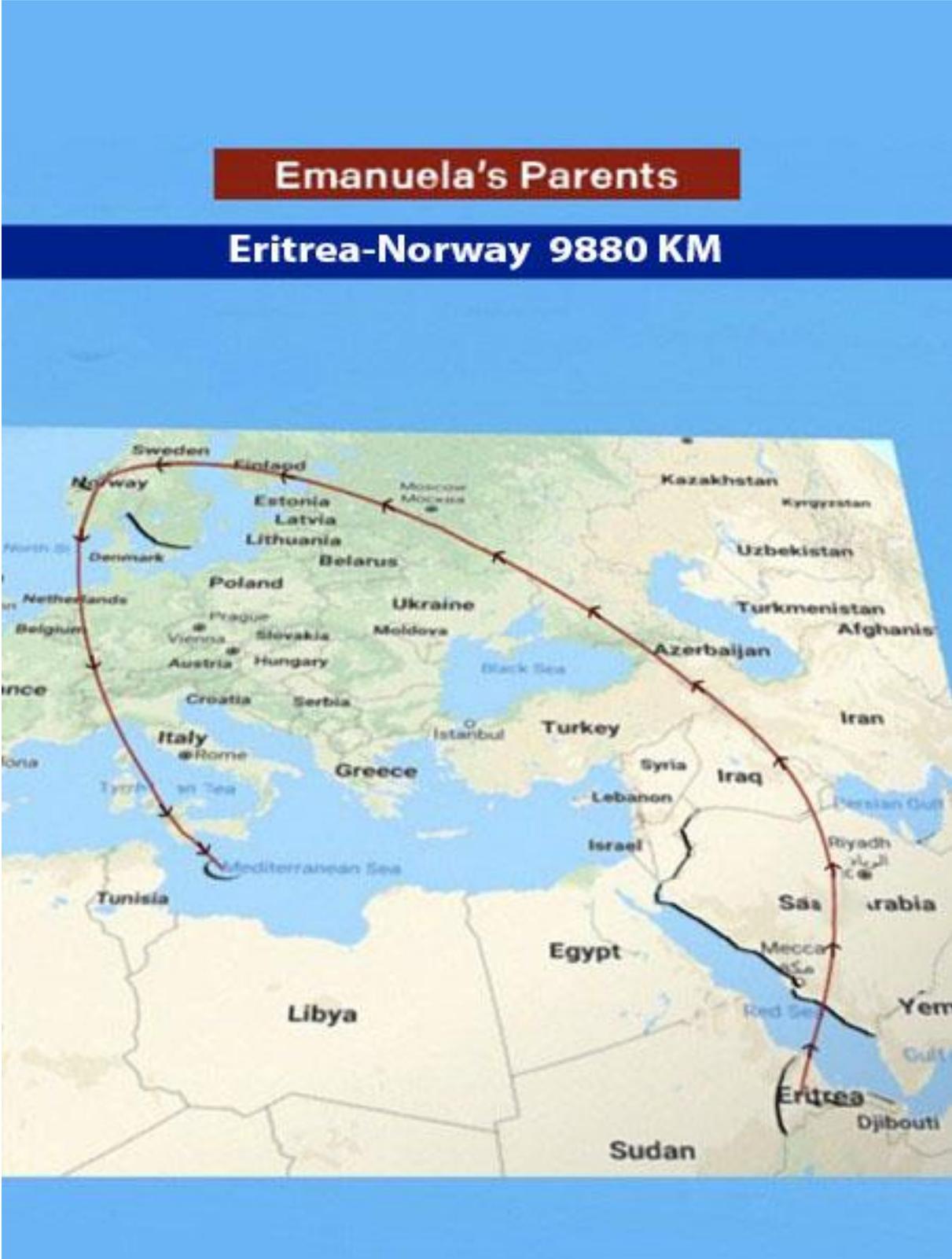
#### **4.12 Emanuela's Parents' Migration – Political Background**

**Eritrea:** When leaving Eritrea to travel and settle in one of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States which include six Middle Eastern countries namely: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman, one must always apply for the mandatory residency visa. The visa is generally granted against payment and usually for a term of six months. Obviously, one has to apply if one wants to extend one's stay in the country. If the authorities refuse to extend the visa one is expected to leave the country as instructed by the same authorities. Travelling South North direction to Europe as an asylum seeker, one has to register his/her finger prints at the first European country according to procedures of the Dublin II Regulation.

This Regulation embodied a new mechanism for determining the State responsible for an asylum claim, backed with a common database for fingerprints - Eurodac. By comparing fingerprints, Member States can determine whether an asylum seeker or a foreign national, who is suspected to be illegally in a Member State, has already lodged an application for asylum in another Member State. This measure controls the so called phenomenon of 'asylum shopping'. The Eurodac regulations state that all asylum seekers over 14 years of age must be fingerprinted when submitting the application. Fingerprints are then digitally transmitted to the Eurodac Central Unit, within the European Commission where they will be compared with those already stored in the data base.

The EU took several further steps towards centralising asylum policy such as The Hague Programme, Common European Asylum System (CEAS) on the harmonisation programme. This programme included the development of Frontex agency – the unified order control system to integrate and standardise procedures, the European Refugee Fund, which is a central fund that is being used to support countries facing large asylum inflows, the Eurodac, as well as the harmonisation of rules and procedures for status determination and appeals.

Figure 8. Map of Emanuela's Migration Journey



#### **4.13 Emanuela's Pen Portrait (Participant 6, Emirati - Eritrean parents)**

Emanuela's status: Subsidiary protection

Emanuela is a 20year-old female born in Dubai from Eritrean parents. She said that she has two younger brothers and stated that she never visited Eritrea. She was told that her parents left Eritrea because her father had issues with the Eritrean authorities. Nostalgically she narrated how she was brought up in Dubai surrounded by family and friends. She uttered that from Dubai her family had to move to Norway because of her father's work where she was very happy and still wishes that one day she would return. After a year living in Norway, the Norwegian authorities stated that according to their records of the Eurodac Regulations, their fingerprints records were originally held in Malta, something which shocked the family and which they completely denied. According to European legislation they had to return to their first destination so, to their dismay, in 2014 they were deported from Norway to Malta. To add insult to injury, her father left the family and they have since then lost contact with him. At the time of the interviews she was living with her mother and brothers in an apartment in Marsascala in the south of the island.

In Malta, Emanuela attended secondary schooling and then joined an MCAST Foundation course in Applied Sciences. During the time of the interviews, she progressed to level 3 and was aiming at joining a pharmacy course at University to become a pharmacist. She wears the hijab and sadly states that some of the Maltese do not accept it and discriminate against those who wear it - *"They keep on staring as if they are seeing something weird."* Emanuela came across as very reserved and quiet but determined. She said that she likes drawing, painting, playing football and spending time on her mobile phone.

## Chapter Five – Findings and Discussion. Understanding the Participants

### 5.1 The Main Interview Themes

This study has attempted to discover the experiences that drove asylum migrants out of their home countries in Africa, the challenges and barriers faced in order to join the Maltese community as well as to pursue their post-secondary and tertiary education. This study has also sought to critically analyse how their experiences affect their aspirations and how MCAST can assist and support asylum migrant students in their educational journey and eventually employment. The following are the overarching questions that guide this study:

1. What are the experiences faced by learners, who arrive as asylum seekers in Malta, in feeling part of Maltese society and, in particular, of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) learning community?
2. According to these students' perceptions, how might their experiences affect their aspirations?
3. How can MCAST with its civic role improve on the provision of support for these learners' educational experiences at the College?

As part of the research process, the recorded interviews and focus group sessions were all transcribed, (Appendix IX, p. 264), to facilitate the proceedings of the data analysis. This included the classification of concepts as well as the identification of similarities and differences to establish the principal and subsidiary emerging themes in response to my research questions. The interview transcripts were analysed in three sets according to methodology, in relation to the three phases of interviews that were undertaken, i.e. phase 1, **Participants' Past** (early recollections, motives that drove them out of their home country and their journey); phase 2, **Participants' Present** (their experiences when arriving in Malta, and reactions), and phase 3, **Participants' Future** (the way forward, motives and obstacles). A number of common principal and subsidiary themes were identified during each of the three sets of interviews respectively. These are highlighted in Table 14, namely past (childhood, the journey), present (detention, insecurity and responses) and future (aspirations and challenges). Similarly a number of subsidiary themes were identified: Past - family, political instability, conflicts and loss, fleeing from country of origin, character, memories, motivation, support, hatred and their reflections; Present - interviews upon arrival, physical, housing, financial, information and support, education (the college), health, employment, differentiated treatment, willpower and resiliency, determination to achieve qualifications,

spirituality; Future - aims and attitudes, solutions, difficulties in general and at college. Reflecting on the data, it is clear that the themes are in many ways interconnected and the reality is more messy than the matrix suggests. Working within the constraints of a written linear thesis this discussion aims to address the research questions in a pragmatic way.

The discussion on Understanding the Participants – Their Past will follow.

**Table 14: The Interview Themes - Understanding the Participants**

	<b>Principal themes</b>	<b>Subsidiary themes</b>
<b>Country Context</b>  <b>Past</b>  (Home country and migration journey)	1 Childhood	Family, Political instability, Conflicts and Loss  Fleeing from country of origin
	2 The Journey	Character, Memories, Motivation, Support, Hatred, Reflections
<b>Maltese Context</b>  <b>Present</b>  (Arrival in Malta and enrolment at MCAST)	3 Detention	Interviews  Physical, Housing, Financial, Information and
	4 Insecurity	Support, Education (the college), Health, Employment, Differentiated Treatment
	5 Responses	Willpower and Resiliency, Determination to achieve qualifications, Spirituality
<b>Hopes and Capabilities</b>  <b>Future</b> (Prospects)	6 Aspirations	Aims and attitudes, Solutions
	7 Challenges	Difficulties in general and at college

## 5.2 Findings and Discussion. Understanding the Participants - Their Past

### 5.2.1 Introduction

The study accentuated the asylum migrant students' perspectives and showed how, unlike local students, asylum migrant students faced dilemmas associated with their past, present and future which was influenced by the migration process itself. In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire asked the educators “*Do you know who you are talking to?*” (Freire, 1993: 120). Moreover, creating a space for participants to voice their experiences accentuates the human element of each and every individual with a natural plea for more social justice. To further acquire a holistic picture of the experiences asylum migrants go through, and to better understand asylum migrant students, I categorised their experiences into three stages: **pre-migration**, **transmigration** and **post-migration** (Anderson et al., 2004; Bhugra & Gupta, 2011).

Seven principal themes were identified from the 3 interviews that were held with each research participant discussing their Past, Present and Future respectively. The discussion in this chapter deals with the themes of the pre-migration phase. Table 15 depicts the themes associated with the Past of asylum migrants.

**Table 15: The Main Themes in Relation to the Participants' Past.**

	Principal themes	Subsidiary themes
<b>Country Context</b>  <b>Past</b>  (Home country and migration journey)	1. Childhood	Family, Political instability, Conflicts and Loss
	2. The Journey	Fleeing from country of origin  Character, Memories, Motivation, Support, Hatred, Reflections

### 5.3 Theme 1: Childhood

Various psychoanalytical theorists have emphasised the importance of the early years for the development of the individual's own personality (Freud, 1949, 1955, 1962; Erikson, 1963; Mahler, 1968, 1971; Piaget, 1920, 1932, 1936, 1966, 1970; Vygotsky, 1916, 1917). Thus, the exposure from a very young age to violence, tension and instability together with the lack of basic needs, may negatively influence the personal development of the individual.

During the interviews, childhood memories were narrated with great nostalgia and connection. Participants devoted particular energy to relating their stories of their own childhood. Both Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) and Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) stated that they have had a *“very good and nice childhood.”* Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) added that. *“Up to thirteen years, I was very happy enjoying life. I was leading a very normal life .... particularly the way people were living.”* This correlates with what was discussed in the literature review chapter with regards to place identity: *“a potpourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about specific physical settings as well as types of settings”* (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983: 60). Emanuela stated that she was told that the reasons for leaving Dubai were related to issues with her father's job (economic migrants, Ravenstein, 1989), whilst Lara's issues were linked to residency permits and visas (Kymlicka, 1989) to remain in Saudi Arabia. Both participants indicated that their childhood living style referred to was missed greatly.

Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) chose to speak about his childhood school experience,

*“I have a vivid memory of my classmates. We used to be together in school and also when there was time for inter school games. How we fascinate things together and come together in a very unique way and be in a very communicable way and try to help each other and try to help our school to win all competitions to other schools. I used to be someone who likes sports a lot in my childhood. That is the one thing I would like to remember from all the time.”*

Contrary to the time of the interviews, one can notice how Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean), was an active student engaging himself in school sports events and activities in spite of the negative circumstances. It is clearly stated that he was selective and wanted to specifically remember

this episode, indicating that there were other experiences (push factors) which he chose not to remember.

According to Nagi's (P. 3 Sudanese) nostalgic views, "*Childhood is the best time of everyone; even when it is hard and difficult, it is the best moment.*" He stated that he misses the security and the support provided by the family, his friends, the food and even the area where he used to go and play. This shows the loss of family sustenance and protection both physical and psychological (Maslow's basic physiological and safety needs, Galtung's security and welfare). Speaking about his parents, Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) added, "*They provided all the money, were able to take care of me from the basic education to certain standard. I think they did well.*" In fact, three out of the six participants emphasised that although they were not rich, their families always provided adequate food and basic education. Since some of the participants' families were farmers, food might have been something they could provide their children with, even in difficult times. At that young age, the participants did not comprehend the poverty that might have engulfed other citizens in their country. On his part Hans (P. 4 Somali) reminisced:

*"Sometimes I used to help my father; he was a farmer and my family also, because my family was poor. When I was young sometimes I used to go to school. My father always encouraged me to go to school and to learn education. Sometimes I used to go to private school lessons. I was living in a very small village in my country. All the people in my area wished to go to America especially farmers."*

Here I observed the inconsistency of Hans' (P. 4 Somali) school attendance due to the political situation and his security as well as the aspirations of the village people. Referring to the time of his childhood, Hans (P. 4 Somali) stated: "*A tragedy was happening in my country; I had no chance to go play football because my father, he was caring for me because of the civil war*" (Maslow's safety needs).

He continued by stating that although he wanted to become a professional football player or an athlete, no classes on how to run or play football were available at that time, meaning that he had to abandon all his football career aspirations. Unlike the other participants, when Hans (P. 4 Somali) was asked about the feeling generated by his past, he stated: "*Pain, very painful.*"

Contrary to that of Hans (P. 4 Somali), according to Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati), her childhood in Dubai was very normal, surrounded by family and friends. She fondly remembers her evenings on the beach in Dubai surrounded by her cousins, uncles and aunties (Maslow's physiological, safety, belongingness and love needs). Her advice would be *"Never to leave your birth country"* since *"the place that you were born, it is very close to your heart"* - the notions of place feed into the notions of identity (Place identity). Furthermore, this indicates the loss experienced by Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) when leaving her birth country and after.

Almost all participants made reference to the memory of childhood instances of joy and peacefulness. Like many people the participants felt that as their lives evolved something valuable was lost. Although this is very common, for them the loss is even bigger as they possibly lost even the chance to visit the places and relive the memories of their past. According to Muneghina & Papadopoulos (2010), *"They (the migrants) go through harsh experiences which include loss of their loved ones, losing homes and sometimes, their identities."* Participants attributed part of their nostalgia to a disconnection from their family and their birth country (loss) as well as part to the awareness of the political intricacies in their home country.

Findings from this study show that values and attitudes (operative public values, - Parekh, 2001) are conveyed from parents and significant relatives to the younger generation. It is very common that during childhood, parents and other elders impart their teachings. David (P. 2 Ethiopian) quoted his father's words, *"You have to be a good person"*, *"You have to go and help"*. He also referred to his play school and his evening Quran lessons. During David's interview I could notice the apparent loyalty and respect he has for his parents. David (P. 2 Ethiopian) started following his family footsteps by setting up his own business and, like his family, contributing to charitable initiatives:

*"When I was fifteen, I started a business, a small business with my school [whilst attending school]. In the morning I go to school and in the evening, I had a shop at that time, a small shop. Then I started a business which started growing with more money. I used to help by small money like charity and like people who do not have everything."*

He added how his parents are both involved in charitable activities.

*“My mother, she is in charge of around eighty women. She just formed a group and they decide what to do every month. They save some money like in an account and if the person gets sick or if the person needs to do something .....*”

Although participants spoke nostalgically of their childhood, their idealism and possibly family and parental influence may have contributed to their decision to leave their birth country when considering the push factors as described by O’Reilly (2015) in the literature review chapter.

When exploring their past histories and the motives which drove them out of their home country, five out of the six participants stated that political instability and conflicts were the main drivers for them to leave their country. *“It was the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea that made my parents leave their home country Eritrea to Saudi”* - Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian).

According to J.K. Akokpari (1998: 219), *“Wherever actual conflicts have generated refugees, or where threats of uncertainty and insecurity have compelled skilled and unskilled labour to migrate, the state’s partial or total responsibility is almost always evident.”*

Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) stated:

*“My memories ehh, the friends, the family and unfortunately some conflicts in front of me and with some family members. My friend he was getting trouble with that because he didn’t know much detail about the war and things like that, and unfortunately he found himself inside this war zone and he had to act like them. It is really hard to see someone you care about and you do not have any ability to take him off from that situation.”*

This shows the sense of duty felt by Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) to intervene and at the same time the sense of guilt and helplessness in front of the abuse of power, war and atrocities. This excerpt indicates that Maslow’s physiological and safety needs were not met.

For David (P. 2 Ethiopian)

*“The problem is with the government, the political situation. The government for example staying for thirty years, there is nothing changed. It is shameful how the government keep people, getting more depression and more bad economy. They are killing the children of poor people, the people who need*

*protection, the new generation. I had personally planned everything to do my future you know. However, I left everything, my family, my friends, my shop, my education ..... and started a new life in a new country.”*

Such decision implies courage and determination to ameliorate one’s life prospects. Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) narrated how corruption is ingrained in the system:

*“I was playing football with my friends and suddenly there was an accident with the goal keeper. A car crashed in him. The car driver was drunk or something, he gets us in trouble, he captured us and with the corruption he was linked with the police. We were driven to the police station. We were beaten there and facing so much harshness and we even regrets our time to be there.”*

This shows the abuse of people in power on innocent victims. This abuse of power will not only cause physical pain to the inhabitants, but also psychological distress (push factor) and the sense of demotivation and helplessness experienced in such circumstances. Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) recounts:

*“They contested the election and the opposition disagreed. They won the election but the losing party disagreed. They did not accept the defeat. They wanted to go for a second run. And that is where the brutality started, where the government in power deployed strict orders trying to oppress the opposition leaders and then even the citizens. Yes, my father was supporting the opposition. That was the problem. He was attacked, just attacked. They knew he was a key member to the opposition. They wanted to finish him. It was in a rally and on their return they met them on their way. They beat you up until you die and leave you. The time they stop you cannot do anything, you will be vomiting blood. By the time you are taken to hospital it will be too late. Yes, I was there. I do not even want to remember because it was very very sad. If you try to picture this, it is so difficult because you know you miss your father like a normal human being. Very very difficult, very hard.”*

Unfortunately, Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) had to go through this experience that made him leave his country and start his journey to an unknown destination. By deciding to leave their countries, participants started facing their new reality and experiencing the loss of what was important in their childhood and at the same time they were immediately faced by tough

challenges which they had to face all by themselves. Such experiences can imply an impact on the individual's own identity as discussed in the literature review chapter (Hardy & Philips, 1999). It seems evident that participants had drawn sustenance from lessons learnt back at their home country, presumably from their elders and significant others.

This is what Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) said in his first interview: *“What is happening there (Darfur) is really something that has to be recorded for the history as well. The government blocked the media to go there and report and record what is happening there.”*

There is a correlation among oppressive leadership, conflicts and poverty as stated poignantly by the UN Under Secretary-General for Public Information, Mrs Theresa Seigny who argued that deepening poverty leads to mounting instability. She continued by stating that the widespread unrest, turmoil and violence which is now afflicting an unprecedented number of countries is linked by one common factor of growing economic malaise, regardless of the ethnic and political guises it adopts (Seigny, 1990).

In his study of “The Homeless in Africa” which focuses on refugees and the internally displaced, Miller (1982) identifies oppressive governments, civil and ethnic conflicts, colonial and racist domination, foreign invasions and natural disasters as central to Africa's refugee dilemma. This oppressiveness is confirmed by David's (P. 2 Ethiopian) words when stating that *“Politicians say on media or in front of people, they say what they are doing is fair. But they are killing the children of poor people, the people who need the protection, the new generation.”*

Miller (1982) further argues that more recent refugee flows and migration are mainly caused by conflicts and economic adversities. This functional correlation between economic crises and conflicts has been well established to be a push factor as discussed in the literature review chapter. In fact, Smith asserts that *“about 50 per cent of the 25 most indebted Third World countries were at war in 1990 or early 1991”* (1992: 141-2). When Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) was asked what he would change from his past, he replied, *“Instead of taking the opportunity to leave my country, I will try to create a very conducive environment for the people and try to create a democratic nation for the people to feel they are citizens of the nation and not to feel like strangers.”*

Nagi's position, as expressed in his reply, is the result of his own personal experience and what he believes is much needed by the inhabitants of his own country. Furthermore,

according to Galtung, this indicates that a basic human need is not met by the inhabitants with the result of fundamental disintegration (feel like strangers) in their home country. These political situations as well as conflicts negatively affect the majority of the inhabitants and their reactions vary according to the individuals, their personality and circumstances. However, one of the main reactions is that of leaving their home country and look for a better future somewhere else.

As discussed in the literature review chapter, the neoclassical economic migration theories highlight the '**Push**' and '**Pull**' factors of migration. These 'push' and 'pull' factors can vary considerably as was shared by the participants themselves. With regards to the 'Push' factors disintegration, David (P. 3 Ethiopian) said "*It is shameful how the government keeps people*" while Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) said "*In my days there was political chaos.*" With regards to the 'Pull' factors Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese), when freed from detention and could freely walk on European land, said "*maybe this is the opportunity I cannot miss.*"

Adepoju (1994) identifies four conditions, referred to as 'regimes', in analysing the dynamics of emigration from sub Saharan Africa. These regimes are: **economic**, **demographic**, **political** and **cultural**. For Adepoju, the deteriorating economic conditions are compelling skilled and unskilled labour to migrate. The changing demographic patterns exacerbate political instability, and are amplified by conflicts and wars, unemployment and the prevalence of certain cultural practices which are increasingly despised by youth, for whom emigration offers escape from what they perceive as anachronistic traditional practices (Akopari, 1998: 213-214). This corroborates with what Emirabayer and Mische's (1998) view that individuals retain the ability to imagine different ways of living and different ways of doing things even if these sometimes seem impossible as stated in the literature review chapter.

Hans (P. 4 Somali) stated that as a result of the civil war, "*you cannot go anywhere. It is very hard and a lot of risk because he [his father] was afraid of the people who work for the government that they would capture me or create problems for me because they were killing people.*" This indicates that the country's political instability experienced by Hans' father left its impact in such a way as to overprotect his son from the claimed atrocities that were taking place by not even letting him go out.

Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) confirmed this by stating "*Because of the political issue that was happening in my country I lost my father*". These excerpts show that political regimes and

their oppression can result in devastating experiences for the inhabitants. However, the effects on individuals can change drastically and the personal impact may vary depending on several factors including the individual's own character and personality. Nonetheless, the interview narratives indicate that participants went through psychological traumas. According to the participants' views, political unrest, life threatening hardship, instability and the lack of democracy as well as civil wars emerged as push factors, the main reasons that inhabitants decide to leave their home country even at the risk of jeopardising their psychological stability and physiological basic needs. Furthermore, the underlying common factor in the above narratives is pain. This is found in various forms such as physical, psychological, loss – “*I left everything*”, living with injustice, experiencing corruption and even resorting to a helplessness attitude as a coping strategy in the circumstances.

#### **5.4 Theme 2: The journey**

According to the participants' narrations, adding to their personal home country experiences and to other unexpected influential and traumatic experiences was their journey from their home country, traversing the Sahara Desert, the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea from Libya to Malta and the detention episode. On deciding to leave their home country, unknowingly they had to face two challenges almost immediately. First, they had to find ways of leaving their country illegally, particularly since their lack of travel documents left them susceptible to mistreatment by the authorities in other countries. They could be arrested, imprisoned, tortured or even killed, taking advantage of their vulnerability. Speaking about his personal experience, David (P. 2 Ethiopian) stated, “*A lot of things happened to me through my journey from time to time you know.*” Such a strong statement indicates the harsh experiences about which the participant was not ready to expand further.

Since people find it easier to travel from one country to another in a globalised world, even though globalisation has made increased homogeneity in the social and economic life of various countries possible (Brown & Launder, 1996), regional, territorial, tribal and possibly even ‘legal’ distinctiveness of individual cultures remain. This study has shown that when people migrate, they start realising and experiencing the losses in their lives and at the same time start developing a new sense of hope for the future (Hunt, 2004). David (P. 2 Ethiopian) misses his family, “*I didn't see the happiness of my family anymore, and when I call, they always cry. I wish to get time to stay with them, to spend time with them*” (Maslow's belonging and love needs).

Secondly is the uncertainty they go through, as none of them knew how long their journey would take. In general terms, this depended on their social capital, on the resources they had at hand and sometimes also on luck. The journey from Africa to Malta may have lasted months, but in some cases, it is known to have taken several years (Spiteri, 2008). Stefan's (P. 1 Zimbabwean) experience confirms this *"..... When we entered Libya, we were caught and detained for three months."* While there could be several reasons for this delay, such as running out of the money needed to pay for the next part of the journey, in particular circumstances, such as when the war broke out in Libya, it seems to be highly likely that some migrants, who may have been considering fleeing to Europe, would have had to postpone travelling. During one of his interviews, David (P. 2 Ethiopian) said, *"I was afraid when I was in Libya. We spent fifteen days in the desert without anything; we only had some water and small things like cake and biscuits. We were a group and that helped us. It is really dangerous; it is not what humans do. They do whatever they like and if they do not find anything on you, they just shoot you."*

They might also have easily been mistaken for African mercenaries in Libya, and thereby associated with the Gaddafi regime, which would have placed their life in further jeopardy. Confirming this dangerous risk, Hans (P. 4 Somali) said,

*"I saw a hard life when I emigrated from my country. I saw different countries especially when I was passing through the desert; I saw the fighting in different wars at borders, border of Libya, border in Chad and border in Sudan. I was crossing the desert for forty days in there; I saw an aeroplane bombarding the army of Libya of President Muammar Ghaddafi. They were attacking us because they thought we were an army."*

Emphasising the danger encountered throughout his journey, Hans (P. 4 Somali) continued to describe what happened to them in the desert.

*"Some people they take the food, some people they take the money, some people they catch you by power (caught and beaten up) and tell you to call your family to give them money, they kidnap you by force to take your money. A lot of people are dying in the desert. I know someone we were together and there when we were crossing the desert he died because of lack of water and the heat of the desert. I saw a very difficult life..... for my uncle he was helping me, we were together and he died in Libya accidentally, they killed him by car."*

*Actually, I do not know if they killed him accidentally or they wanted to kill him. When he died after weeks there, they arrested me. I was taken in a centre sentenced for one year because I didn't have any documents."*

The experience of Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) was different:

*"Everything is so dangerous, the desert is dangerous and even the sea is dangerous. Maybe the sea is more dangerous because when we were crossing the desert, I did not face any challenges. The only challenge that we faced was initially when we were crossing we were attacked by robbers whilst crossing. They took everything, all our documents; they took everything, all money. They take everything from you. That is a challenge that we had and when we entered Libya, we were caught and detained for three months. But when I was released from detention, I left Libya ....."*

From these narrations, one can elicit several points such as the lack of physiological needs, freedom, security and welfare, which may eventually lead to identity crises, mental health issues and trauma. Furthermore, such experiences which unfortunately are not unique, show the suffering and humiliating experiences migrants go through on their journey from their home country to Libya. According to David (P. 2 Ethiopian), *"In Libya it is very dangerous; you do not have any choice, that is why you either die or cross."* The sea crossing as depicted in Figure 9 is nothing better. David (P. 2 Ethiopian) continued *"You would feel that you are already dead but seeing the land you feel you still have a life."*

**Figure 9 Asylum Migrants at Sea**



Source: BBC.com 22/11/2019

Highlighting the risks involved, Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) confessed, *“I will not advise anyone of my relatives or any of my friends I know to follow this trip to Europe. I will not, I will never. It is horrible in the sea. I nearly perished and I question myself – why I treat myself up to this level?”*

Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) here is accentuating the risks involved when crossing. Consequently, due to the dangerous experiences they may start losing hope of arriving safely to acquire their imagined way of living (Emirabayer & Mische, 1980). Such personal experiences entail certain courage, what Colninger (1998) identified as individual differences in basic emotional responses: novelty seeking, reward dependence and persistence.

Even Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) stated,

*“If I had to relive my past, I will never leave my country even though with those, so much problems. Yes, I regret that I left my country because even though now I am studying and I am improving myself and my life is a better one, I miss my country, I miss a piece of me, how can I say, something of me is still there.”*

Here Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) is attesting the notion of place identity. He continued by stating how badly they were treated in Libya.

*“I saw many people in front of me; they were not shot but slapped on very bad because they were old people you know. Someone is like in the place of my father; he got beaten by a very young man. You know he was army man. You have to interfere but you have nothing in your hand, only you keep an eye and see. When you see everything happening in front of you, it is not easy.”*

This sense of helplessness in front of the injustice and violence adds to the psychological pain and suffering of the journey. Unprepared for such risky experiences and dangers, asylum migrants start realising the true reality of the journey. Furthermore, by that time they are typically separated from their families and friends, creating intense anxiety and possibly depression as they realise all they have lost (Mollica, 2006).

It is however interesting to notice that the sight of land gives asylum migrants a sign of hope, Figure 10, but ironically in recent cases they were not allowed to disembark from their vessel

due to a stand-off between Malta and Italy, causing hardship for those on board (JRS, 2018) who were definitely eager to land in a safe and secure place.

The journey experience for Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) and Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) contrasts immensely when compared to that of the other participants, since they travelled with their family by plane. However, as soon as they walked into the airport the police interviewed all the family members as part of the identification process and escorted them to the detention/open centre like all other migrants irrespective of their type of journey.

**Figure 10 Asylum Migrants seeing the Land after being saved by a Rescue Boat**



Source:Independent.co.uk 04/07/2018

**Figure 11 Asylum Migrants arriving in Malta after being rescued by the Maltese Armed Forces.**



Source: Timesofmalta.com 27/06/2019

The effects of asylum migrants' traumatic experiences are immeasurable, long lasting and shattering to both their inner and outer selves (Steel et al., 2006). However, the knowledge of the three areas of inquiry, pre-migration, migration and post-migration, as discussed in the literature review chapter and stated by George, (2012) will provide the necessary understanding for educators and other professionals working with asylum migrants. It is necessary that they deepen and broaden their comprehension of asylum migrants' traumatic experiences beyond narrow formulations (George 2012). It is also essential that the voices of asylum migrants be heard so that educators and other professionals can better understand their perspectives and needs thereby acting sensibly and providing efficient services particularly as it pertains to trauma.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the participants' childhood and the main motives that drove them out of their home country, and discussed the experiences and challenges faced during their journey including the sea crossing. It is evident, even from the interviews of the six participants, that such experiences vary significantly. The personality of each and every participant plays an important role on how they face their challenges. According to Cloninger and his colleagues (1993), personality is identified as the way that individuals learn from experience and adapt their feelings, thoughts and actions. This statement on personality explains concisely the importance of understanding the participants' past in order to comprehend their present attitudes, feelings and actions. Furthermore, allowing participants to voice their past experiences accentuate the human element of each and every individual with a natural plea for more social justice.

## Chapter 6 – Findings and Discussion.

### Understanding the Participants - Their Present

In this section the principal themes associated with the present have been presented according to their chronological order in the interviews and as per Table 14. It is interesting to point out that the Markers and Means of the Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration (Ager & Strang, 2008) correspond with the themes stated in Table 14. The Markers and Means, Employment, Housing, Education and Health are key areas of activity indicative of successful integration, themes that were elicited by the participants.

**Table 16: Understanding the Participants – The Present**

<b>Maltese Context</b>	3 Detention	Interviews  Physical, Housing, Financial, Information and Support, Education (the college), Health, Employment, Differentiated Treatment  Willpower and Resiliency, Determination to achieve qualifications
<b>Present</b>	4 Insecurity	
(Arrival in Malta and enrolment at MCAST)	5 Responses	

### 6.1: Theme 3: Detention and Open Centres Experiences

#### 6.1.1 Living at the Maltese Detention and Open Centres

Immigration became an issue for the Maltese only when Malta joined the EU (Rodier & Teule, 2005). After the overwhelming experience at sea, migrants are very eager to settle down and rest. However, at the same time, they are hesitant to trust and integrate with the people of the host country. David (P. 2 Ethiopian) said “*I was confused for three days*” whilst Hans (P. 4 Somali) said “*I was very tired in fact I slept for over eighteen hours.*”

Upon arrival migrants are registered by the police authorities and given a number for immediate identification according to their boat. They receive a plastic bracelet with their police

identification number on it. Detention is described as a prison-like environment despite not being classified as having committed any crime (Figure 12). Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) described detention as *“Quarantine. If you are sick they take you to hospital, they put handcuffs on your hands, which is the worst thing to whom it may be, treating innocent humans like criminals.”* This shed light on the dehumanisation aspect experienced by detained asylum migrants. Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) physically described the Maltese detention centre as:

*“Big hall very crowded with over 200 people. Space between one bunkbed and another is just half a metre. There is no privacy at all, no personal belongings just two or three sets of clothes and no lockers to put any personal belongings in.”*

He shared his detention thoughts and experiences:

*“Very bad, the first time I was detained. What did I do wrong to be treated that way? I didn’t know the mistake I did. Just because I was sick, or because of the required help or because I left from a war country to a safe place, it required me to go through this process or is it a normal process that the country does it for everyone? Am I a criminal, I committed something wrong? What was the cause?”*

**Figure 12 Hal Far Detention Centre Malta.**



Source: Telegraph.co.uk 24/11/2019

This narrative implies the sense of shame and self-doubt experienced by asylum migrants and their attempts to establish a justification for such treatment whilst being held under arrest for months at the detention centres. This treatment is a threat to the esteem needs as described by Maslow's hierarchy of needs and contrasts immensely with the migrants' high expectations and hopes which accompanied and sustained them all the way through their long journey. This is confirmed by Hans (P. 4 Somali) who said, *"I was not happy there. I lost a lot of time in there."* The lost time as described by Hans is related to what Erving Goffman (1961) calls *"a sense of dead and heavy-hanging time."* Highlighting the psychological impact of their disappointment, Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) signed to go back to his country [with civil unrest] but his request was refused. This resonates the extent of suffering when considering that the participant would rather return to a situation of political unrest, from where he first fled, than remain under the detention conditions in Malta.

The Maltese detention policy has had the intention to *"constructing a crisis"* both at the National and European levels (Mainwaring, 2012). She continues by stating that *"Detention and its associated practices thus serve to criminalise migrants and refugees and negatively affect the way Maltese people perceive them"* (Mainwaring 2012: 694-5).

As elsewhere in Europe, in Malta adult asylum migrants were to be detained for a period of twelve months, or if their application for protection is rejected, for a maximum period of eighteen months (Pisani, 2011; 2012). As a controlling measure to contain the problem, local authorities detained migrants in an uninhabited area in tents, which later were replaced by containers, under strict security and in inhuman conditions. Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) and Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) went through the experience of living in a container. Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) explains this by stating: *"I know that containers are for goods and not for people to live in. I stayed there maybe three months but there it was horrible. It is not a house you know, not safe that is for sure."*

This is confirmed by Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) who says:

*"We sleep and my father stays awake, nothing was safe in there. If I go to the toilet someone like dad has to come with me. When it rains you do not feel comfortable, tick, tick, tick. You cannot sleep; you have to close your ears and try to sleep."*

Referring to the physical conditions of the detention centres, David (P. 2 Ethiopian) said

*“- they kept about 3,300 people sleeping on top and under (bunkbeds) you know in beds one top and one under. Space between one bunk bed and another is just half a metre. No privacy at all. They put pregnant women, children, wife and husband all in the same way. No personal belongings just two or three sets of clothes. No lockers to put any belongings. Sometimes around 300 people would be watching one TV. They were always fighting for the TV.”*

This contrasts completely with what they were aspiring for when leaving their country of origin and during their journey.

Referring to how he was treated, Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) said:

*“I was totally shocked when they took us to the detention centre where we were searched like we were going in a normal prison. If you have some stuff like pocket money, the police take it. The experience of the detention is very bad; the first time I was detained – what did I do wrong to be treated that way? I didn't know the mistake I did, just because I was sick or because of the help, or of going out from a war country to another safe place? Is it a normal process that the country does it for everyone? Am I a criminal? I committed something wrong? What was the cause? And a lot of this stuff.”*

These negative thoughts and questions clearly show the impact of the unexpected detention and traumatised treatment on Nagi. One can realise that such impact may influence future decisions creating a sense of discouragement and helplessness. A study of psychological distress and trauma among south Asian refugees by George (2009; 2012) found that refugees had higher levels of psychological distress and trauma likely caused by the degree of interrogation by immigration officials. The study sheds light on refugees' re-traumatization each time they were exposed to interrogation by immigration boards in the host country, the main reason being the uncertainty and fear of the interrogation outcome and the board decision.

Stefan's (P. 1 Zimbabwean) experience of the detention centre is rather shocking:

*“Detention Centre - very bad conditions. I signed to go back but they refused to send me back. We were always with security 20-30 metres far, for more than a year (slow violence). I didn’t commit any crime. If you are sick, they put on handcuffs to take you to hospital. We were treated like animals.”*

This attests what Debono (2013) declared that the experience of detention in Malta makes migrants feel *“less than human”* which clearly emphasises how the total system has an impact on individuals’ perceptions of themselves. As stated in the literature review chapter, detention could be inclined to also add to, or possibly trigger PTSD as this can be instigated by structural factors that would include detention (Fazel et al., 2005). Findings from this research show that these experiences of mandatory detention coupled with the lack of information about the host country and the policy systems adopted on how to deal with irregular migrants contribute to the disillusionment of migrants who would be hoping for an ideal European standard of living.

Hans (P. 4 Somali) stated *“..... I was not happy there; I lost a lot of time in there.”* He was motivated to pursue his studies, to get to know the host country and its people but on the contrary he found himself detained for eighteen months. He described how he used to spend his days during detention as follows:

*“I attended some lessons, read some books and used to sleep until 11.00, eat, shower, brush my teeth, clean my area and go to the living area. They were always telling me to translate. I helped in what they wanted with the security, translating their stories. At 4.00 o’clock they used to organise football, then shower, watch football and play monopoly.”*

The main striking factor in such narration is the experience of ‘slow violence’ (Nixon, 2011), of the unproductive time spent at the detention. *“If it is bloodless, slow-motion violence, the story is more likely to be buried, particularly if it is relayed by people whose witnessing authority is culturally discounted”* (Nixon, 2011: 16).

It is interesting to notice that the impact of the participants’ detention experiences varies considerably such as with the duration at the detention centre, the way they were treated, as well as the personal trauma as a result of such experiences. However, detention for any amount of time can probably have negative psychological effects (JRS, 2010; Lorek et al., 2009; Mares & Jureidini, 2004). This explains why the detention of children and young

people has attracted the harsh criticism of human rights organisations all over the world (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

*“The procedure of locking up children and teenagers until they can prove they are minors might be interpreted as running contrary to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNHCR). Malta is a signatory to this convention which prescribes under article 37(b) that the detention of children should only be used as a measure of last resort” (UNHCR, 1989: 10).*

The impact of detention on asylum migrants in Malta was recorded in the report ‘Becoming Vulnerable in Detention’ (Jesuit Refugee Service, 2010). The report highlights how the mental health of detainees can be affected by the experience. Mental illness in the asylum migrant community has become such a predominant problem that a separate ward has been opened at the Mount Carmel Psychiatric Hospital specifically for migrants (Debono, 2013). This results, at least to some extent, from the dehumanization process that detainees go through. As already stated Debono declared the negative impact of detention on the individual. *“Detention has never left me. I was treated like a dog, but I also became a dog, an animal. And when you become an animal once, you are ashamed for life” (Debono, 2013: 62, quoting one of her interviewees).* This excerpt accentuates another traumatic experience, following the previous ones asylum migrants go through when faced with the unexpected detention conditions.

It also has to be borne in mind that migrants are likely to be sent back to the first European Union country they find themselves in after the crossing. The Eurodac regulation allows for the identification of migrants and their return to the country that granted them protection. This means that in theory, the Europeanization of migration policies hold that migrants do not have the right to settle anywhere else, except for the first country that registered them as asylum migrants with no freedom to travel to the non-existing mainland, unless they would benefit from resettlement schemes.

Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) compared the Norwegian approach to migrants with that of the Maltese. She stated that the Norwegian experience was completely different, living in proper houses, provided with the necessary resources, and staff members were treating them with the right approach and attitude. This shows that the EU member states treat migrants differently. Furthermore, the implementation of EU policies and regulations by member states’

governments varies according to a multitude of factors which may include culture, resources, economy, physical position and make-up of the host country among other reasons.

The detention experiences in Malta may have easily contributed to what Lemaire's (2014: 147) statement that, "*Initially, migrants physically experience the island (Malta) as a closed isolated and tightened space.*" David's (P. 2 Ethiopian) words concur: "*I was just close to give up because I expected to see something better.*" They experience the disillusion of living in Europe with all the high expectations after their long harsh journey and to their disappointment they will be living in a prison-like environment despite not being classified as having committed any crime.

It is pertinent to mention that detention facilities in Malta are state-funded. The detention practice is partially the result of the country's physical restrictions and the high population density, and also seen as a way of controlling the country's borders. "*It is therefore in the national interest and more specifically, for reasons concerning employment, accommodation and maintenance of public order that a detention policy be adopted in cases concerning the arrival of irregular migrants*" (Government of Malta, 2005: 6).

Driven by local Maltese politicians, the policy regarding detention aimed at responding to the apprehensions of local citizens concerning issues related to employment, accommodation and maintenance of public order. Leaning on the island of Malta's restricting characteristics (exposed coastline, size, high population density), political representatives justified detention and entrusted the Ministry for Home Affairs with the policy's implementation. Policy enactment involves creative processes of interpretation and re-contextualisation – and this process sometimes involves 'interpretations of interpretations' (Rizvi & Kemmis, 1987, in Ball et al., 2015).

It was in 2015 that the Maltese Detention Policy was no longer interpreted in a rigid way. According to Ball, strands within policies are selected and actors interpret them to fit their own agenda (Ball, 2000: 496). Hence mandatory detention is therefore the result of a political will to manage the number of arrivals. Detention centres are still being used, but mainly for medical clearances and usually migrants are then allowed to move onto the open centres. Nowadays the detention centres are replaced by the Initial Reception Centres which fall under the Ministry for Home Affairs, National Security and Law Enforcement.

### 6.1.2 The Immigration Police Interview

According to the participants of this study, new arrivals go through the identification process carried out by the Immigration Police Department. Their fingerprints are recorded according to the EU Eurodac regulations. They are photographed and searched whilst personal belongings including mobile phones are taken and kept by Immigration Police Officers. They are asked to provide basic information about themselves and their country of origin. Following the initial interview, migrants are detained whilst their application is being processed. Other interviews are carried out in order to establish the status of each and every migrant according to the various circumstances. David (P. 2 Ethiopian) spent about ten months at the detention centre and was given a subsidiary status. The time spent in detention may last up to eighteen months, in fact Hans (P. 4 Somali) spent the full cycle.

*“During the interview they try to get out information as much as possible about our birth country and our past. They were telling me that I was not giving them a lot of information about the region where I come from and for me I was not understanding well what they needed, a lot of information and they gave me another chance to sit for another interview.”*

Hans (P. 4 Somali) added that they were going to give him ‘rejection’ but after his last interview he was given subsidiary. Following the completion of the status process, migrants are given the necessary documents to move freely and even to work. Then detainees are released from detention and they usually move on to an open centre where they can move freely and start having a true and authentic picture of the island.

**Figure 13 Marsa Open Centre, Malta**



Source: Times of Malta .com 26/11/2019

Once detainees are released from detention, they are placed in the so called Open Centres and this regardless of their status. At the open centres residents can enter and exit the premises anytime they want, however staff members observe the residents and oversee the management of the place. David (P. 2 Ethiopian) explained that, *“After detention I was at Marsa Open Centre. I got certain freedom. I can go out find some things, ask for some information, do what I wanted you know. In Marsa a bit better, in one room 3 by 3 metres sleep 20 people. It was like the detention but with more freedom.”*

Although the open centres offer migrants certain freedom of movement when compared to the detention institutions, they still do not contribute to the migrants’ integration with locals. These centres are housed in three venues: Marsa, Hal Safi and Hal Far, Figures 15, 16 and 17. Even if it may be possible to indicate their location, in reality migrants find themselves housed in centres *“outside of all places”* (Foucault, 1984), isolated from the social activities of everyday life. They are on an island within the island. Their isolation is further increased by the way the open centres function (Lemaire, 2014). Managed by the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers, AWAS, the personnel confirm that at the open centre residents maintain the cleanliness of the premises and aim to avert any irregular behaviour. Every resident is required to register three times a week at the office of the centre in which he or she is living. The signing is compulsory in order to be granted shelter as well as to receive the financial allowance that sums up to 80 euro a month (Appendix I). Referring to the one of Hal Far, Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) confirmed *“the place is very far away from the centre.”* This confirms that open centres are not contributing to the integration process meaning that, in spite of living for months if not years on the island, migrants would remain estranged and separated from the local culture and common daily life events and social activities. Such experiences of residing in open centres, away from the daily activities of the host country people, do not contribute to the development of a new identity since place and identity work together to legitimise or criticize people’s pressure in the specific country. However, residing in open centres is not compulsory and some migrants also live amongst the Maltese community should they afford to rent a household. Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) and Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) travelled by plane. They both declared that they were not expecting the police at the airport to escort them to Hal Far open centre. They were not detained because, according to her personal statement, Emanuela and her family were sent from Norway.

*“According to European Law we had to return to our first destination as the records indicated that Malta was our first European Country. Although this is not true as we never came to Malta before, we had no other option but to come to Malta.”*

The Eurodac regulation allows for the identification of migrants and their return to the country that granted them protection (Lemaire, 2014). Lara’s (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) father allegedly had bought a Maltese visa from Saudi Arabia.

**Figure 14 Marsa Open Centre Courtyard. Malta**



Source: Timesofmalta.com 26/11/2019

### **6.1.3 Open Centre Living**

Both Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) and Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) stated that they were not expecting containers as their houses at the open centres. Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) continued, *“When we saw the containers, the office, the people who were working at the office, nothing was good.”* Even Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) stated *“horrible, never can thought that someone can live in a container.”*

They both commented on their ‘shameful’ experiences at Hal Far Open Centre. Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) said, *“Yes when I was in Hal Far, I went to school but I never told them where I live”* (Maslow’s esteem needs). Lara’s (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) reaction is different: *“I use to tell them that I was ok and that I was trying hard.”* She said that even to go to the toilet she needed to be accompanied by a family member because *“nothing is safe in there.”* The feeling of fear experienced by Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) is very evident (Galtung’s security

need). Summing up the open centre episode, Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) concluded, “*We as a family felt the open centre experience was weird.*” Bearing in mind their past as discussed above and all these new experiences, one wonders how migrant students can focus and concentrate on their studies when considering that they will be experiencing insecurity and the lack of certain basic needs.

#### **6.1.4 The Norwegian Experience**

As already mentioned, Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) experienced the Norwegian approach to migrants. Exercising their mobility rights, migrants are likely to be sent back to the first European Union country they find themselves in after the crossing. The Eurodac regulation allows for the identification of migrants and their return to the country that granted them protection according to fingerprints records. In this regard, Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) could easily compare the differences between the two European countries – “*When we went to Norway, we went to a camp and it was like houses you know. They treat people in a very good way not only with the resources but also with their approach and attitude.*” Her Maltese experience was totally different. “*I stayed there maybe three months but there it was horrible. You live there with your family but you do not feel like home. It is not a house you know, not safe that is for sure.*” This highlights the lack of security (Maslow and Galtung) that the participants experienced. Whilst a house is a place to stay and live, a home is a place of safety and stability, the lack of which was one of the main reasons that asylum migrants left their home country (Dutch Refugee Council/ECRE, 2001: 5). It is evident that the EU member states treat migrants differently. The implementation of EU policies and regulations by member states’ governments varies according to a multitude of factors which may include culture, resources, economy, physical position, make-up of the host country and much more. Although certain behavioural approaches and attitudes might be culturally ingrained, it is indicative that locally more sensitivity and care are required when dealing with migrants particularly in the field of services and in their initial stages of getting accustomed to the people and the characteristics of the host country.

**Figure 15 Hal Far Open Centre, Malta**



Source Tvm.com.mt 26/11/2019

**Figure 16 Hal Far Open Centre. Malta**



Source: Loveinmalta.com 26/11/2019

### **6.1.5 Comparison between the Detention and Open Centres**

It is interesting to point out that both Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) and Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) did not actually experience the detention centres. The other participants described the open centres as better when compared to the detention. Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese)

*“When I turned eighteen, I moved to an open centre. It is like a detention centre but open. The personnel in charge carried out safety checks and there*

*were security personnel at the main door. We had the freedom to walk out but needed to present the card. We were eighteen persons in a room with a fridge to share and a locker for personal belongings.”*

David’s (P. 2 Ethiopian) description was similar: *“It was like detention but with more freedom.”* The signing was compulsory for all residents in order to receive shelter and their financial allowance. The Maltese policy practice on detention and open centres aims to defend both national and European entities, limiting the control exercised on migrants. As stated by Lemaire (2014), along the years detention has been readapted, reshaped, and reiterated to separate different categories of people who have somehow been identified as a threat to society.

People behave differently in similar situations and the evaluation of conditions is based on their unique expectations, values and previous experiences (De Neve & Copper, 1998). Personality traits and wellbeing in relation to stressful life events have been investigated by many researchers (Braken, 2001; Abraham, Lien & Hanssen, 2018). These all refer to individual differences and perhaps even uniqueness. It is not easy to describe how individuals develop particular ways of interacting with the world. This is another issue of individual differences (Huffman et al., 1991) and how they respond to different life situations.

## **6.2 Theme 4: Insecurity**

Theme four deals with the insecurity experienced by asylum migrants with reference to Maslow’s deficiency needs as discussed in the literature review chapter and according to the narrations of the participants’ experiences.

### **6.2.1 Housing**

In order to understand the challenges and barriers faced by migrants to engage themselves into a learning journey and form part of a learning community, one has to make sure that the learner has full access to the required basic needs. One of these needs strongly emphasised by the participants is housing (shelter) which provides protection from the elements as well as privacy and security. *“Integration into the community depends directly on the provision and accessibility of good quality housing”* (Fsadni, 2012: 14). This was also confirmed by Ager & Strang (2008) as discussed in the literature review chapter, that housing, one of the public outcomes, is one of the indicators of integration. Referring to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Olson (2007: 37) states:

*“The just world exists for those who have these four basic needs satisfied (physiological, safety, love/belonging and esteem). For most people in the world, the just world is invisible, is ideal, an abstraction. Without seeing and feeling access to economic and social opportunity, the said opportunity doesn't exist.”*

Leaving the open centres and moving into an urban area is a necessary step towards integration but this move is not so easy due to various reasons. This was Emanuela's (P. 6 Emirati) experience: *“When I was at the open centre, I went to school but I never told them where I live. It was really hard to find a house; that is why we stayed at the Open Centre so long.”* This is the result of the influx of foreigners seeking accommodation on the island and consequently apartments' owners are taking advantage of the situation and charge higher fees. In order to go round and deal with the high fees some migrants are sharing apartments as stated by Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) due to financial issues. This issue of housing is causing asylum migrants lot of distress particularly if they are studying. Considering that their income would be very low, each euro will count. Although rent prices mentioned are not high when compared to the present market, for some of them, such prices are beyond their means.

As reported by Fsadni & Pisani, according to a research carried out among residents of an open centre, by Fondazzjoni Suret il-Bniedem (2010), it was pointed out that

*“..... the difficulties in finding regular work, paid work with a decent salary, rather than the irregular short term work often under exploitative conditions that is generally offered to migrants, as well as the difficulties in recognising qualifications and skills, all contribute to instability thus making the transition from life in an open centre to life in the community a considerable challenge. The research also found that given the possibility of regular employment and a stable income, the residents of open centres are willing to make the move into the community”* (NCPE, Fsadni & Pisani, 2012: 15).

Besides the stable income, there are other challenges that migrants may face when attempting to move out from the open centres to reside in the community. In another research conducted amongst Third Country Nationals residing in Malta, Zammit (2012) reports that Nigerian nationals experienced problems in accessing housing and also had to resort to using a Maltese

intermediary as a strategy to ‘*try to bypass the obstacles.*’ The report notes that skin colour serves as the signifier for discrimination. Furthermore,

*“Documented evidence provides specific examples such as persons who have had the door shut in their face when approaching a landlord to enquire about accommodation because they are ‘Arabs’. Research suggests that landlords have justified such discrimination on the basis of past negative experiences including the inability to secure payment, complaints by other tenants and cleanliness”* (Fsadni, 2012: 11).

It is important to point out that the Maltese use the collective term ‘Arabs’ for individuals originating from North Africa and the Middle East and with the assumption that they are Muslims. This generalisation by the Maltese is a source of discrimination, prejudice and racism which manifests itself in various forms including issues pertaining to the renting of apartments.

Moreover, renting an apartment is becoming highly expensive particularly at the time of writing due to the influx of foreign workers on the island (Times of Malta, 27 June 2018). Presently property landlords are taking advantage of Malta’s present economic growth situation and are increasing the apartments’ monthly rent rates. The Federation of Estate Agents, in a statement issued in August 2018, described the situation as desperate, with families sleeping in garages and cars as they cannot afford the high property prices that the Maltese market currently sees. As a partial solution to this unbearable reality tenants are sharing apartments to cut down on the expenses and make it affordable. Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) said, *“I share an apartment with another three. We are paying one hundred euro each per month.”* Although one hundred euro is not much, but when considering that the participant is a student and his only income is the money he gets from a part-time job, his time to work is limited due to his studies, and he needs to juggle with the daily expenses of food, transport and services amongst other things, so renting is becoming close to impossible. In this scenario and as discussed above, landlords are becoming more selective to whom they rent their property. Speaking about this, Nagi (P.3 Sudanese) said, *“Now I have lack of accommodation because the place I rented now the owner wants it back because he wants to increase the fee.”* This situation is adding more pressure on migrants as one of the solutions may be to increase the hours of their part-time job so as to earn extra money to pay their rent.

At the same time, one has to bear in mind that, apart from their private baggage, migrants have to cope with the pressures of study.

David (P. 2 Ethiopian) said that, after the open centre,

*“Then I rented a place for €150 a month. After some time, I rented a room somewhere else for €200 a month. After four months I got out from where I used to live because I didn’t pay for one month. All the money I had saved finished. I packed my clothes in a bag and asked him (the owner) if he can keep it for me until I find a place where to live and he kept it for me. I slept out one night near MCAST in the garden of the mosque. I met a friend on the bus stop. He was staying with his family in one room. The following night I slept in his garden and came to school asking for help.”*

This excerpt demonstrates the suffering asylum migrants can go through particularly when they find themselves in solitude, unsupported and homeless. The frustrating element is that although migrant students go to the MCAST Students’ Support Services for assistance, unfortunately the staff there cannot do much because the college has no accommodation facilities. However, through personal networking, MCAST staff created links with a number of NGOs who offer accommodation services and thus they try to liaise with the NGOs to provide assistance to migrant students in need of accommodation. The buddy system and the student-to-student support networks at MCAST are at a very initial stage of their development and they cannot be looked upon as a reliable source to empower migrant students at this moment in time.

The lack of material resources and longer-term job security to provide enough income to lead a decent life and cope with the unavoidable necessary expenses of basic needs may necessitate sharing accommodation with the risk of resulting in sub-standard conditions and overcrowding. In such situations, not having the right facilities and environment to study, migrants may end up quitting the course (Attrition) in spite of their good will to pursue their studies. That is what happened to David (P. 2 Ethiopian) - *“That time I was going through difficult time, I couldn’t even come to school. I was really tired and after four months I said I am going to stop attending school.”* This shows that housing, a basic need, can be problematic and may be a contributor to migrants quitting their studies (Attrition). On the other hand, the benefits of stable housing were drawn on how the established local residents

and refugees valued the stability and continuity of relationships associated with being settled in an area over time (Ager & Strang, 2008: 171).

### **6.2.2 Financial issues**

Related to the theme of Housing are those of Economic Security and Employment. As discussed in chapter one, state Education at post-secondary and tertiary levels is offered for free to all Maltese students and asylum migrants usually get an exemption from fees upon request to the Office of the Minister of Education. It is pertinent to mention here that the great majority of Maltese students still live with either one or both parents and although some of them work, they also get a student allowance (stipend). Most of them use their money to buy a car and to go out on weekends and in the evenings. Basic needs which include food, water, electricity, internet services and others are generally provided for free by parents and family members.

This contrasts considerably with the financial situation of the male asylum migrant students participating in this study who have to juggle between school, work, cleaning, food preparation and other daily chores. With regards to the female participants, Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) and Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) do not work and are supported by their families although they stated that they do help out at home. Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) said: *“My mother works and after school I look after my two younger brothers.”*

Asylum migrant students try to apply for the students’ allowance, but in the majority of cases they would be ineligible due to the requisites of the students’ allowance entitlement which states that the applicant must have been resident in Malta for the previous five years. In his interview Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) stated that, *“Basically, it all boils down to the financial. I have a big issue with the stipends office. They told me that I am not entitled for the stipend unless I have been living for five years in Malta.”*

This regulation applies even to Maltese students living abroad during the previous five years, so it is not discriminatory in any way with any specific group of students.

A factor that clearly emerged from the interviews among the male migrant students is that they all faced financial problems. Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) was very explicit when stating *“Finance is the main problem. No money for bus, missing lessons.”* He continued by stating that his financial problem reflected negatively in his course results. It is evident that in spite of the good will, wishes and aspirations, it would be impossible for asylum migrants to

achieve good academic results, and to progress and move on in life especially without the financial aid to cope with the daily needs and requirements.

David had to quit the course he was following (attrition) due to his financial situation. He had no money to sustain himself, to pay the daily travel expenses to college, to pay the rent, in fact he ended homeless for a couple of days. When the basic needs, such as food, shelter, security, etc. are not met, other needs would be insignificant as outlined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. A case in point would be education. How can one attend lessons and concentrate when he/she has no shelter where to stay and study, no sanitary facilities to wash, no food to sustain themselves?

In order to combat this issue, asylum migrant students try to join the labour market usually in jobs which do not require the level of skills or qualifications possessed by the habitual jobholder - under-employment. Additionally, lacking the right information on employment and official documentation, they end up doing odd and temporary jobs; less paid and usually in the black or grey economy with the risk of experiencing exploitation by employers as per the Dual/Segmented Labour Market Theories discussed in the literature review chapter. Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean)

*“I started doing some casual work for three months. Then I got a job of a cleaner at a hotel. The first time I went to Marsa square I was ashamed, I will never go there again because they literally abuse you. At the hotel I was happy. They helped me. You need to search again for the job with the performance in your school, certificates and qualifications. Getting a job related to what you will be studying helps you to better understand your lessons and it can also motivate you to progress to higher levels in your studies.”*

The exploitation of migrants when they try to join the labour market is almost inevitable. Hans (P. 4 Somali) said, *“I applied for some jobs, but people sometimes give you a cleaning job but then they tell me you know, you do not understand and I didn't have any skills at that time.”* Here Hans (P. 4 Somali) is highlighting their state of vulnerability and how employers take advantage of the difficult financial situation asylum migrants find themselves in, with the result of renouncing their employment rights and accepting the worst employment conditions and treatment.

Comparing migrant students with their classmates who benefit from a monthly stipend allowance, the participants and many other migrants are at a huge disadvantage when considering daily needs, which for the Maltese are normally provided by their family, such as food, housing, and clothes, while migrants need to provide everything themselves and at their own financial expense. The concept of foodbanks has only been recently introduced in Malta, and they can barely meet demand. While critics of foodbanks see them as encouraging dependency, for some people, these enable them to have food to eat. Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) stated: *“I have the social security allowance only. I deal with my life, rent, food, stuff, transport and a lot of it”* - which must be tough for him to make it to the end of the month with all the expenses incurred. The majority of our local youths continue to live with their parents until they start a serious relationship and even get married. This usually comes with a lot of benefits and parental pampering, as opposed to asylum migrants who would be living on their own, facing all the challenges including financial ones. David (P. 2 Ethiopian) shared his experience:

*“I applied for an English language course, but they asked for money and to be honest I didn't have any money at that time. It was just one month after detention. All the money I had saved finished, and I ended homeless.”*

If David (P. 2 Ethiopian) was Maltese, I am convinced that his parents would have done every sacrifice to pay for their son's course. This comparison shows how disadvantaged migrant students are when compared to their Maltese peers. This drastic difference is counter-productive to the integration of migrants. The Commissioner of Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Mr Nils Muiznieks, in a letter sent to Malta's Minister for Home Affairs, National Security and Law Enforcement pointed out that:

*“This situation (of housing) constitutes an obstacle to migrant integration and may generate tensions with the local population, as occurred recently in Marsa (the Open Centre locality). Therefore, I urge Malta to give full effect to Article 31 of the European Social Charter (ESC), which guarantees the right to housing, and Article 16 ESC, concerning the right of the family to social, legal and economic protection, by taking appropriate measures to improve public housing schemes and to eradicate discrimination that migrants may face in their access to housing.”*

Unfortunately, asylum migrant students are often among the first to suffer from issues pertaining to finance. During a group interview for lecturers, both Mr R. and Ms I. shared their experiences. Ms I. said that due to their jobs, her asylum migrant learners were missing their weekly lesson, Maltese for Foreigners, because the jobs they were being offered were in no way connected with what they were studying, it was just a matter of coping with their daily expenses. Mr R. said that he had an issue with a migrant student who always arrived late for the 8 o'clock lesson because he always overslept after his night shift. Another case that was mentioned by Mr R. was about a migrant student who towards the end of the academic year resigned because he took a full-time job to support his mother by paying her monthly rent. Such cases are rather common among asylum migrants but not so much among the Maltese students. Hence economic insecurity is placing asylum migrant learners in a discriminatory position affecting the various facets of life including the prolongation of their integration within the Maltese community.

### **6.2.3 Employment**

Directly linked to physical and economic security is the issue of employment. According to a survey carried out by JRS and Aditus Foundation in 2016, 80% of asylum migrants surveyed were living at risk of poverty. Although at face value employment can be seen as an opportunity for integration, it can also be a source of numerous problems such as exploitation and discrimination. Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) revealed: *“The first time I went to Marsa Square I was ashamed. I will never go there because they (the employers) would literally abuse you.”*

These words precisely confirm the rampant exploitation that takes place at that square. However, it may be a long and tiring process to find a decent long term reliable employment guaranteeing an adequate living wage. Migrants may also face unique cultural and bureaucratic obstacles in seeking access into the labour market. Hans (P. 4 Somali) was studying nursing way back at his birth country but he found it hard to find a part-time job and at the same time continue with his studies. He stated that he applied for jobs but he lacked skills and what was offered was just cleaning jobs.

This is the rejection experienced by migrant job seekers which negatively affects them in acquiring self-confidence, self-esteem, achievement, mastery, independence and other basic needs. These attitudes towards asylum migrants are the result of culturally ingrained perceptions based on generalisations. All too often ‘whiteness’ is perceived as existing

outside of culture, whilst ‘ethnicity’ is often perceived as exotic, dark, problematic and not ‘white’ (Giroux & McLaren, 1994).

Stefan (P.1 Zimbabwean) described in detail how he managed to get a job. *“I was not earning any money at that time. I was only doing casual work but after three months, I got a job at Hilton as a cleaner.”* He sought the support of JRS to prepare his CV and distributed over a hundred copies of his CV in different localities over the island.

*“At Hilton I was happy, they helped me a lot; they gave me the job to earn money and to study here (MCAST) . .... They withdrew me from morning shift to only evening shift, so after school I go to work in the afternoon till midnight.”*

It is indicative that in spite of the general Maltese subtle racist attitude and essentialist stereotypes grounded in misinformation and myths namely against Sub-Saharan asylum migrants, when experiencing the individual, the attitude changes into one of acceptance. This frequently happens even when students are on their apprenticeship. At first employers show resistance, but once they experience the individual and start building a working relationship, the situation would normally change and asylum migrant students are accepted and respected as team members. Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) proudly confirmed this by stating that through his apprenticeship he acquired a job with relatively high status.

*“After all I have already achieved and what I am today, I am a migrant and I have an office job here in Malta. I am working in the office and not working as a cleaner anymore. They treat me like a family. The way they treat me is more than enough.”*

Stefan’s (P. 1 Zimbabwean) reference to the way he was treated at work as well as his involvement through education and employment illustrates his achievements with pride and great satisfaction. This excerpt accentuates the esteem needs (Maslow’s hierarchy of needs) experienced by Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) and also brings to mind that stated in the EQUAL report (2007: 6), *“traineeships and other forms of on-the-job training are a first and important step which help the integration of migrants and can lead to ‘real’ employment.”*

#### 6.2.4 Information and Support

Information plays a crucial role in making the right decisions. David (P. 2 Ethiopian) said:

*“I needed more information after the detention. I started going round asking anyone to get information: which way I need to apply for the school and which way I can find a job..... I had to get close to the Maltese community. I have been asking for information people who have been long years in Malta. I used to ask JRS, AWAS, UNHCR - What are my rights?”*

It is understandable that being in a new country necessitates general information on how to access basic services and cultural knowledge on the host country. Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) commented: *“When we arrived, they didn’t give us much information about the country, it would have been helpful if we were given information about the island.”* Contrary to Nagi’s (P. 3 Sudanese) view is that of Hans (P. 4 Somali), *“JRS helped us a lot; they gave us a booklet, some in English and others in our own language with information. UNHCR visited us and gave us some information on Maltese culture.”* Even Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) stated that JRS helped him to write his CV for employment. It is evident that the above mentioned information is not provided centrally by the civil service but more likely by the NGOs.

Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) - *“JRS gave me information about four schools”* and for Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) - *“the Religion teacher gave me information on MCAST and post-secondary courses.”* Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) - *“At school during Form 5 they guided us on the choice of post-secondary courses.”* David (P. 2 Ethiopian) - *“I asked a social worker at the Marsa open centre for a language course. I only got one hour a week for two months. Then JRS gave me a cheque to follow a language course.”* He continued - *“I found a solution to the problem. I spoke with the MCAST student liaison manager and the MCAST senior counsellor but couldn’t do anything immediately, everything takes time.”*

Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) felt very supported by his employer - *“the hotel management gave me the opportunity to work on shifts, in the evenings after school.”* Stefan was very appreciative because his employer made it possible for him to study and work at the same time. Contrary to that experience is the one of Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) - *“You go for support for students, but you leave empty-handed.”* This shows the disappointment when someone asks for support and finds closed doors.

Referring to the above excerpts, it is evident that from their perspective, when it comes to information on their rights such as health, employment, education, no standard procedures were in place at national level. The information services provided were mainly dependent on the good will of the individual or the NGOs and thus lacked standardised professionalism. With regard to services provided by Educational institutions, at the time of the interviews, no specialised information services, career guidance and counselling for migrants were in place and as such they were benefitting from the same services offered to their Maltese counterparts. However, since the needs are different and officers providing such services are not always aware and trained about migrants' specific needs, migrants end up disappointed, moving from one place to another trying to seek support somewhere else. In such circumstances, treating asylum migrants like Maltese does not work as the needs are different and specialised services are required.

Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) and Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) experienced the lack of support for integration. In Emanuela's (P. 6 Emirati) words,

*“No Maltese friends, maybe only one but the others they just say hi. I was the only one with dark skin over there (her previous school). There was one girl, she used to sit next to me during the first break, during the second break she used to sit with someone else. I used to be always alone. Then after three weeks I changed school. At the other school it was nice because there were a lot of dark skinned girls.”*

And for Lara (P. 6 Saudi Arabian) - *“I do not feel like the Maltese. I wish I am engaged in the Maltese community but I am not.”* The excerpts from Lara's and Emanuela's interviews denote the desire for a sense of belonging to the Maltese community. However, the lack of support experienced by both Lara and Emanuela worked against their wish to engage themselves, integrate and feel part of the Maltese community. The information and support or else the lack of Information and Support can take different forms and depends on various factors as can be drawn from the participants' interviews.

### **6.2.5 Education**

Employment and access to employment depends on one having the skills and dispositions to be employable. Associated with education, particularly at high levels, is access to career guidance; as in one's young adult years or adult years, the correct choice of course of studies

usually becomes more urgent. Career guidance service is intended to assist individuals to make educational, training and occupational choices to effectively manage their careers.

*“Career guidance can help individuals to understand education systems, labour market trends and opportunities and at the same time help them to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities and how all these relate to what they know about themselves. Professional career guidance directs people to plan and make decisions about work and learning” (OECD, 2004: 19).*

This definition of career guidance emphasises the importance of such services for individuals who would like to invest in their career. According to the interviews among the six participants, it emerged that different sources of information on educational opportunities were tapped. To find information on educational paths, Hans (P. 4 Somali) *“.....asked somebody from the bus stop and he showed me where the school for skills and higher education is. The man I met told me about the school. Then I met a guidance officer at College.”*

This shows that he was not even aware of the location where the school/college was. Since both Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) and Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) were attending secondary school, they were guided on the choice of post-secondary courses at school through the existing system like all other Maltese students. However, in spite of all this, Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) stated, *“No I do not feel like the Maltese; I wish I am engaged in the Maltese community but I am not.”* This denotes that integration can take many forms and although she was treated well at school, it seems that in other areas she was not, and thus she was feeling disengaged. In this regard, MCAST offers psychosocial support but is lacking in terms of outreach services, as most of the support anticipates that people will go to MCAST and avail of the services it offers them.

Nagi’s (P. 3 Sudanese) experience illustrates this point:

*“A social / care worker at the open centre used to be there at her office very often. She had a direct link with the education system. She told me about MCAST and about the place I needed to go. She got the MCAST book (prospectus) and from there, I searched for Electrical and Electronics. She*

*was very helpful; she always gave me advice on how to survive here in Malta, the life and the difficulties.”*

Although Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) benefitted from the generosity of a care worker, structure is required to widen the provision of quality service in a professional manner.

A UK Commission on Integration and Social Cohesion (2007) identified four key factors for securing community cohesion between migrants and host country communities. These factors included the assurance of a degree of stability and security; helping migrants and their host communities to see themselves as contributors to an evolving shared future; a understanding of civic rights and responsibilities, and similar access to services and trust in fair treatment (Bimrose & McNair, 2011: 326). Adopting a holistic approach to career guidance and counselling can contribute to the achievement of the four key factors particularly the second and the third. It is evident from Nagi’s excerpt that his personal experience with the social/ care worker was positive and possibly contributed to one or more of the established four factors.

Acquiring information on the Education system of the host country is a right that leads to the possibility of engaging in education and eventually in the host country community. Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) said that,

*“Studying in a foreign country is not easy. I had no information about the system at MCAST. I started at level 2 and found it very easy. I have ‘A’ levels but had not certificates. I requested a copy of my certificates from my country and then applied for level 5. There are differences between you and the resident student because you are not surrounded by your own people.”*

Lacking the support of his family and friends, Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) is emphasising how difficult it is to face all the challenges on his own. It transpires that he did not make use of or benefit from any professional career guidance and counselling support services. He explored his way and discovered things by trial and error, on his own and at his own expense. Even David (P. 2 Ethiopian) experienced the uncertainty of not knowing what to do.

*“My plan since I was young in my country was to finish my school and get more educated. How I can get good education, maybe I can attend full-time. I spent a year without anything. I said I better get some good qualifications. In fact, what helped me was that in my free time I used to listen to English*

*conversations. Maybe because I am not that educated and qualified otherwise I do not have any problems.”*

Although he always valued education, which correlates with cognitive needs (Maslow), David wasted a year because he was uncertain on how to navigate his way all by himself, in an alien environment and in an unknown country. He also made reference to the issue of language skills which can create problems in communicating effectively in the host country. Even Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) had to face the language challenge - *“They didn’t give us a course in Maltese language. I had to do it all on my own, voluntary English courses and not provided by the government.”*

During the time of writing, the government introduced a scheme of lessons, free of charge in the English language, in the Maltese language and in Cultural Awareness for all non-Maltese living in Malta. This measure was introduced to help migrants in their learning trajectories as well as in their integration processes. *“Integration takes place when individuals maintain their cultural integrity and adopt sociocultural aspects of the new society”* (Khawaja et al., 2014: 4). The implications of this would be that if migrants acquire cross-cultural competence, they would be able to communicate clearly and have their needs met and eventually they would be more employable (Spiteri, 2020). Hans (P. 4 Somali) complained about the lack of clear information - *“I was not informed and had no skills to go for a job.”* In spite of all the good will to learn and willingness to achieve, the participants lacked the proper necessary knowledge on local education system, educational support and employment services. This demonstrates asylum migrants’ lack of social capital which places them at a disadvantage when compared with the locals.

Although JRS are doing an excellent job, they need to make sure that the services offered reach and are made available to each and every individual arriving on the island. When it comes to education, it is imperative to give the educational opportunity to everyone irrespective of country of origin, creed, age or sex, status and place of living. Furthermore, the provision of professional career guidance and counselling services in partnership with employers or employer based organisations is essential, specifically for technical knowledge of particular occupations, so as for the asylum migrant beneficiary to be able to identify personal training needs for the new context. These services must be delivered in a way to take into account the specific context and needs of the migrant user. One of the main

requirements is cross-cultural competence from the practitioners' side as well as familiarization with value systems that are different from their own (Bimrose, 1998).

### **6.2.6 Health**

Although medical services in Malta are offered for free to the Maltese, EU citizens and asylum migrant patients have to pay for medicine prescribed by medical professionals as a follow up of care treatment. De Vroome & Van Tubergen (2010) suggest that health difficulties form a further significant rationalisation of the economical detriments of asylum migrants.

Spitzer (2012) contends that in Canada, migrants underutilise health care services despite the circulating stereotype that migrants and refugees exploit health care facilities. Toar, O'Brien & Fahey (2009) studied the frequency of health problems together with an application of health facilities by refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland. They concluded that asylum seekers obtained a higher degree of 'self-reported' post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety symptoms when associated with refugees. Concordantly, Hondius, Van Willigen, Kleijn & Van der Ploeg (2000) revealed that a significant number of migrants in the Netherlands suffer from Mental Health conditions, citing post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and somatic complaints as the most prominent ones. This resonates with what was already discussed, that post-migration practices are additionally acknowledged by migrants as causes of health difficulties. Vayrynen (2000) claims that high rates of health difficulties offer a clarification of the underprivileged financial position asylum migrants find themselves in.

MCAST, through signed agreements with the Malta National Health Services, provides health services for staff and students through regular scheduled visits at college by MNHS professionals in the following areas: psychiatry, nutrition, sexual health, addictions and smoking cessation. Hence it is imperative that all students including migrants are well informed about their access to health services so as to make use of them in a timely manner and to avoid further health complications. This knowledge would contribute to their well-being with prospects of achieving their aims and aspirations.

### 6.2.7 Summary Theme 4

In this section I went through some of the main experiences and challenges that the participants had to face to start the process of settling down in Malta. However, according to the participants' life stories, their main challenges comprise issues related to housing, employment, finance, lack of information on education systems as well as the availability of support. Such barriers hindered in some way or another, and even lengthened their education trajectories. Meanwhile, Santos (2004: 31) found that her participants “*desire an education so they can have a career rather than a job.*” This confirms that education can be a main effective resource which would help asylum migrants in their integration process.

### 6.3 Theme 5: Responses

This theme deals with the participants' experiential responses to their basic needs that may evolve into the personal growth needs. Four out of the six participants decided to leave their country out of their own will while it was the family who decided for the other two. The participants' temperament varies. During one of her interviews Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) stated that although she is very quiet and shy, lately she had become rather nervous. Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) is very reserved, does not interact easily with others and sometimes he feels inferior when he compares himself with his colleagues. David (P. 2 Ethiopian) is very caring, altruistic and makes friends easily. Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) said, “*I think those problems changed my life. I used to be a very intelligent mature student*”, while David's (P. 2 Ethiopian) reaction to the life problems is opposite to that of Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) – “*Terrible experiences can break you but at the same time can make you stronger.*” This clearly shows that the effects of similar situations and experiences can vary according to the individual's own personality.

David (P. 2 Ethiopian) stated:

*“Although I encountered so many difficulties, I didn't give up even at that time. I need something for a better future, that is why I continued and I managed, yes I managed. I improved and I am better than I was yesterday and before – today is a bit better. I always take note of what I need to do to improve myself and to improve my mind. You need to struggle more than the Maltese.”*

Hans (P. 4 Somali) stated that in spite of his bad experiences and suffering, his message would be *“I only encourage others to start the new life now.”* Such statements imply that behind the determination expressed in their own words, participants may be hiding their suffering, veiling it with strength and will power.

### **6.3.1 Identity**

An aspect which can be affected and influenced by the migration experiences and processes is the asylum migrants themselves and their identity. According to Cohen (1997), although many ethnic groups are *“de-territorialized”* and live in diasporas, they still maintain their identity. People in Africa often do not identify themselves with a certain location, but instead with their clan or ethnic group, wherever it is located at any given moment (Merks, 2002). Although David (P. 2 Ethiopian) is living in Malta, he strongly feels that he forms part and is still an active member of the Oromo Liberation Front. However, there are occasions when the sense of belonging to a group is doubtful and may not be so clear to the individual. This uncertainty about the ground upon which individuals are acting, leads generally to uncertainty in behaviour and disintegration. They do not feel at home and are therefore more or less self-conscious, inhibited or even inclined to overact and may involve themselves in deviant behaviour. This is characteristic of individuals crossing the margin between social groups which they are not even certain that they belong to or that they are ready to enter. They are also not sure that they belong to the group they are leaving. Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) holds a contradicting view to the one of Cohen by highlighting the oneness of the family/group and the place - *“I am able to talk to them even sometimes with skype but it is still not like you are in front of them because the family is not the part but the part within the place.”*

Nagi’s (P. 3 Sudanese) words imply that he is missing not only his family but also his country, the place where he was brought up. This reality can contribute to disintegration and identity uncertainty which may influence and affect the individuals’ confidence and self-esteem. This identity uncertainty leads us to the concept of Hybrid identity.

### **6.3.2 Hybrid identity**

According to Brah (2001), identities are not static, but constantly fluid and evolving. This fluidity enables migrants to form part (and to perceive themselves as forming part) of more than one cultural group since they are able to exert a corresponding influence on the people with whom they interact. This interaction was confirmed by David’s (P. 2 Ethiopian) own

words - *“I had to get close to the Maltese community.”* Nonetheless, cultural influence depends on various factors such as the time of exposure to the new culture, how much the individual manages to mingle with the inhabitants of the host country, as well as how much the individual allows him/herself to get accustomed to the culture and traditions of the host country.

The past experiences and personal baggage that migrants carry with them to the host country, together with their own personality, all influence their openness (or otherwise) to other cultures and hence to the development of their own hybrid identity. The culture that the participants were developing had characteristics that relate to both their home country in Africa and the European aspects of daily living based on different expectations and cultural norms, particularly as they saw, interpreted and understood them. However, all this depends on the openness and the readiness of the individual to assimilate aspects of the new culture of the host country. Whilst Hans (P. 4 Somali) convincingly stated, *“I have my fingerprints in Malta, I am Maltese, I have the documents”*, Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) held an opposing position when she said, *“No, I do not feel part of the Maltese even if I had the papers, the documents, no, nothing.”*

Another aspect which may influence the developmental process of hybrid identity is the influence of the community / communities they originally belonged to. The community itself can promote a type of hybrid identity among its members. Bhabha’s (2004) notion of hybrid communities accentuates the foreign bodies that make up partial cultures. In order to fully understand, one must also take into consideration the social and political arena seriously, engaging with narratives of the powerful and the oppressed (Beattie, 2008). Clearly hybridity is not just a mixing together; it is a dialogical dynamic wherein certain elements of dominant cultures are appropriated by minorities and rearticulated in subversive ways. At this point hybridity marks the jarring of a differentiated culture, whose opposing powers challenge the dominant norms (Beattie, 2008).

In terms of identity and community, it is understandable that asylum migrant students will feel a tension between which aspects of their culture to retain, and how to act in a manner which is conducive to the cultural norms of the host country. With hybrid cultures, people retain practices pertinent to their old culture and produce others pertinent to their new culture; however, hybrid cultures generally take time to form (Spiteri, 2020).

Therefore, one can conclude that the notion of hybrid identity clearly indicates that migrants are not a homogeneous group meaning that they cannot be treated the same due to their uniqueness as well as due to their requirements and needs. Furthermore, their identity could be in a state of flux because of their own personality, values, and personal experiences as well as their disposition and openness to other cultures. Thus, educators and other professionals working with migrants are to be aware of issues pertaining to identity and at the same time sensitise themselves to the different processes migrants may go through in the various processes of integration.

### **6.3.3 PTSD**

Several studies have shown that migrants who fled from war and persecution in their home countries reported high rates of pre-migration trauma and high frequencies of trauma related to mental health problems (Porter & Haslam, 2005; Sinnerbrink, Silove, Field, Steel & Manicavasagar, 1997; Turner, Bowie, Dunn, Shapo, & Yule, 2003). The problems remain with them during the journey and even after the arrival at the host country. During the first interview David (P. 2 Ethiopian) divulged that he had problems, *“I am not paying for it (the apartment) because last year I had problems with my life so they try to help me to stay there until I get something stable - A lot of things happened to me through my journey .....”* Even Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) disclosed that *“Unfortunately the things went like 100 per cent turn from (his home location) where families were surrounded with mercy and love and I go crazy and sometimes I face hardest even in thinking. I think those problems changed my life.”*

PTSD and depression symptoms are the most common mental conditions among migrants. (Fazel, Wheeler & Denesh, 2005; Steel et al., 2009). The contributing factors to post migratory stressors include delays in the application process, conflict with immigration officials, denial of work permits, unemployment, separation from families, loneliness and boredom (Toar et al., 2009). Emanuela’s (P. 6 Emirati) words confirm her change in temperament: *“Since I came to Malta I changed. Most of the time I am very angry, reply quickly and answer back.....”* David (P. 2 Ethiopian) admitted, *“I miss a lot of things, my shop, my family, my school,”* whilst Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) confessed, *“Then we were totally shocked because they drove us to a detention centre where we were searched like we were going in a normal prison.”*

These and many other factors depict that certain basic needs (Maslow and Galtung) were not met with the result of experiencing more disintegration. All this further emphasises the stress

and pain migrants may continue experiencing in their host country. So the effects of migrants' traumatic migration experiences are immeasurable, long lasting and shattering to both their inner and outer selves (Steel et al., 2006).

#### **6.3.4 Resiliency**

A common factor which emerged from the interviews among the participants is their sense of resiliency. Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) stated that in spite of the hardships, *“if you have the challenge on you and you look in front of you, you will achieve what you are willing and aiming for.”*

Resilience is contextual as it changes over time in response to the situation, the successful (or non-successful) completion of tasks, and the complexity of tasks (Gordon, 1996). There are various definitions of 'resiliency'. Gebre (2008: 47) wrote that *“resiliency is the ability of individuals to draw strength from protective forces and survive difficult circumstances.”* Interestingly, Martin et al. (2000) postulate that refugees and migrants' mental health challenges may be better understood within the concept of their resilience and coping capacity. This personal strength often comes out of solid base. Rutter (1990) defined resiliency as the positive end of the distribution of developmental outcomes among individuals at high risk. Gebre (2008) and Lee (2011) reported resiliency as a persistence strategy for immigrants and refugees. In spite of all barriers and difficulties, they move on and strive to achieve what they would be aiming for. For Pipher (2001), after the initial period of struggle, many migrants display an impressive drive to rebuild their lives. Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) is a clear example of a resilient asylum migrant. For Cefai & Cooper (2006), resilience is associated with perseverance and thereby rests on a person's ability not 'to give up'.

According to Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese), *“If I try and try sometimes you will give up, not because you want to give up, but because something really stops you. I am afraid I will end up like that, trying to finish it but I do not know about next year.”* Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) in his excerpt made reference to the fine line between resiliency and distress which may lead to mental health issues.

Stefan's (P. 1 Zimbabwean) resilient appeal to other asylum migrants is to: *“Be courageous, determined and fearless and try to fight forward - never give up..... in level (high) I failed three units. I am repeating the failed units. A lot of challenges, you cannot say*

*you have it easily. Yes my challenges, I am fighting hard and studying hard for my repeated units and try to seek another way if I can to progress (to a higher level course) in the next two years.”*

According to Gebre’s study on sub-Saharan migrants (2008), many of the individuals’ resiliency factors stemmed from surviving a civil unrest, war and poverty in Africa. These resiliency factors included perseverance, self-motivation, problem-solving, independence, not losing hope and holding an overall positive attitude. Hence, the key factor for migrants’ resiliency is the result of their past experience itself which may make them more aggressive and innovative (Stein, 1998; Gronseth, 2006). Resiliency serves to counter the social construction of forced migrants as victims without agency and enables them, despite their traumatic experiences, to succeed in the host country. Ms. D., one of their lecturers, highlighted their enthusiasm to learn which she holds as more than that of our local students.

Gebre (2008: 49) stated:

*“Immigrant students from non-English speaking countries are more likely to be resilient than similarly situated natives because they may be living in a more depressed and volatile economic and political environment ..... They live in a strange place with financial hardship, homesickness, and other daily stressors, yet manage to make the right educational choices that shape their future. This is because they have the ability and the strength to survive and increase their confidence in the face of adverse circumstances.”*

Gebre’s statement is congruent with Galtung’s thesis maintaining that individuals will be *“..... willing to suffer both violence and misery including the sacrifice of their own lives in struggles for Identity and Freedom”* (Galtung, 1978).

In spite of all obstacles, David (P. 2 Ethiopian) who comes from Eritrea, a non-English speaking country confirms his resiliency, *“Although I encountered so many difficulties even at that time, I didn’t give up.”* Referring to the crossing and his arrival to Malta, Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) stated, *“I cannot afford to die again, when you die you lose everything, when alive there are a lot of things you can achieve.”* At the time of the interviews he was repeating his failed units at college.

*“I have a life now so I do not care about what happened. What happened had passed. .... I am working to get my certificate. Now I am afraid of nothing. I*

*do not care what is going to happen whatever they (at his country) do, let them do it. Succeeding is my issue but what I am going through is ..... I cannot describe it. Migrants are suffering and some of them are very strong and they do not tell that, but they are all suffering, financially, mentally, they need a lot, even psychological support.”*

Through this quote Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) is portraying himself as strong from the outside but at the same time indicating elements of weaknesses from the inside. It is interesting to note how he protected himself by diverting the focus on other migrants that are suffering. This denotes the need for specific attention and care for asylum migrant students particularly with regards to the provision of professional psychological and other support services at college.

Resiliency can be reported as a persistence strategy for migrants (Gebre, 2008; Lee, 2011). Participants' resiliency has developed through the challenges of having fled their country of origin as a result of political conflict. This resonates with Gebre's study when stating that many of the individual resiliency factors stemmed from surviving civil strife, poverty and war in Africa. These resiliency factors included self-motivation, perseverance, independence, problem-solving, not losing hope, and a positive attitude (Gebre, 2008).

Applying resiliency to education, literature identified three broad protective factors to help young adults developing their autonomy and competency: dispositional attributes of the individual, affectional ties and external support system (Garmezy & Rutter, 1983; Werner & Smith, 1988; Masten et al., 1990). The social context of schooling has been identified as one of the key determinants of resiliency in students (Wang & Haertal, 1995; Doll & Lyon, 1998; Pianta & Walsh, 1998; Pianta, 2001; Dent & Cameron, 2003).

*“Resiliency building can be done by schools through common contextual processes that promote positive social and academic behaviours among young adults” (Cefai, C., 2007: 120-121). Their dispositional attributes and resilience were confirmed by Mr. D., a lecturer who has experience in teaching asylum migrant students, who during the focus group stated that he repeatedly noticed “..... their enthusiasm to learn. I find their enthusiasm to learn, which is more than that of our local students, not in all of them but a general tendency is that they want to learn a bit more.”*

However, that enthusiasm needs to be dealt with with great care particularly by educators and support services providers as asylum migrants may be investing all their time and energy to prove to themselves that they are capable of achieving their desired goals in spite of all obstacles.

### **6.3.5 Mental Health**

Surprisingly the concept of resiliency is closely tied to mental health issues. The lives of mentally ill individuals are often filled with pain and suffering, yet one of their major strengths is resiliency (George, 2009). Migrants and refugees gain durability from the personal experiences they go through before resettling (Gronseth, 2006). As Harter (1996) suggests, overestimating one's abilities, within reason, is associated with positive mental health. Stefan's (P. 1 Zimbabwean) words are proof: "*I am someone who always composes myself .....*" However, recognizing migrants' internal strengths and resiliency should not lead to underestimating the difficulties they continue to face in their host country.

Hondius et al., (2000) revealed that significant amounts of migrants in the Netherlands suffer from Mental Health conditions, citing post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and somatic complaints as the most prominent ones. They continue by stating that post migration practices are additionally acknowledged by migrants as causes for both physical and mental health difficulties. Furthermore, Mollica (2006) states that due to the migrants' direct experience with trauma, they may avoid contact with strangers out of fear of re-traumatization despite their need for immediate help. Other factors which may contribute to this state of mind include language barrier, lack of knowledge and information where to seek the right support. This vulnerable situation of disintegration (Galtung) may generate a perception of pointlessness, loss of direction and purpose which consequently would lower the person's self-esteem and when coupled with social isolation and a feeling of "*uniqueness*" can create a sense of alienation, existential distress and severe demoralisation (Briggs, 2011). Hence, in spite of their aspirations and wishes to improve their situation, asylum migrants tend to find themselves in a state of helplessness, particularly due to the numerous obstacles seen as blockers to their way of success.

### **6.3.6 Will Power**

An opposing attitude to the state of helplessness is the positive drive to succeed. One approach to understanding how an asylum migrant student, despite tremendous obstacles (as already discussed in theme 3 of this chapter), persists academically, is through their will power and resiliency.

Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) showed his resilient will power in his message, *“Now I am afraid of nothing. Whatever they do let them do it. I do not care what is going to happen. Do it if you want to do it, I do not fear.”* He continued by an appeal to his asylum migrant peers to be courageous, fearless and not to give up when facing challenges. Here one can notice Stefan’s (P. 1 Zimbabwean) strong personal belief in his own abilities and an internal locus of control (Gebre, 2008; Gordon, 1996; Rana et al., 2011; Reynoso, 2008).

Hans’ (P. 4 Somali) optimistic *‘self-concept’* is evident in his words *“everything I like what I have now, I try to find a solution.”* This positive attitude is a protective factor and an influential resource in maintaining a resilient approach.

The participants experienced a great deal of deprivation and trauma particularly in their home country and during their journey including the crossing from Libya to Malta as already discussed in this chapter. Consequently, they developed resiliency skills because despite the obstacles, they made it and are persisting to succeed, everyone in his/her own way. However, as stated by Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese), *“migrants are suffering and some of them are very strong and they do not tell that they are suffering but they are all suffering.”*

This is a cry for help to provide support, both physical and psychological together with compassion, understanding and empathy. This reveals that, as discussed in the Mental Health section of this chapter, although they portray themselves as strong, resilient and that they are coping, there may be a limit to how long they keep on persisting particularly if they do not experience any success (Lee, 2011). This calls for the provision of professional pastoral care and timely psychological interventions.

### **6.3.7 Determination to Achieve Qualification**

Linked with the theme of will power and resiliency is the determination to achieve qualification. Something that is common among the six participants is how they all value

education and believe that it can be the solution to their problems. Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) believes that:

*“Education is the key in life. In the fighting and misbehaving we follow on media, you will never see well educated persons involved. Anybody who knows his rights, they do not fight. I am also encouraging my brothers, the young ones not to give up and I always advise them that education is not something that you just go and achieve everything. Work hard and face a lot of challenges - that will be your experience from education. You need to sweat, work hard, need to put your arms on, work hard and achieve it.”*

Here Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) is highlighting the importance of education and how the media portrays a generalised image of asylum migrants. Education can be the solution to this negative image but one has to work hard to achieve one’s goals. David (P. 2 Ethiopian) insists: *“I have to get some education and money will come.”* Hans (P. 4 Somali) is of the same view: *“I encourage people to go to school and to learn education or to learn skills, to learn how to make people aware.....”* Even Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) is of the same view - *“I am happy because I am studying.”* So is Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) - *“I am studying and I am improving myself and my life is a better one.”* Emphasising his determination to achieve qualification, Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) stated:

*“My issue here is to study and get the certification - that is it. Definitely this year I am going to study top up degree. Repeating the failed units helps me to understand better even for the top up degree. When something is happening, you need to stand up and say the truth. It is my duty as a student to study. I am looking for investment, investing for me to build a hospital and invest in my country.”*

Placing their educational aspirations on top of the priority list, participants showed determination to achieve the qualification they are aiming for, irrespective of the obstacles, sometimes even including the postponement of their aspirations for a couple of years to reach their desired goals. In view of these statements which portray a sense of assertiveness and determination, one can question how educational institutions are responding to this demand and what actions if any are being taken to facilitate their learning.

David (P. 2 Ethiopian) and Hans (P. 4 Somali) both declared that their career aspiration is nursing or medicine. They had already started the nursing course at their home countries. Hans (P. 4 Somali) is aiming at a medical doctor career. Whilst he acknowledged the difficulties he may encounter, he stated that he will continue with his education until he reaches his goal. Although he wants to be a medical doctor, at MCAST he was following the electrical installation course and *“prepared a security certificate to have the licence and work as security at night and continue with my education during the day.”*

This statement shows that Hans (P. 4 Somali) had to postpone his career aspirations and acquire the skills through vocational education to earn a living, - very basic need (Maslow, 1990), - whilst continuing with his studies. This contrasts considerably when compared with the experiences of most Maltese students who, from my personal experience as career guidance, usually tend to embark on their chosen course which would lead them to their preferred career.

Following the MCAST Applied Sciences course, David (P. 2 Ethiopian) divulged that he is *“interested in chemical engineering and willing to investigate on my (his) own some medicine.”* He admitted he was influenced by his father’s career, a pharmacist with experience in natural medicine. However, he acknowledged that it all depends on the job they get, the money they manage to save as well as the accommodation. David is realistic and although he is determined to get qualified, he is also considering the challenges that may feature in the way to achieve the desired goals.

With a positive attitude Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) was aiming at getting *“solid knowledge that can help me in my future to obtain a good job and at the same time I can be able to help others as well as my earnings.”* According to his words, with a bachelor in electronics he would apply for a job in Malta or elsewhere although his first preference would remain his home country. This shows Nagi’s (P. 3 Sudanese) affection and strong nostalgic ties with his own birth country in spite of the political turmoil and negative experiences.

Although Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) and her family found themselves here in Malta from Norway against their wishes, she supports her mother by looking after her two younger brothers in the absence of the father who abandoned the family and is very determined to pursue her studies in the pharmaceutical sector.

Stefan's (P. 1 Zimbabwean) aim was to be an entrepreneur, to open a private hospital at his birth country Zimbabwe and help his people through medical health services. Stefan showed that he is very focused: *"if you need information you need to get it - establishing what I want but not being a complainant. Plans are placed ahead of me and I am working hard, I cannot even sleep because I am working very hard to achieve my targets."*

The super-optimistic attitude of Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) sets an example particularly to his migrant colleagues not to give up in front of challenges and obstacles encountered in our daily chores. *"Definitely this year I am going to study top up degree. I think only four remained and only me as foreigner just completed the higher level HND."*

These life narratives show the participants' positivity and that they are focused on what they want out of life. Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) stated, *"I was always willing to study, I think I improved, I went through those rough days but they made me strong. Now I am willing to finish my studies."* This concurs with what Mr R., lecturer, shared in the focus group when describing the attitude of one of his asylum migrant students: *"He was always with a smile on his face, very positive."*

Familiarising oneself with the systems and acquiring correct information may take time. Hans (P. 4 Somali) confided:

*"The first year I was still not happy and I did not go (to school) because it was difficult. I wanted to first see the place, go for a walk around the place and second to prepare what I wanted to be and what I need to pay from my money, my home, my wife and to save, all by myself. This year I applied for electrical installation to learn a skill. If I survive this year, I say next year it will be a success but you have to keep going."*

Education systems vary from one country to another, hence the challenge is to obtain the right information and familiarise oneself with the education system of the host country. Adapting to the education system of the host country requires time and preparation and whilst other students would usually have the knowledge and support or at least know the source where to acquire such information and support even through family and/or friends and other networks (social capital), asylum migrants have to do and explore this all by themselves. This adjustment period usually comes at the price of having to postpone one's studies.

Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) complained that,

*“There is no information about the system at MCAST. I started at level 2 for one year and stopped. I found the course very easy. Then I started level 5 Applied Sciences and went back to Engineering. Studying in a foreign country is not easy. There are differences between you and the resident student because you are not surrounded by your own people. I did level 2 because I did not understand the system.”*

Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) commented:

*“They didn’t give us a course in Maltese language. You have to do it all on your own. Voluntary English courses are not provided by the government. If one tries and tries sometimes you will give up not because you want to give up but because some things really stop you. I am afraid I will end up like that, I am trying to finish it but I do not know about next year.”*

Here Nagi, in a realistic manner, is referring to the fine line between resiliency and giving up or even depression and other mental health issues.

Focusing on the use of services and obtaining the right information, David (P. 2 Ethiopian) shared his experience: *“I have one question, one is for you and another question is for another office, you will get different feedback. I ask one question and people give you different answers.”*

There is no formal system in place to assist migrants to acquire accurate information on the Maltese educational system. They depend solely on NGOs, voluntary organisations and the good will of individuals working close to them. Moreover, administrative staff and service providers are to be aware of the asylum migrant students’ reality, and they must be professionally trained on how to effectively assist asylum migrant students in order to facilitate their integration. Furthermore they must be provided and assisted with the right tools to be able to promote their integration within the learning community while successfully completing their course of study.

However, in spite of the determination and wishes, doubts on whether one would succeed remain and in certain instances they will dominate the thoughts of the individual. The right supportive intervention in a timely manner would surely place the individual on track to continue with his/her educational plans.

Another issue is the lack of documents and certificates indicating the qualifications acquired at the country of birth of the respective immigrants. Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) stated,

*“I have studied ‘A’ levels but had no certificates so I cannot prove it. Then I requested a copy of my certificates from my country and when I received them, I applied for level 5 and was accepted.”*

ON his part Hans (P. 4 Somali) declared, *“Although I was learning nursing in my country, I do not have any certificates to prove that, and I would like to be a medical doctor.”* Unfortunately, the political instability of Hans’ birth country does not allow him to obtain another copy of his certificates and other documents as proof of his qualifications and past experience. All this hinders the smooth enrolment of migrants in an educational programme of their choice and in line with their qualification level and previous education. Interestingly, asylum migrants are often highly educated in comparison with other groups of migrants (Muus, 1997, as cited in Ager & Strang, 2008: 170). Hence it is the college’s duty to create mechanisms and transparent procedures on how to assess and validate past experiences not backed by formal documents. Such measure would encourage migrants to continue their studies according to their level.

Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) also acknowledges his inner power when he argues that, *“the world will be ideal when I want it to be ideal, it depends on me to make it ideal and not anybody else.”* You have to be persistent, *“You need to get up and start to make an improvement for people to let you feel the way you want to feel.”*

Lara’s (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) aim was completely different as she was aiming at settling in America due to her temporary status which certainly generates a sense of instability. This shows that although all participants value education and were determined to get qualified, the basic needs must be met before focusing on their education. Lara’s (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) temporary status issue took precedence over her educational trajectories. Thus, although at the time of the interviews she was following a vocational course at MCAST, which confirms that she values education, yet she was aiming at solving her residing-related status issue first. She (Lara, P. 5 Saudi Arabian) applied through the UNHCR scheme for resettlement of migrants, however, her hopes were not very high due to Trump’s migrants’ and refugees’ politics. Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) shared her daily prayer: *“God accept our request so that we can go to America and start a new life and a new future. Everything is closed here for us.”*

These excerpts highlight the importance of support with an empathic attitude. The asylum migrants' determination must be accompanied by the provision of a variety of professional support services including the psycho-social and pastoral care services afforded at the colleges/universities to answer to the students' holistic needs as stated in the Eurodice Report. (2018: 164).

*“A key purpose of these support services practice is to focus on helping individuals escape from artificial or unnecessary constraints on their aspirations or options, to challenge preconceptions and offer alternatives. In particular Career Guidance and Counselling services have the potential to make a positive contribution to the social justice agenda, though their impact will depend largely on their ability to change practice in response to the particular challenges posed by migrants.”* (Bimrose & McNair, 2011: 332).

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

In summary, the participants' views on education are congruent in the sense that they all value education and see it as a solution to their problems. They all have different educational aspirations but acquiring qualification may take longer due to adaptations to the systems of the host country. Other reasons presented include, the lack of information on systems and services, no documentation on previous learning and issues with the recognition of prior learning. Presently no formal system is in place to support asylum migrants and provide them with adequate assistance. Support services providers should familiarise themselves with the needs of asylum migrants so as to be more effective with their interventions.

This chapter presented the themes that emerged from the interviews and focus groups related to the participants' present. The three main themes, detention, insecurity and responses were discussed, referring directly to the participants' excerpts on the same themes. The next chapter will present the themes related to the participants' future together with a discussion.

## Chapter 7 Findings and Discussion.

### 7.1 Discussion. Understanding the Participants – Their Future

In this chapter, the themes associated with the future have been presented according to their chronological order in the interviews and as per Table 14.

**Table 17: Understanding the Participants - Their Future**

<b>Hopes and Capabilities</b>	6 Aspirations	Aims and attitudes, Solutions  Difficulties in general and at college
<b>Future (Prospects)</b>	7 Challenges	

### 7.2 Theme: 6 - Aspirations

Aspirations are future goals that require a basic level of capability on their owner to imagine the future and exercise practical reason. They vary according to a number of factors such as parental influence, personal attitudes, life experiences, personality traits and others. According to Webb (2007: 80), “*Our hopes may be active or passive, patient or critical, private or collective, grounded in the evidence or resolute in spite of it, socially conservative or socially transformative.*” Moreover, Hart (2016: 5) argues that “*Aspirations are future-oriented, driven by conscious and unconscious motivations and they are indicative of an individual or group’s commitments towards a particular trajectory or end point.*” David (P. 2 Ethiopian) stated:

*“It is very difficult to achieve but most of the people who never give up, I mean they will achieve the goal that they want. But the situation is not easy. It all depends on how we live, how we rent and with the money we are planning to put, save for example for things of the programme we are going to start at school.”*

Aspirations are often the result of unequal power relations that constrain humans to mould themselves in ways that suit perceived expectations of normalcy and acceptability (Hart, 2016). They are not static, they change and may be influenced by experiences and circumstances as well as by the personality of the owner.

Here I have drawn on the concept of '*habitus*' of the individual put forward by Bourdieu (1998: 25) which "*is a kind of practical sense of what is to be done in a given situation, the art of anticipating the future of the game, which is inscribed in the present state of play.*" It focuses on our ways of thinking, feeling, and acting being in relation to the cultural and familial roots from which a person grows. Hence it is structured by one's past and present circumstances such as the family upbringing and the different educational experiences. "*The Habitus is necessarily internalised and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions*" (Bourdieu, 2010: 166). It is '*structuring*' systematically a system of dispositions which generate perceptions, appreciations and practices to help shape one's present and future practices. Together with the habitus and one's position in the field (capital) within the current state of play of that social arena (field), the social capital acquired provides the key for understanding practice. "*Individual practices are thus not simply the result of one's habitus but rather of relations between one's habitus and one's current circumstances*" (Grenfell, 2008: 51-53).

Migration is found to lead to higher aspirations which in turn affect the subjective well-being of migrants in their migration destinations (Czaika & Vothknecht, 2014). During the interviews all participants stated that they have goals. David (P. 2 Ethiopian) said: "*My plans are to achieve my goals because presently I am studying and if possible I want to push myself into finish my school.*" Influenced by his father who is a pharmacist with experience in natural medicine, David (P. 2 Ethiopian) quoted his father's words that he is "*an achieving boy*" and confessed that he is "*optimistic on the achieving side*"; such attests parental influence. Also, David (P. 2 Ethiopian) is very grateful: "*when am I going to give back something to the people who helped me, something of what they did for me, I have to do something for them.*" Referring directly to future aims he said, "*I am thinking of medicine, medical or something else. I want to push myself into completing my school. I am interested in chemical engineering and willing to investigate on my own some medicine.*" Here one can notice the effects of parental influence on career aspirations.

During his interviews Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) showed a positive and altruistic attitude. Regarding his career aspirations he stated:

*“Further my education, get a solid knowledge that can help me in my future to obtain a good job and at the same time I would be able to help others as well with my earnings. I would like to further my education to a degree level, obtain a bachelor in electronics and then after that I will apply for a job here in Malta or where can be possible to work. First preference is home country and work there but if not possible I would go to any other stable country.”*

With the word ‘stable’, Nagi, (P. 3 Sudanese) highlights the importance of stability in the country, something which he yearns for and an indication that he missed it way back in his birth country. Hans’ (P. 4 Somali) positive attitude is reflected in his words:

*“Last year I solved my things and I will not give up because I am here to win and I mean it. I prepared a security certificate to have the licence and work as security officer at night and continue with my education during the day.”*

Since Hans (P. 4 Somali) has no proof of his previous academic qualifications, certificates/transcripts, he is ready to repeat what he had already learnt in his country and continue the nursing course and may be further his studies to become a medical doctor. *“I continue until I reach my goals. It is very hard but may be possible. I will never leave education until I reach my goal.”* Though participants’ aspirations show determinism, they *“may be born of ambition or optimism but also out of pessimism, frustration or the need to escape a present way of life”* (Hart 2016: 9).

Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) is optimistic about her future and states that her aim is to finish her level four programme at MCAST and then go to University to follow a pharmacy degree course. On the other hand, Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) believes that her future is not in Malta. Her family applied to go to the USA through a migrants’ resettlement scheme. She said that politics change all hopes and their application was made through UNHCR as the USA take refugees from Malta only through the UNHCR. In spite of the apparent similar conditions, Emanuela’s and Lara’s aspirations are totally different. Oyserman & Markus (1990: 112) concluded from their empirical studies that, *“individuals imagine not only the future they want for themselves (aspirations) but also the ‘possible selves’ they fear. They argue that*

*avoiding certain kinds of futures is an important impetus for action alongside motivations to achieve desired possible selves.”*

Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) portrays himself as very realistic and practical. He recognised his inner power and made good use of it. *“The world will be ideal when I want it to be ideal, it depends on me to make it ideal and not anybody else. I was independent right from my childhood up to this day.”* This narration shows the strong attitude that Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) has towards life. With regards to his future aims, Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) was very clear, making good use of his entrepreneurial abilities:

*“I would like to open a private hospital. In all African system the health issues are a big problem. I want to support my people and at the same time make a business. That is my big plan. In the next two years I will achieve my degree. I am trying to save money and try to make an improvement on the land. Then I put a proposal to the bank to apply for a loan. Plans are placed ahead of me and I am working hard.”*

One can notice the enthusiasm Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) is experiencing in planning a business and at the same time providing a much needed service to the people of his country.

*“I cannot even sleep because I am working very hard to achieve my targets. My aim is to achieve my target because by the age of 40 or 43 I might get my PhD so that is my target now. So the future is very smooth, I will go back to my country and see my friends, some are now nurses, engineers, doctors. They will see me coming home with a foreign qualification which would supersede what they have. I am not keen on what I see at MCAST, no my mind is not here in Malta because I know what I am doing, my mind is outside here.”*

His advice to asylum migrant students is: *“if you try to love money at the moment and to study is difficult, you cannot – either you drop one or the other, you need to choose.”*

It is important to highlight that educational and career aspirations including job satisfaction and wealth are not the only aspirations deemed important and, although certain aspirations may look very ambitious, one has to bear in mind that, *“Changes would not have occurred without pushing the limits of what was known to be possible. So asking whether an aspiration is “feasible” does not necessarily help in determining whether or not to support it.”* (Hart, 2016: 20).

Post migration aspirations are more likely to increase as migrants expect higher returns to their human capital investment. These may stem from the psychological preparation, distress and courage required to leave their home country added to the unexpected challenges and harsh experiences during their journey as well as upon arrival at the host country. Such aspirations can be a source of vital energy to keep migrants moving forward. Cautious of possible changes, Hans (P. 4 Somali) stated *“I do not know what will happen in the future but I want to continue until I reach my goals”*. He continued by sharing one of his aspirations:

*“In the future I want to be a doctor so this moment I was preparing how to get a skill to get a job and after to start what I want to be so at the moment I want to start at the Applied Sciences to continue for nursing until I get what I want.”*

For Mac Leod (2009: 15) aspirations form a conceptual bridge between structure and agency since they are rooted in both. Constructed in the habitus of the individual, aspirations are informed through socialisation into larger cultural contexts, and by the opportunity structure. This resonates with Arun Appadurai’s view that *“aspirations are never simply individual. They are always formed in interaction and in the thick of life”* (2004: 67).

However, a number of scholars have shown that asylum migrants often have unrealistically high pre migratory expectations (Adam et al., 2002; Mahkler, 1995; String, 1999), with stories frequently quoted of *“migrants thinking that the streets in the destination country are paved with gold”* (e.g. Staring, 1999: 64). Consequently, when migrants discover that the society they encounter fails to offer them the unlimited opportunities they had envisioned, they usually automatically adjust to the situation and revise their aspirations downward through an adaptation process.

Van Meeteren (2012) identified three types of aspirations among migrants:

1. **Investment aspirations** aim to work and make money in the host country but with the plan to return to their country of origin. This reflects a lot Stefan’s (P. 1 Zimbabwean) dream when he claimed that, *“In the future I will go back home.....”* Instead of money he is investing in education to get qualified with the aim of *“..... opening a private hospital in my area because in all African system, the health issues are a big problem. So I do that, I am going to support my people.”*

2. **Settlement aspirations** aim to start a new life in the host country without any intention to return. This situation was aired by David (P. 2 Ethiopian) has no intention to return to Ethiopia for good, but just only to visit his family. He has presently decided to stay here in Malta - *“I want to feel comfortable and integrate with the Maltese society.”*
3. **Legalisation aspirations** aim to acquire legal residence status. Migrants associate a legal status with leading a better life. This scenario reflects the situation experienced by Lara (P, 5 Saudi Arabian) and her family who are interested in acquiring legal access to go to America and not to stay in Malta. *“For me my papers are temporary”*, she said, adding: *“I am keeping praying and every time I pray, I say please God accept our request.”* This shows that Lara’s family are after legal security and that is why they are aspiring to go to America through a resettlement scheme.

Van Meeteren (2012) continued by stating that migrants with Settlement or Legalisation aspirations usually would be coming from poor and corrupt countries. Furthermore, van Meeteren found that in those cases where migrants were not transnationally active, this was all due to their aspirations. Therefore, this poses a challenge to MCAST to create and offer more opportunities for migrant students to engage themselves in activities which would promote internationalisation and at the same time design and implement a curriculum incorporating cultural diversity and promoting internationalisation. This should be complemented with the provision of support services which should include psychological assistance and even counselling, if required, when revising and re-establishing personal aspirations.

### **7.3 Theme 7: Challenges**

When participants were asked about the challenges they were facing when striving to achieve their goals and aspirations, they highlighted several points, some of which were already discussed in their previous interviews. Differentiated treatment and discrimination, racism and the issue of languages were highlighted as the main challenges faced by asylum migrant students.

According to the European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey conducted in 2009, Malta was the country in which sub-Saharan reported the highest rate of discrimination, with 66% of individuals interviewed declaring that they had experienced some form of

discrimination during the previous 12 months (Council of Europe, 2011a). Africans have been identified as the most discriminated and vulnerable migrant community in Malta (European Network against Racism, 2010). Discriminatory practices apply mainly when it comes to accessing public spaces such as parks, buses, bars, restaurants and night clubs. However, in spite of the fact that racist discrimination is illegal in Malta, its practice is widespread and the excerpt below gives an insight into the daily exercise of power and discrimination over black people as narrated by Lara (P, 5 Saudi Arabian).

*“Discrimination and racism are the top problems in this country. We (Lara, her mother, sister and younger brother) were sitting in a park in Floriana. We were talking and taking some snacks and my brother and my sister were playing with other people, some children. These Maltese from Floriana, these are people who do not like the Africans; you can see this from their eyes. A group of teenagers came with the bikes; they were like eleven to fifteen years old. They started like getting mad because we were acting like we were not seeing them. So they started throwing some stones on my mum and no one was doing anything to help us or stop them. They (other Maltese who happened to be there) were looking fixed and not like ask what they were doing you know. I was saying like I am dreaming or what. We started fighting and they took off my sister’s scarf (hijab). Then, the security of the garden came and my sister called the police. They didn’t speak to us in a nice way and the security told us to go to the police station in Valletta. The police didn’t treat us in a good way either and suggested like to forget what was said and happened and move on. So here you feel you are not welcomed in this country.”*

Ironically Malta has its anti-discrimination law. Chapter 456 of the Laws of Malta, namely, the Equality for Men and Women Act, was enacted on 9 December 2003, in order to protect citizens and residents in Malta against discrimination. The law defines discrimination as:

*“discrimination based on sex or because of family responsibilities, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, racial or ethnic origin, or gender identity and includes the treatment of a person in a less favourable manner than another person is, has been or would be treated on these grounds and*

*“discriminate” shall be construed accordingly.*” (National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, 2004: 1).

Furthermore, article 45 of the Constitution of Malta deals with the principles of equality and non-discrimination and relates to the protection from discrimination on the basis of ‘race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex’. It also stipulates that no law shall make any provision that is discriminatory either of itself or in its effect. Moreover, according to the EU Race Equality Directive, including the Equal Treatment of Persons Order (2007), NCPE’s remit extends to include the promotion of equality on the grounds of race/ethnic origin in the access to, and supply of, goods and services. Notwithstanding these laws and directives, racial discrimination is still present in Malta and in various forms.

The unwelcoming feeling by the Maltese community towards sub-Saharan migrants was confirmed through a research conducted amongst refugees and other beneficiaries of protection in Malta in 2011 wherein participants described how in Malta they had experienced discrimination and/or unfair treatment (UNHCR & Aditus, 2012). It is to be highlighted that all six participants in this study were sub-Saharan Africans, implying that they were all likely to be confronted by the hostile attitude towards them, as referred to in this report. Referring to this unwelcoming feeling, David said *“Two of our neighbours, when they see us in front of the door, we say hello, good morning / good afternoon, they do not even reply to the greetings.”* This shows that although the laws to protect migrants are in place, for most of the Maltese the first reaction would be to avoid migrants as a sort of protective measure out of unfounded fear. David (P. 2 Ethiopian) substantiates this by stating that:

*“Discrimination because of skin colour, because we are foreigners. Some people are racist, they do not like to mix but actually they are not racist, they do not have relationships with foreigners or other students. They do not care about the foreigners, they are ignored. The problem is the lack of mixing with the foreign students. Most Maltese, they do understand and give us help but because you know, they do it because of law. Racism is illegal in Malta, so the law is forcing them. If they can, they will throw you out, they help you only because of the law.”*

David’s (P. 2 Ethiopian) statement accentuates that the Maltese do not like to mix with foreigners out of unfounded fear and because of skin colour and other differences. He argues

that although sometimes Maltese offer help, it does not come naturally and it is only the result of laws against discrimination. Nagi says that:

*“Some of the Maltese when they see a coloured person, they judge and say that they are all the same, they call you black. The first thing they say is that they are ignorant and fool, migrants do not understand and they are all in that situation.”*

These views shed light on how certain Maltese react to the presence of sub-Saharan migrants. Notwithstanding the anti-discrimination Maltese laws, discrimination is still present in the Maltese culture, sometimes openly but more commonly in a subtle way where it would be difficult to determine whether it is just a cold and unfriendly reaction or discrimination.

Apart from discrimination, hatred towards asylum migrants is visible. The adoption of ethnocentric attitudes has also been said to be at the centre of certain sporadic violence and crimes perpetrated against asylum migrants. This has led people from migration and asylum seeking backgrounds to somehow feel excluded, isolated and unwanted. This negative feeling impinges on the process of acquiring the safety, belongingness and esteem needs depicted in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and Galtung’s basic human needs typology. In extreme cases of discrimination, they have become the victims of hate crimes and widespread prejudice, both in Malta and elsewhere in Europe (Ager & Strang, 2008; de Jager, 2011; Hathaway, 2005; Spiteri, 2012, 2013). A case in point is when migrants were victims of violence and some of them had their cars burnt, as had happened to the Jesuits who operate the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), whilst others were subjected to verbal abuse or called traitors (Darmanin, 2013).

Focusing on the difficulties at college, David (P. 2 Ethiopian) said *“in the beginning at college I did not find any encouragement and support.”* He holds that *“from my experience in Malta, skin colour counts.”* Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) referred to this unfriendly reaction by the Maltese when stating: *“I have been at MCAST for two years and I still do not know my classmates. I am an alien for them and my feeling is that I am not welcomed, there is a barrier between us.”* She continued by stating that she was *“not accepted for basketball because of the hijab. For basketball they make a big thing you know because of our scarf. Everything is closed for us here in this country, the people they are fed up of us.”* Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) concludes that there is *“hatred against Africans”* and *“Boat people are supported by foreigners not by Maltese.”* These experiences surely contributed to the

family's decision to apply through the resettlement scheme to move to and settle in another country.

Sharing similar racial experiences, David (P. 2 Ethiopian) said, *“an EU guy at college, Maltese students call him to join them and help him. They call him to sit with them but no one talks to me because of the skin.”* One can notice David's (P. 2 Ethiopian) pain of feeling left out despite his desire to mix and be integrated with the college community as well as with the Maltese society. Such behaviour was also confirmed by one of the lecturers Mr R.:

*“They would let him sit on his own, even if he comes to join in sometimes they would just get up and leave him. He used to get picked upon - they used to pass comments because he was dark skinned (black).”*

This reality contrasts considerably with the migrants' previous somewhat rosy expectations of idealised life in Europe. The flexibility, open-mindedness and empathy necessary for effective interactions to take place between individuals of different cultures cannot come about if all stakeholders involved, including the Maltese students as well as MCAST staff, see their own culture as central, and see all other cultures as having an inferior status. Ms J. (lecturer) confirmed this by stating that *“Sometimes we (Maltese) are not exposed enough to different cultures or we do not want to. There is this perception that we are great sometimes and our culture is the best.”* This view corroborates with that of David (P. 2 Ethiopian) when stating that the Maltese are not exposed enough to different cultures and they react in a racial discriminatory manner out of fear.

With this reasoning, by default our perception would be that other cultures are inferior. Thus, becoming aware of the different cultures would enrich our knowledge and would possibly make us more empathic and understanding towards migrants. A Muslim migrant student asked Ms I (lecturer), *“Can I have a short break during the lesson because I need to pray?”* She agreed with the class to have a short break and it was followed by a discussion on cultures and religions. Such awareness on the different cultures as well as religions would surely contribute towards the integration of migrants in our community. Furthermore, the fact that migrants are in an educational setting with other young people who are going through a phase of *‘emerging adulthood’* is likely to be helpful (Arnett, 2000). Like with other Maltese young people, if basic needs are met, migrant students would be likely to experiment with and *“explore a variety of different possible life directions in love, work and world-views”* (Arnett, 2000: 469, 2007). All this depends on access to necessary material resources as well as the

stability experienced by migrants in the host country at that point in time. However, referring to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Olson (2007: 37) states:

*“The just world exists for those who have these four basic needs satisfied [physiological, safety, love/belonging and esteem]. For most people in the world, the just world is invisible, is ideal, an abstraction. Without seeing and feeling the access to economic and social opportunity, the said opportunity doesn't exist.”*

However, migrants lacking any one or more of Maslow's basic needs will not be able to experience justice and hence Maslow's 'just world' must seem to be indefinitely postponed for them. Furthermore, intercultural communication is by far, more likely to come about when individuals know their own culture is as valid and valued as other cultures, even if certain aspects of the culture are different. This contributes to the development of an identity incorporating some aspects of the different cultures experienced, an aspect that resonates with Galtung's thesis of the four basic needs, Security, Welfare, Identity and Freedom. It is the structure through its policies and services that must provide for the welfare of individuals whilst contributing to the development of their hybrid identity. Adopting this intercultural communication and acknowledging that one's culture is as valid as that of others is more likely to result in mutual respect (Bennett, 1993; Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Greenholtz, 2000; Olson & Kroeger, 2001).

### **7.3.1 Asylum Migrant students at MCAST**

Allen (1988) and Feagin (1992) attest that middle-class students find it easier to gain access to mainstream social and intellectual life than do minority students. They argue that minority students of colour are highly distinguishable on campus, with the result that they are often considered as outsiders and isolated from the mainstream. Consequently they must struggle more not only to meet the academic demands of further and higher education but also to fit in the college culture and access the college community (as cited in Nagasawa & Wong, 1999). They accentuate the challenge faced by minority groups including asylum migrants to integrate into the college community and emphasise the additional barriers minority groups may face when compared to other local students.

Drawing on to the theory of Survival of Minority Students in College (Nagasawa & Wong, 1999), several models were developed to understand the students' college persistence and

attrition. The four axioms of the theory are barriers, social networks, social and academic integration and success in college. As discussed in the literature review chapter, another influential aspect is their adaptive behaviour when faced with challenges. When discussing friends of migrant students, all lecturers as participants agreed, as stated by David (P. 2 Ethiopian), that migrants tend to relate more to other foreign students. In addition, Constantine et al. (2005) reported that international students develop support networks with other international students on campus. Mr R., a lecturer who teaches foreign students, when speaking about the friends of a specific migrant student said, “..... *His two best friends are also migrants. He has good relations with Maltese students but sort of he prefers to spend time with migrants.*” An explanation to this preference is, in the view of Duster (1991), that minority students are more likely to survive college if they are members of ethnic networks on campus. This resonates with what in theory is referred to as ‘Ethnic Subculture and the Formation of Social Networks’ as a result of barriers and challenges faced. Referring to a study carried out by Spiteri, asylum migrant students see the Maltese as friendly but forming a tight clan: “*they are not used, simply not used, to relating to people who they see as different*” (Spiteri, 2015: 166). This is confirmed by Lara’s words about her experience at MCAST. “*They (Maltese) accept us but we are not like very friends with the Maltese. During break foreigners stay together, Maltese stay together, only the lessons bring us together. So in breaks you see groups of foreigners and other groups of Maltese.*”

This highlights the lack of social, civic and academic integration on MCAST campuses. Asylum migrant students seem to be missing the belongingness and love needs (Maslow) of the supposedly college community. According to Maslow, this would affect the next need in the hierarchy, that of self-esteem. Bennett & Bennett (2004) note that to reach a stage of relating on an inter-ethnic level, people must be willing to remain aware of their differences and yet not let them stand in their way when approaching others and interacting with them. However, the lack of interaction from the locals seems to be a barrier to relating to people in an affective manner.

Referring to MCAST lecturers and their attitude towards migrants, David (P. 2 Ethiopian) stated that “*some of the lecturers are very good, they are trying their best, but there are some whom they don’t care about the students.*”

Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) said that she found support at MCAST from lecturers except for the [subject mentioned] one because every time Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) asks her to explain

again, she gets nervous but with her favourite students the story would be different. This shows a preferential approach by one of the lecturers with some of the students. Emanuela's (P. 6 Emirati) comments were in favour of MCAST - "*At MCAST I found what I needed.*" Hans (P. 4 Somali) complained about the lack of clear guidance on how to work out the assignments - "*It is the first time I am learning here, I did not understand the assignments, how I need to do them and that became a big problem.*"

However, with regards to lecturers, he said that they helped him a lot to continue with his education and encouraged him not to give up. Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) confirmed that at MCAST he never experienced any differentiated treatment, had words of praise for lecturers who were in his favour and mentioned that they gave him an extra course in order to solidify his English. He added that the syllabus at MCAST is very encouraging and he liked the idea of obtaining a certificate practically every year. Even Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean), when referring to his lecturers, he said that they are good and had nothing wrong to say about them. "*They do their best to support how they can do to support the students; they are always ready to help.*" However, he missed the clear information about Education and stated that he would have appreciated a detailed explanation on how the Maltese education system works.

A contrasting experience is that of Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) who had her elder brother studying at MCAST and stated that she had all the information she required before submitting her application: "*Nothing discouraged me, it is easy to enter school/college, really easy, the national system is easy.*" Apparently, the fact of already having an elder brother studying at MCAST was a source of direct information which helped her to acquire a good understanding of the systems adopted by MCAST.

Taking into consideration the participants' overall comments on their lecturers, in general such comments are rather positive except for Lara's and David's. According to the participants, the pastoral element and the caring approach on the lecturers' side as educators are there, however the need for clear and accurate information and guidance on educational systems and services is emphasised.

*"Career guidance and counselling services have the potential to make a positive contribution to the social justice agenda, though their impact will depend largely on their ability to change practice in response to the particular challenges posed by migrants"* (Brimrose & McNair, 2011: 332).

This quote implies the importance of practitioners' sensitization and adaptability to answer to the migrants' needs, to offer them the required support in joining an ethnic subculture group and to help them connect with social networks in order to facilitate their process of integration in the host country community.

### **7.3.2 Languages**

A great challenge which is affecting both lecturers and asylum migrant students in their belongingness (Maslow) to the college community is the language barrier – how to communicate effectively without discriminating, but on the contrary including and engaging each and every individual student in the learning process. Participants stated that communication can be a stumbling block for the process of integration. Hans (P. 4 Somali) confessed that the language was a problem for him. David (P. 2 Ethiopian) highlighted the fact that *“Most people communicate by using the Maltese language. They do not care about the foreigners. They are ignored”*.

For over twenty years, the promotion of pluri-lingualism and the fostering of linguistic diversity, which characterises the European Union, has constituted an important priority on the agenda of European institutions: language has acquired an obvious strategic role in mapping out the European model of citizenship, democratic participation and competitiveness in the knowledge society (Commission of European Communities; (1995, 2003, 2005, 2008; Council of the European Union, 2008, 2014; Civil Society Platform, 2011; Business Platform, 2011).

Malta being an EU member state, certain policy initiatives in this regard were taken<sup>3</sup>. As a result of diversity, working in multilingual and multi-ethnic classrooms, working with new migrants' trajectories, as well as providing orientation for new students started to become the norm. A number of language courses (mainly English and Maltese) for beginners and even at intermediate level were introduced in post-compulsory schooling such as MCAST, both held during the day and in the evenings for the migrant community including students' parents and families. However, according to David (P. 2 Ethiopian), *“Migrants are not geared in English.*

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<sup>3</sup> 2012 - National Curriculum Framework with specific reference to language awareness' programmes; 2013 - Migrant Learners and Client Support Unit; 2015 – Mind the Gap: Together we can make a difference, with the aim of drafting a long term strategy for the integration of migrants; 2015 – Language Education Policy Profile (CoE, Strasbourg): language and access to Education for non-Maltese students; a distinction between 'elite' and 'non-elite' immigrants; the acknowledgement that certain measures are in need to address a phenomenon that is here to stay (Caruana, 2018)

*They are offered lessons in English and Maltese but they do not give them proper lessons like only for one month or two.”* Even Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) emphasised this language aspect and stated that, *“What migrants need are good English language lessons.”*

This shows that although the provision of lessons in both the Maltese and the English language are a step in the right direction, it is not enough to offer a short course. They would benefit from more intense language programmes spread over a longer period starting from an early stage upon arrival. Hence the language/communication issue can be a challenge and is making it harder for migrants to integrate with the Maltese community.

Referring to a research study carried out in 2010 among 2,216 migrants living in Malta within the open and closed centres, the findings demonstrate a broad spectrum of educational experiences and level of attainment (Padovese et al., 2013). The results also highlight a high level of illiteracy among residents in the open centres. This is often due to the conditions in the countries of origin that many of the migrants had left behind. A case in point is Somalia, where a long and protracted civil war led to the complete destruction of the education system, thus limiting educational opportunities for the majority of young people growing up in Somalia over the past 20 years. In order to answer to this reality migrants must comprehend the knowledge of their native language and then move on to learn the language of the host country. This confirms the crucial role education can play in facilitating the integration of asylum migrants and at the same time accentuates the sensitivity required of educators with regards to the use of the native language of asylum migrant students.

Mother tongue words are identical to their referents and express the word directly whilst foreign language words are only representations, or to use the Saussurean term that signifiers are arbitrary and their relation to their signifiers is purely a matter of linguistic conversion (Erdinast-Vulcan, 2010).

*“The words I learn now don’t stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in my native tongue. ‘River’ in Polish was a vital sound, energised with the essence of riverhood, of my rivers, of my being immersed in rivers. ‘River’ in English is cold – a word without an aura”* (Eva Hoffman, 1991: 108).

As Garcia, Kleifgen, Backledge & Creese (2010) suggested, translanguaging is essentially sociolinguistic and ecological. Translanguaging means that students are allowed to use their

native language to access the additional language (Lewis, Bryn & Baker, 2012). Hence the non-use of the mother tongue language implies much more than a mere language change. *“It leads to the loss of interior language, the very sense of one’s subjective existence”* (Eva Hoffman, 1991: 108).

Research confirms that students need first language literacy before second language (August, D., 2002, August & Hakuta, 1997). *“Common Underlying Proficiency ‘CUP’ which means what the learner knows in the native language can be transformed to English, Maltese and any other language if they have a rich foundation in the native language”* (Whelan Ariza, 2018: 16).

Hence, in order to facilitate learning, lecturers must allow space and encourage translanguaging in classrooms and in other learning environments so as to let students be themselves with less inhibition and participate with their own developed identity. Some migrants lack the language skills to communicate effectively and to be able to follow explanations, instructions and given tasks during their training. Even lecturers who were interviewed emphasized the fact that the language/s of communication at the host country can be a barrier to the integration of asylum migrant students. This was shared by Ms J. (lecturer), *“The situation that was created was that this student, since he was a foreigner, he had a language barrier and couldn’t communicate with the rest of the class not even in English, because his English wasn’t that good.”*

Gebre (2008) explained several systemic challenges faced by migrants if their English language skills have been determined to be not proficient enough for college credit learning programmes. Speaking about a migrant student, Mr R. (lecturer) said:

*“He was always with a smile on his face, very positive but was unable to speak Maltese and I noticed that he used to get segregated in class, sit on one side of the classroom and they would let him sit on his own. Even if he comes to join in sometimes, they would just get up and leave him.”*

This excerpt corroborates with the ‘loner’ and ‘ethnic islet’ of Nagasawa & Wong (1999) as discussed in the literature review. Furthermore, it is indicated that not knowing and mastering the language of the host country can contribute to a differentiated treatment and racist actions against the migrant student which may also lead to a state of segregation and even bullying. Parallel to this, is the role of the lecturer in a class made up of students of different

nationalities. The direction adopted by MCAST lecturers is that of using English in class/workshops/salons/laboratories, etc. in the presence of international students. Such position sometimes creates problems as stated by David (P. 2 Ethiopian) when he said that not all asylum migrant students are fluent in English. This happens mainly in the lower level courses where some of the students use the Maltese language as their main language. Faced with this challenge lecturers are expected to be bilingual in class so as to include as many students as possible in their learning journey. Furthermore, using their own native language with other migrant students helps them to express themselves accurately and to feel more participative during the lesson. For Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) language can be a barrier, *“They (the students) are Maltese, they can talk freely; if we say we did not understand it (Maltese), the teacher gets fed up explains again (in English), but briefly and with a loud voice.”* Contrary to Lara’s (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) experience, Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) said that, *“They (the lecturers) are always ready to help. They do their best to support .....”*

Nonetheless David (P. 2 Ethiopian) holds that, *“Some lecturers they are very good, they are trying their best. But there are some whom they do not care about the students.”* This shows different experiences and views with regards to the college lecturers and their attitudes towards migrants. Furthermore, some of the lecturers may not be trained to make use of translanguaging and may not be committed to a bilingual delivery of lessons, consequently impinging on the integration of migrants at college. Unfortunately, as evidenced in Snell’s study (2013), language discord is often amplified by lecturers’ reactions and that is what leads to differentiated treatment and disengagement, which regrettably is similar to what is taking place locally. Likewise, as pointed out by Belanger (1994: 89), *“literacy education conceived and organised as the imposition of a unitary project in a diversified society is bound to have a gatekeeping function for those remote from the privileged code of communication.”*

An appeal to MCAST lecturers was made by David (P. 2 Ethiopian) particularly when it comes to group work tasks: *“This needs to be seen by some of the lecturers because they must see who is working with whom and to instruct them to speak English.”*

As discussed in the literature review, to facilitate communication in such context, where students bring in more than one language, it is very likely that lecturers and learners use various linguistic resources (Li Wei, 2013). Sometimes this may involve moving a step further and contest the language policies of the school/college and adopting a translanguaging (Garcia, 2007) approach to engage the learners and encourage their full participation and

critical engagement, which may be rather difficult to achieve in a foreign language. Moreover, for lecturers, adopting a translanguaging approach is more than a selectively drawn upon register, but rather an integral reflection of students' social learning experiences. As such, translanguaging strongly comprises students' perceived identities and plays an important role in their social relationships and integration. Whilst acknowledging that the use of foreign languages in class may create certain challenges, particularly to the educators, undoubtedly the benefits for asylum migrant students would outweigh the challenges. At the same time, by using translanguaging in class, educators would be embracing the principle of social justice among asylum migrant learners.

### **7.3.3 On-the-job Training Experience**

To make the training more relevant, MCAST, as part of its training programmes MCAST offers on-the-job training through apprenticeship and work based learning modules across the majority of its EQF level 4 and some of its level 3 programmes. In the academic year 2019-2020 the apprenticeship was extended to eight degree programmes. Whilst paving the way for students to join employment, this measure can facilitate the integration of migrants in the labour market and eventually in the local community (Aerne & Bonoli, 2021). Furthermore, the apprenticeship experience provides an opportunity to employers and work colleagues to get to know and work closely with asylum migrants. Such experiences can provide the opportunity to change the general racist attitude and start treating asylum migrant workers with dignity and respect like all other workers.

### **7.3.4 The provision of Information and Support**

Throughout the research interviews, it transpired that some of the participants benefitted from various support schemes. It resulted that the support was provided by both government institutions as well as NGOs, however this was done in a rather sporadic manner and with no follow up.

In their concluding interviews the participants all accentuated the importance of easy access to the right information on crucial issues for the integration of migrants. Although this was already discussed in their previous interviews, they highlighted it again to emphasise its importance. Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) stressed the importance of the *“right information on education, employment and services including language, history and culture of the country.”*

Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) lamented “*no one gave me clear information on the education system in Malta.*”

As already discussed, when migrants arrive in the host country, they lack many of the skills that are necessary and crucial for their involvement and integration in the host country. Due to the lack of essential information and social capital, the earnings of foreign born persons immediately upon arrival, are likely to be lower than the earnings of comparable natives. As a result of this lack of social capital David (P. 2 Ethiopian) said:

*“I started going round asking anyone to get information which way I need to apply for the school and which way I can find a job. JRS and UNHCR helped by giving me information. I had to get close to the Maltese community. I have been asking for information to people who have been long years in Malta. I used to ask JRS, AWAS and UNHCR: What are my rights? I asked a social worker at the Marsa Open Centre for a language course. They helped me for two months. I only got one hour a week for two months.”*

It transpires from this excerpt that the lack of information, which for natives is fundamental, may not always be easily available to asylum migrants. Furthermore, the support required by migrants may be incomparable to what natives usually require. This highlights the disadvantageous state migrants may find themselves in. Over time however, since migrants have relatively lower earnings, if any, they also have relatively higher incentives to invest in human capital when compared with natives (Borjas, 1989). The asylum migrant students’ need for social capital can be similar to the mentoring relationship that Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco & Todorova (2008) had found to make a significant impact in the lives of migrant youth. The authors found that college educated mentors may take the role of providing advice and information on how to access post-secondary education programmes. Taffer recommended a mentoring programme because it “*provides structured support for new students*” (2010: 149), and asylum migrants in particular. Moreover, the country is not prepared and equipped for such an influx of non-Maltese on the island. This is confirmed by Nagi’s (P. 3 Sudanese) words when stating that you seek for the support for students and you leave empty-handed.

Contrary to Nagi’s (P. 3 Sudanese) appeal for support and information, Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) said that JRS helped him to prepare his CV and gave him information about four schools. Even Hans (P. 4 Somali) holds a similar experience: “*JRS helped us a lot.*

*They gave us a booklet, some in English and others in our own languages with information. UNHCR visited us and gave us some information on Maltese culture. My friend he used to tell me a lot of things.”*

However, depending on migrant friends for important information may result in seclusion subjected to exploitation and sometimes even living in ghettos. Such circumstances would never contribute to the asylum migrants’ engagement in the integration process (Bimrose & McNair, 2011). The excerpts also highlight the fact that when information is provided, it is given in a sporadic way and hence a structured plan on what, who and how information is to be disseminated is required.

#### **7.4 Reflections by the Asylum Migrant Participants**

Certain challenges as discussed above can be transformed into opportunities. However, this requires the full commitment of the asylum migrant students themselves, together with the right support of third parties such as professionals, policy makers (national level), administrative staff and obviously fully committed educators amongst others (institutional level). In this section I shall go through the shared thoughts at national and institutional levels of the six study participants, on their already discussed problems and challenges found in previous sections, faced by migrants when starting and pursuing their studies in Vocational Colleges of further and higher education.

According to Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean), education and the learning process contribute to integration. This is confirmed by Moskal & North (2017: 106), *“education delivered in a safe environment can provide recovery, healing, and empowerment for the vulnerable, forcefully displaced people”*. However, they pointed out that a necessary help during the learning journey is the provision of adequate accommodation.

*“A research conducted by HUMA (2011) with asylum seekers and ‘undocumented’ migrants found that 72% of the respondents described their occupancy status as insecure and short term, whilst 85% of the respondents also claimed that accommodation problems negatively impact their wellbeing”* (NCPE, 2012: 28).

Even Hans (P. 4 Somali) emphasised the importance of housing assistance. The authorities are aware of this reality. Speaking at a conference organised by the Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants, the Minister for Home Affairs remarked that, *“One of the biggest*

*challenges in providing 'safe and dignified living conditions' for migrants was that of facilitating the transition from the open centre to living in the community"* (Times of Malta, 2011). In contrast, David's (P. 2 Ethiopian) experience is different as after going through a rough phase related to accommodation, he found the support of an NGO and was offered accommodation for free for which he is really appreciative and very grateful.

Additionally, both Hans (P. 4 Somali) and Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) pointed out the importance of financial assistance in order for them to be able to continue their studies. Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) also stated that most of the asylum migrants do not get the stipend (students' allowance) and they have to live on social security benefits which make it more difficult for them to cope with the expenses incurred to live and to study. In an altruistic manner, Stefan (P. 1 Zimbabwean) suggests that those who present their personal documents, should be eligible for the stipend, knowing that in his case he would not be eligible since during his journey in the desert, all his documents were stolen. Hans (P. 4 Somali) stated that investing in such situations give a return once one finds employment. Similarly, Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) made a call to support migrants who are in education because *"students who are taking or willing to further their education, it would be great because the country at the end will benefit from them."*

Asylum migrant students need strong support and a variety of services to help meet their educational needs, or an entire generation will grow up without sufficient education or life skills. Ultimately, unless immediate measures are seriously taken in hand, our future generation will be negatively affected.

### **7.5 Participants' Ideals on what can be done at MCAST to Facilitate their Integration**

Focusing on MCAST, Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) recommends that *"The College should be more organised particularly the people who are in charge."* Referring to administrative staff and officers dealing with students' queries, participants showed their disappointment. The challenge however seems to be the alignment of practice with theory for the benefit of this client group. For David (P. 2 Ethiopian) it is important *"To help each other and if students report something they should be given an immediate answer. Changes should take place to improve the situation following feedback and reports."*

He continued by suggesting that there should be more career guidance and counselling services targeting specifically this client group as well as the dissemination of more accurate

information on choice of study as part of the career guidance services. Advocacy may be a critical function of career guidance and counselling services for migrant clients who often face discrimination and hostility and who may have some of the greatest and most complex career guidance and counselling needs. Even Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) appealed for more support and guidance services. This resonates with Bimrose & McNair's (2011:332) position on career guidance and counselling services for migrants as per quote on page 167.

Other suggestions by David (P. 2 Ethiopian) include more outreach activities in strategic places to promote the services on offer at college, including the training opportunities with prospective migrant students as well as the provision of short courses. Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) stated that *"What we need is to have equal opportunities like all other students."* Emanuela's (P. 6 Emirati) appeal is *"to accept us and be treated equally."* Referring to the language barrier, Emanuela (P. 6 Emirati) pleaded for less use of Maltese in class. English speaking migrants feel discriminated as they fail to attentively understand and follow the lesson successfully like the Maltese students. This clearly shows that classroom practices must be reviewed to be in line with the new reality of internationalisation. Kramsch & Whiteside (2008) point out that in multi-lingual settings, social actors seem to activate more than a communicative competence that would enable them to communicate accurately, effectively, and appropriately with one another. They seem to display a capacity to play and experiment with various linguistic codes and with the various spatial and temporal resonances of these codes.

Adopting and practicing a translanguaging approach in MCAST classrooms would convey a message of respect and surely help migrants to enhance their self-esteem and self-confidence as well as their motivation to invest in education. This would contribute to the acquisition of Maslow's hierarchy of esteem and cognitive needs.

A point that merits immediate attention is that according to the participants, their own experience at MCAST depicts a sense of differentiated treatment and even discrimination. Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) passionately appealed to the Maltese: *"You must stop judging someone without knowing him/her because as they say, 'do not judge a book by its cover', judging on bad reputation."* He continued by referring to the stigma of the Maltese on migrants by stating that the Maltese tend to generalise and think that migrants like to stay at home, do not like to work, when actually they are very hard-working. This is confirmed by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality report (2011) when stating that *"In Malta,*

*migrants continued to face discrimination in the education, housing, employment and social spheres*” (NCPE, 2011: 28).

Acknowledging David’s (P. 2 Ethiopian) positive attitude and enthusiasm, he shared a dream - *“I want to see more foreigners at college. I want to see more migrant students feel comfortable and integrate smoothly into the Maltese society.”* He pleaded for *“more activities both at MCAST and outside which facilitate integration.”* He believes that *“good activities generate good smiling.”* This idea is also supported by Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) - *“They (people who are in charge) should organise some activities and hold events, whilst invite all students and tell them about migrants, how they are suffering and the way they are living here in Malta.”*

Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) wants more activities that show and share the different cultures. Maltese students, according to Nagi (P. 3 Sudanese) must be aware of the life of asylum migrants and they must be provided with a true picture of what migrants are going through. Such awareness on migrants and their life experiences would contribute to a better understanding of the migrants’ life trajectories. This would eventually lead to a smoother integration process. Furthermore, sharing their experiences and cultures would serve as an acknowledgment of the migrants’ funds of knowledge. Hence migrants would feel valued and made to feel that they have much to offer to society. Referring to a kind of multiculturalism that needs to be developed, Kymlicka (2015) identified the prospects for *‘a multicultural national solidarity’* that enables immigrants to express their culture and identity as modes of participating and contributing to the national society (Moskal & North, 2017).

David (P. 2 Ethiopian) advised migrants to unite and organise themselves in groups – migrant refugee society to join and facilitate the integration with the Maltese society. He continued by promoting the idea that *“we (Maltese and migrants), are one despite the differences, aiming at accepting the different faces and characteristics.”*

Hans (P. 4 Somali) appealed for more solidarity amongst migrant students by providing the necessary help and requested the recognition of prior learning. In the absence of proper documentation depicting the qualifications and experience, recognition of prior learning would facilitate the continuation and development of the learning trajectories. Although MCAST in practice holds a procedure on how to deal with cases of APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) and RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning), this needs to be regularised through a formal policy for the benefit of all students. Determined not to experience

discrimination any longer, Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) emphasised that “*what Maltese students have, we need to have.*” Accentuating the importance of equity, she said “*If there is equity there is everything.*” She wants to see and feel the experience of being welcomed. “*Equity in education enhances social cohesion and trust*” (OECD, 2008). This is all about social justice. Lara (P. 5 Saudi Arabian) is obviously not referring to ‘equity’ in certain sectors which could imply less equality in affairs such as lowering taxation in one area and raising it in another, but rather to ‘equity’ in the collaborative sense, where people would mutually enjoy recognition of their prior learning for which that prior learning is actually worth.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings grouped in themes related to the participants’ future that emerged from the interviews carried out with the six participants. References to the participants’ future aspirations and challenges generate insights into similarities as well as the differences in the appreciation of the life experiences of the six participants. It is essential to point out that all experiences mentioned are influential and held as important by the participants themselves. They also contributed to the participants’ individual development as well as their psychological state. Certain repetition in the analysis of issues cited by the participants was inevitable in order to present an accurate account from the participants’ perspectives on their personal experiences. The participants’ reflections and their ideals on what can be done at MCAST to facilitate the integration of migrant students were also presented. The next chapter, the conclusion of this research study, presents a way forward, contribution to knowledge, reflections and recommendations.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

This thesis has brought to the fore the complexity of the needs of migrants from an asylum background and explored how they can be supported with integration into a new host society. More specifically, the thesis sought to explore how vocational educational colleges can contribute to this integration process, specifically considering the perspectives of the migrant students themselves.

In the previous three chapters, the discussion on the findings dealt with themes identified from the migrant participants' personal narrations grouped into their past, present and future. In this concluding chapter, the main points emanating from the research questions are presented; followed on by concluding remarks, recommendations and reflections on the research process itself. The study supports previous research studies advocating the integration of asylum migrants with specific emphasis on education.

### 8.1 The Past - Key Findings

Findings from the study correlate with other studies on the subject and show that asylum migrant learners had left their home countries due to such factors as political instability, violence, wars, lack of human rights and unemployment. For example the realization that “*no democracy (means) no freedom,*” gave participants the courage to leave their country and explore other horizons.

The journey experience to Malta was described by the participants as ‘*dangerous*’. The situation in Libya was described by four of the participants as leaving them with no choice. One of them explained that he felt that he had to “*either die or cross ..... you would feel you are already dead.*” The sea crossing was described as a horrendous experience, but the sight of land gave them a sense of hope. The detention they faced on arrival in Malta was also something that they found very disappointing - particularly after the struggles and dangerous experiences they went through. It was described by the participants as “*putting us like in prison*”. There were also allegations of being treated unjustly as evidenced by such statements as “*I didn't commit any crime.*” The two female participants who travelled with their families complained about the lack of privacy and security and the way they were being treated at the detention centre.

## **8.2 The Present - Key Barriers to Inclusion and Integration**

Information on study opportunities in Malta was not easily accessible to asylum migrants in Malta even though most institutions publish their prospectus and make it also accessible online. The participants explained that most of the information they had was given to them either by NGO representatives or else by friends. Sporadic support and assistance was provided, in terms of careers' advice. Such assistance was not constant and not presented to them in an organised and professional manner, consequently impacting on their educational aspirations. Compounding this, the participants described how difficult it was for them to find ways of forming part of the Maltese society. They described barriers like racial discrimination, judgemental generalisations, financial issues, housing, employment, challenges associated with applying for residency permits, and an overall lack of necessary information about where to go and who to contact in order to be able to get on with daily life successfully. These findings reinforce those of previous research studies on the subject. When speaking about MCAST, the participants highlighted other integration barriers including a lack of communication, their need for language learning, an alien educational system, and institutional differentiated treatment that sometimes took the form of lecturers' negative attitudes towards asylum migrant learners.

## **8.3 The Future – A Way Forward for MCAST**

When asked how they see vocational colleges like MCAST as potentially facilitating their integration, the participants highlighted a number of supports that they suggested could lead to their finding integration easier both in college and in society. These included: the provision of specific services delivered in a structured manner such as information sessions on training options, specific personal career guidance sessions and other psychosocial services for asylum migrants, the adoption of a more clearly stipulated approach to the recognition of their prior learning - in the absence of official documentation, and language training sessions. Other suggestions included outreach events to attract more asylum migrant individuals to the college, financial assistance in the form of allowances, the provision of short training courses, social activities to promote unity and equity, and the promotion of diversity and well trained lecturers to initiate and maintain relationships with students hailing from different countries. The apprenticeship experience can be a vehicle for asylum migrants to attain a higher level of integration in society and can also provide a smooth transition from education to the place of work.

## 8.4 Policy Recommendations

A further recommendation that the participants made is that it is necessary for an integration policy to be in place with the aim of facilitating the integration of migrants. They suggested that the policy should not only apply to MCAST and other educational settings but it is also to be on a national and departmental level, besides at college level. One may see the launch, in 2017, of the 'National Strategy and plan of action for the integration of migrants vision 2000' as a step in the right direction to this end, as it does lay down initiatives that need to be taken nationally so as to facilitate the integration of migrants into Maltese society. However, in the light of this study, I argue that there is a pressing need for the development of a national comprehensive policy to address the present different facets of diversity and the effective integration of asylum migrants. Notwithstanding this, educational institutions are not isolated from and impervious to what happens in society. The social changes of multiculturalism and diversity permeate in schools, colleges and classes. This implies that educational integration should be seen as an important precondition for education policy to serve as a main instrument to further the cultural and economic integration of migrants in the host societies. Ideally, this should be seen in the light of the civic role of MCAST of promoting social justice, which has been either referred to specifically or inferred many times over through what the participants have said. Fairness can be seen as a function of three different perspectives: material, social and personal identity, all of which are pertinent factors in assigning to asylum migrant students an overall satisfying learning experience when at college. Hence, the involvement of representatives from socially diverse groups and nationalities in any discussion relating to the drafting and implementation of social policy is necessary to ensure fair representation, recognition and validity. Research suggests that 'top-down' educational policies have created '*an army of reluctant conscripts to post-compulsory education*' (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997: 17), and for this reason a participatory approach is advocated instead.

Successful integration of asylum migrants into society carries a strong relation with the efficacy of education policy and school practices in tackling and addressing the diversity challenges and the daily living social relations to help asylum migrant students acquire the knowledge and develop the required personal skills (Moskal, M. & North, A., 2017).

## 8.5 Education

Aiming at improving on the learners' holistic development and enhancing the support provided for all learners including asylum migrants, it is favourably recommended that the college develops further its civic role by adopting a consultative approach with the direct involvement of students including asylum migrants. Through this approach, students would be provided with the opportunity to share their views and experience a sense of belonging. On the contrary, if a top-down approach is adopted, then this is likely to become oppressive and indicative of structural oppression. The roots of structural oppression "*are embedded in unquestioned norms, habits and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules, and the collective consequences of following those rules*" (Young 1990: 179).

Hence, the need for collaboration among all stakeholders - administrators, educators and students – involved in the strategic planning, implementation and day-to-day running of educational institutions is necessary. Chircop (2018) traces the oppression to when educators cling to their usual practices as a form of permanence amid the instability caused by ongoing social changes. It is necessary for educators to listen to their students' life experiences and hear their views in order to shift their educational paradigms and be responsive to multiculturally diverse colleges. For similar reasons, hooks b. (1994: 36), calls for "*training sites where educators have the opportunity to express those concerns while also learning to create ways to approach the multicultural classrooms and curriculum.*"

It is vital that, like students, educators are provided with opportunities and space in which they voice their fears without being judged. It is necessary that training would be an ongoing empowerment exercise for educators to take the challenge and not only adapt to the new multicultural reality in education, but also take advantage and make use of the funds of knowledge in classrooms and acknowledge the presence of each and every student in class. The lecturers' training should address any misconceptions about specific racial minority groups, thus ensuring that such groups are not portrayed in a negative manner but as an integral part of the college learning community. As Fraser (2007: 27) notes, "*overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalised obstacles that prevent some people from participating on par with others, as full partners in social interaction.*" In order to reach this aim, educators must be committed to empower asylum migrant students and to educate their colleagues in order to promote equity both at college and society at large.

## 8.6 Support

*“In these conclusions, we highlight the importance of equity and inclusion in an education system that needs to be just, flexible, diversified and comprehensive. In other words, a system that leaves no one behind.”*

The above excerpt is taken from the concluding brief of the President, Council (Education) Brussels, 17/02/2017: 2.

This statement implies that in order to reach out effectively to as many students as possible, educators must move away from the extremes, the idiosyncratic and/or the singular model. They must move towards a more *‘radical middle’* (Pearson, 1996) or *‘third space’* (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson 1995). Moreover, educators need to be prepared to a *‘radical social change’* (Mills, 1959), to understand diversity in student intakes and to provide the best possible opportunities for students including asylum migrants. If the need arises, educators must be ready to consult and/or refer to other specific services. This is because students cannot be fully supported unless their social and emotional needs are supported. (Hamilton, 2013; Slade & Griffith, 2013; Krachman, LaRocca & Gabrieli, 2018). As already discussed in the previous chapters multiple stressors may impact asylum migrant students in particular, which can further compound their emotional difficulties in spite of the resilient outlook. These difficulties include resettlement trauma, migration and loss of the familiar, acculturation, identity formation and the experience of psychological difficulties in the context of dual cultural membership (Phinny, 1990). Hence, the need for psychosocial support in the provision of therapeutic interventions, including specialised counselling, psychotherapy and in certain cases even psychiatric treatment which may be required in order to enable students from certain asylum migrant backgrounds to profit optimally from their college education.

Pierre Bourdieu (1977) argues that in schools, information and knowledge are normally exchanged through the use of only one set of tools, that of discourse. Then it is the students of the dominant classes who in fact have the *‘cultural capital’* to converse using these tools. Other groups, specifically those coming from *‘lower’* socio-economic backgrounds have their own discursive tools, but these are neither recognised nor given legitimacy. Asylum migrants can fall into this latter category. Adding to their socio-economic background, it is possible that their customs, mores and habits are so different from the cultural capital of the dominant

classes of their host society, that this also makes their behaviours appear dissonant. As stated previously, the confusion that this could generate in their minds could be compounded when asylum migrant students experience a lack of clear and accurate information related to education and to Maltese society in general. Another important aspect is language training, where the provision of extra lessons in both Maltese and English as foreign languages can be crucial for the integration of asylum migrant students, since these are the languages they will use to communicate with Maltese people.

## **8.7 Conclusion and Recommendations**

A core aim of this study was to create space for the asylum migrant participants at MCAST to narrate their stories and share their views on what can be done to enhance their integration process. The following are nine recommendations elicited from the findings based on the participants' narratives.

1. Educators need to empower all students to be able to participate in the various aspects of college life including the learning processes. Educators need to know better who the asylum migrant students are, with all their experiences and backgrounds and then act on the knowledge gathered. They have to nurture their intellect and make learning contextualised within the framework of who they are. *“It is all about recognising how students are differently positioned in terms of their equity needs and on providing differential support to address these needs”* (Keddie, 2012: 264).
2. As part of its civic role, MCAST must provide a socially just and equitable education for all learners whilst producing the necessary social networks to serve as mechanisms that integrate asylum migrant students into the college social structure, thereby enhancing their sense of belonging to the college community. These networks reinforce academic behaviour (Antrobus et al., 1988); provide students with information to help them navigate the college maze; and give them the required social support to feel assisted when in need (Bogat, Cladwell, Rogosh & Kriegler, 1985; Wellman & Wortley, 1989). This can be done in various ways employing the further input of students' organisations, sports and social activities, academic for a and cultural events, amongst others.

3. The MCAST Integration Unit that was recently launched must grow to identify and promote good integration practices for the benefit not only of migrant students, but of all the college learning community. Through its drop-in service, the unit can develop into a reference and support point in particular for asylum migrant students to present and discuss their queries and access any other required services. Furthermore, the unit must provide advocacy to asylum migrant students with regards to issues pertaining to their education and personal well-being. Links with NGOs providing services to asylum migrants are to be strengthened and maintained so that when in a crisis, students can make use of and benefit from their services through such contacts. Additionally, the unit can take on and assume a consultative role for lecturers to discuss issues pertaining to migrants and their integration.
4. In the current sociocultural context of vocational education, it is imperative that educators are adequately trained in ways to be able to harness the potential of cultural diversity. Lecturers must be provided with the necessary resources including continuous training with the aim of creating inclusive classrooms where culture and social differences are celebrated. The use of translanguaging can be beneficial in this regard as it comprises student perceived identities which play an important role in their social relationships. Furthermore, through translanguaging, migrant students would be affirming their bicultural (or sometimes tricultural or multicultural) identities (Poza, 2018: 3). The CPD training sessions on the subject would ideally also be extended to administrative and support staff including the team of the psychosocial services, since the personnel in this section of MCAST in particular, are expected to respond to student queries and carry out the advocacy roles which are often critical to meeting the migrant students' needs.
5. To address the communication challenge, MCAST must strengthen the provision of language lessons to asylum migrant students, mainly Maltese and English as foreign languages. These must be provided on a regular basis, additional to the students' training programme lessons and without any costs for the beneficiaries. These are to be provided on the principle that the host society's

languages, in our case English and Maltese, are essential to a successful integration and academic completion.

6. In order to promote social justice among vulnerable, exploited and abused asylum migrant workers, MCAST must carry out outreach activities in various forms and at places such as at open centres for asylum migrants to provide them with relevant information on vocational training programmes at MCAST. During these sessions the message should be very clear: *'You can make it,'* train yourself to be employed regularly, avoiding the underground economy in order to be integrated further in the Maltese society. In these activities, reference should also be made to the assistance and support services on offer as well as the apprenticeship schemes and the direct link with employers.
  
7. Through its civic role, MCAST should set an example of how to practise the integration of asylum migrant students in vocational colleges of further and higher education. This can be done through various initiatives and practices such as by:
  - A. establishing a clear policy on the recognition of prior learning
  - B. establishing a clear policy on the accreditation of prior learning
  - C. establishing standard procedures - in particular for asylum migrant students to make up for their lack of social, cultural and economic capital - on the provision of accurate information on specific areas including health, education and employment
  - D. delineating codes of conduct for students, lecturers and staff to prevent any discriminatory and racist motivated behaviour
  - E. collecting, recording and updating detailed accurate relevant data about migrants, such as their nationality, status, date of arrival and other useful information
  - F. creating a fund account where staff, students and industry partners can contribute so as to be able to support students including asylum migrants in dire need of some form of immediate financial assistance.

8. The college must provide a multicultural infused curriculum that promotes integration and cultural intelligence which facilitates the learners' capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse situations and settings (Earley & Ang, 2013; Ott & Michailova, 2018), whilst enhancing the learners' self-esteem and resiliency. Opening its doors to asylum migrants who wish to further their education is a noble initiative that reflects MCAST's mission statement. In view of this reality, the college needs to thoroughly check that the necessary structures are in place and resources are available to secure a successful experience for all learners to make them feel integrated and valued during their trajectory with the college learning community.
  
9. Specialised careers support services including advocacy must be provided in a multicultural context to answer to the specific needs of the individual based on a strong social equity agenda. Additionally, the provision of professional culture-infused counselling service focusing on personal cultural factors of students is necessary in view of globalisation and multiculturalism.

### **8.8 Contribution that the Study makes to Knowledge**

The study is original as it explores the experiences of six asylum migrants in vocational education. Although migration is a well-researched topic, very few studies on migration are coined with vocational education (Chadderton & Edmonds, 2014). Hence the study fills a gap in the academic field as it brings forward the possible contribution vocational education can make in the integration process of asylum migrant learners based on their own personal perspectives and experiences. The study enhances understandings about the integration processes of asylum migrants in vocational education, a rather neglected population in theory and research.

Vocational education has its roots in a social justice approach that prioritises assisting learners including underprivileged and disadvantaged individuals with their integration process in the complex and unfamiliar contexts of the worlds of education and employment. It provides an opportunity to asylum migrant students to gain work experience and familiarize themselves with the workplace rules, habits and expected behaviour which can contribute to higher level of integration (Aerne & Bonoli, 2021). Furthermore, it provides an opportunity

for employers to get to know and experience asylum migrant trainees at the place of work through apprenticeship schemes.

The study highlights the participants' perspectives on pervasive social forces that might be limiting them from accessing the necessary resources to achieve a higher level of integration. The influence of asylum migrants' past experiences is accentuated with its impact of cultural and contextual stories of the country of origin, of the migration journey and of the host country. Projecting themselves as strong and resilient, asylum migrants may be risking giving up when faced with multiple adverse circumstances that may lead them to a depressive state.

The study enhanced understandings of integration through culturally and contextually sensitive exploration of the asylum migrants' life stories. It creates awareness on the barriers to integration faced by asylum migrants in vocational education and highlights the importance of cultural identity and community norms. The research process projected a stage on which participants had the opportunity to gain space and a sense of voice. The study also attempts to create awareness on the matter and turn the personal troubles and concerns of asylum migrant students into social issues and problems open to reason (Wright Mills, 1959). Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of specialised support services specifically for asylum migrants as the needs may vary from those of local students. Considering social justice as a framework for the provision of specialised services to answer to the specific needs of asylum migrants would support them to develop their human capital and talent potential (Arthur, 2013). Such services can contribute to the realisation process of personal and academic aspirations.

Another contribution to knowledge provided by the research and based on the understanding of the research participants' own experiences, is how vocational colleges like MCAST can effectively support asylum migrant learners - which could be adopted and applied by similar vocational colleges in Malta and beyond.

### **8.9 Reflections on the research journey**

This research project gave me the opportunity to have an insight into the world of six asylum migrant students during their educational journey at MCAST. It was a learning experience to get to know and understand how the participants' decisions and actions were influenced by their past experience. I have learnt that no part of the personal experiences in the

participants' narratives was of lesser importance than any other and that all contributed in some way or another to their present state.

During the research process I realised that giving a voice to asylum migrant students to express their thoughts and feelings as well as to share their ideas on education and integration is an expression of social justice. I am very satisfied with the level of trust that the participants showed in me throughout the process.

It is hoped that this study would raise awareness and inform educators, policy makers and other stakeholders in the field, on the hidden realities and challenges faced by asylum migrant students while at the same time sensitise them to the barriers asylum migrant students may encounter during their educational journey. Whilst the exploratory nature of this study does not allow for the findings to be generalised, the study has lent insight into the integration of asylum migrants. The subject can be further explored and studied even through a longitudinal study to trace the developmental career paths and personal aspirations, the integration processes and levels of asylum migrants even after obtaining a vocational qualification.

Acknowledging that the study has its limitations, such as the limited number of participants, the findings can be useful in contributing to the area of asylum migrant students in vocational education, training, employment and society at large. Finally, the experience I take with me from this fruitful research is that through the research adventure, excitement and confusion that the data may generate, I learnt not to take anything at face value but to listen carefully and reflect deeply as things can be viewed from different points of view.

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Figure 9. <https://www.bbc.com>

Figure 10. <https://www.independent.co.uk>

Figure 11. <https://www.timesofmalta.com>

Figure 12 <https://www.telegraph.com.uk>

Figure 13. <https://www.timesofmalta.com>

Figure 14. <https://www.timesofmalta.com>

Figure 15. <https://www.tvm.com.mt>

Figure 16. <https://lovinmalta.com>

# APPENDICES

Appendix I.

**Table of Allowances**

<b>Payment Status</b>	<b>Daily Rate in €</b>
Asylum Seeker	4.66
Child	2.33
Humanitarian	4.66
Refugee no Social B.	4.08
Refugee Social B.	0.00
Rejected	2.91
Returned	3.49
Single Parent	4.66
Student	4.66



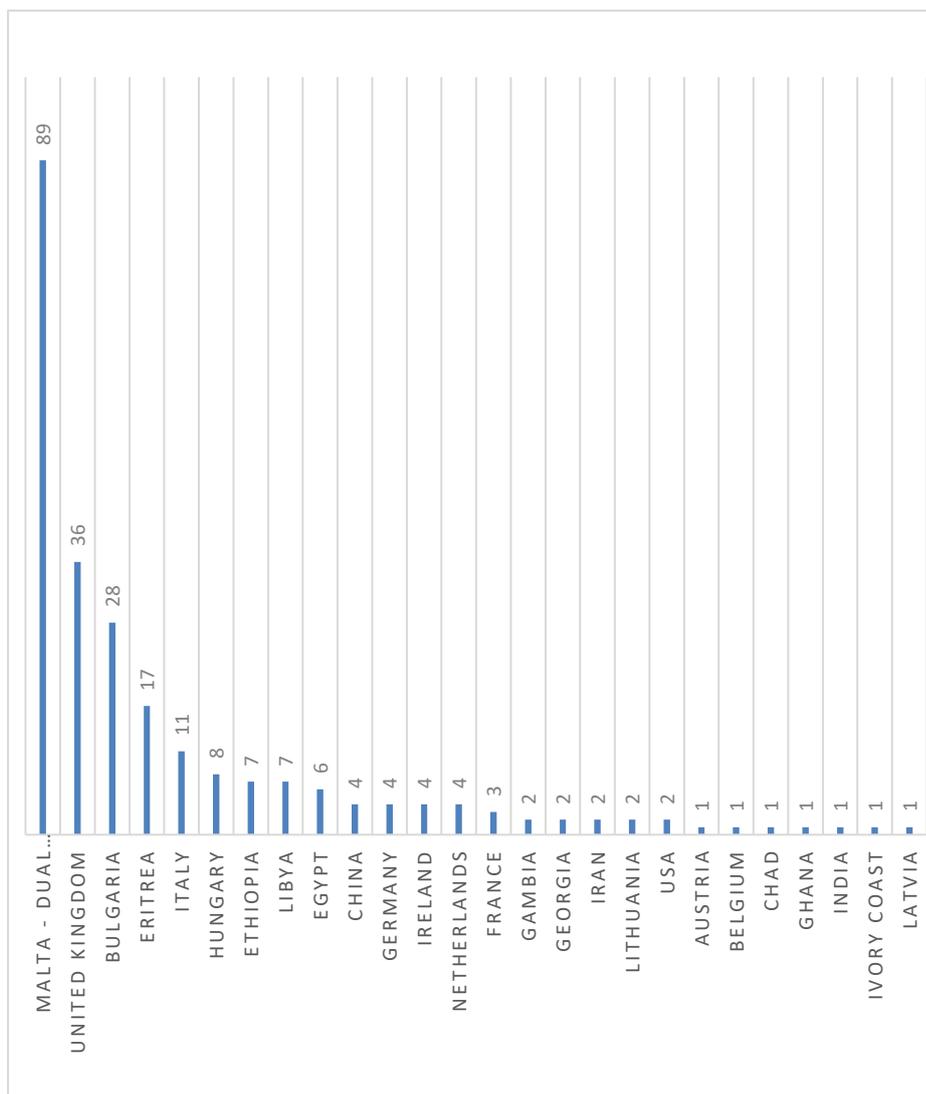
## **MCAST Institutes/Centres**

- 1. Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS)**  
**Centre for Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences (CAAAS)**
- 2. Institute of Business Management and Commerce (IBMC)**
- 3. Institute of Community Services (ICS)**
- 4. Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA)**
- 5. Institute of Engineering and Transport (IET)**  
**Centre for Aviation, Transportation and Logistics (CATL)**  
**Centre for Building and Construction Engineering (CBCE)**  
**Centre for Electrical, Electronics and Robotics (CEER)**  
**Centre for Maritime Studies (CMS)**  
**Centre for Mechanical Engineering (CME)**
- 6. Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT)**
- 7. Gozo Campus (GC)**

Appendix III.

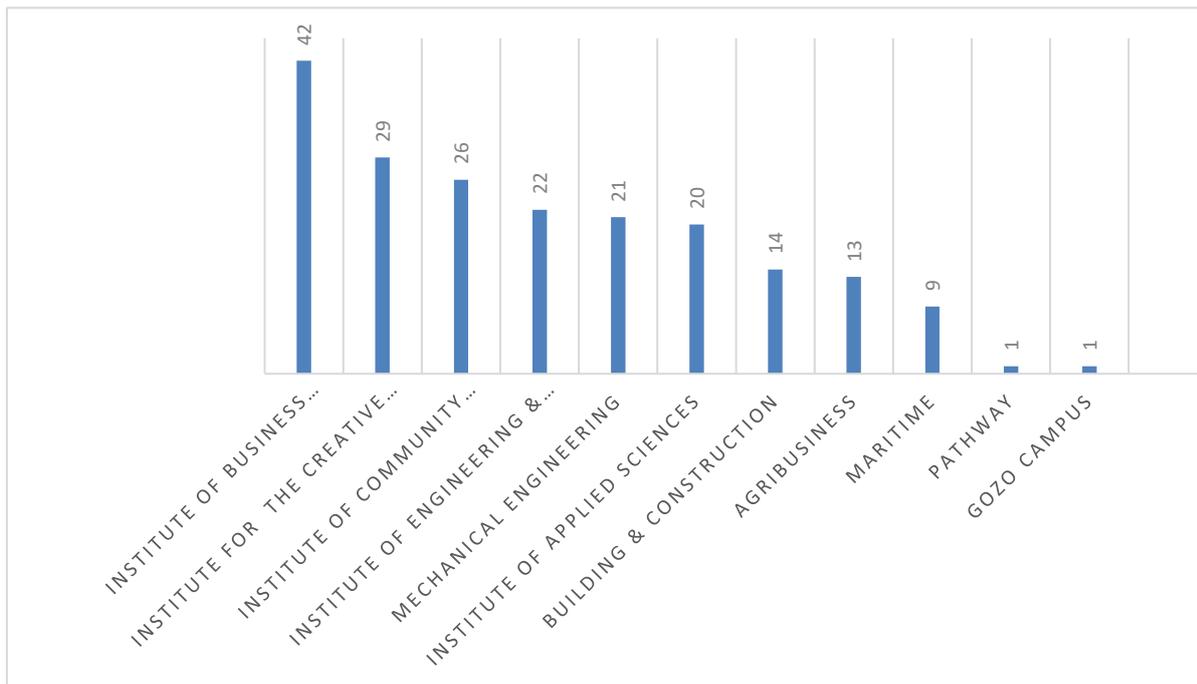
**MCAST International Students 2014-2015**

Malta - dual citizen	89
United Kingdom	36
Bulgaria	28
Eritrea	17
Italy	11
Hungary	8
Ethiopia	7
Libya	7
Egypt	6
China	4
Germany	4
Ireland	4
Netherlands	4
France	3
Gambia	2
Georgia	2
Iran	2
Lithuania	2
USA	2
Austria	1
Belgium	1
Chad	1
Ghana	1
India	1
Ivory Coast	1
Latvia	1



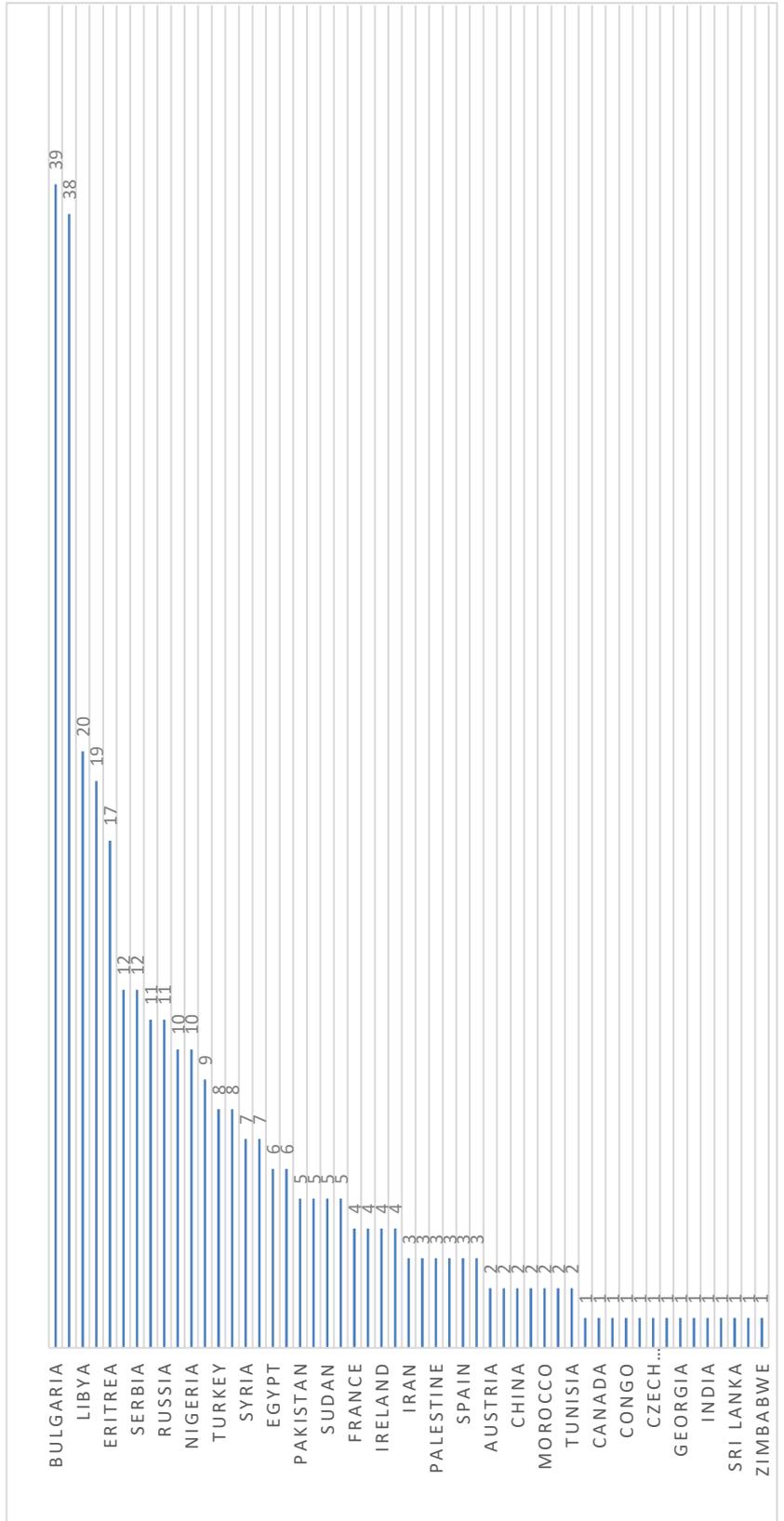
### MCAST International Students 2014-2015

Institute of Information & Communication Technology	47
Institute of Business Management & Commerce	42
Institute for the Creative Arts	29
Institute of Community Services	26
Institute of Engineering & Transport	22
Mechanical Engineering	21
Institute of Applied Science	20
Building & Construction	14
Agribusiness	13
Maritime	9
Pathway	1
Gozo Campus	1



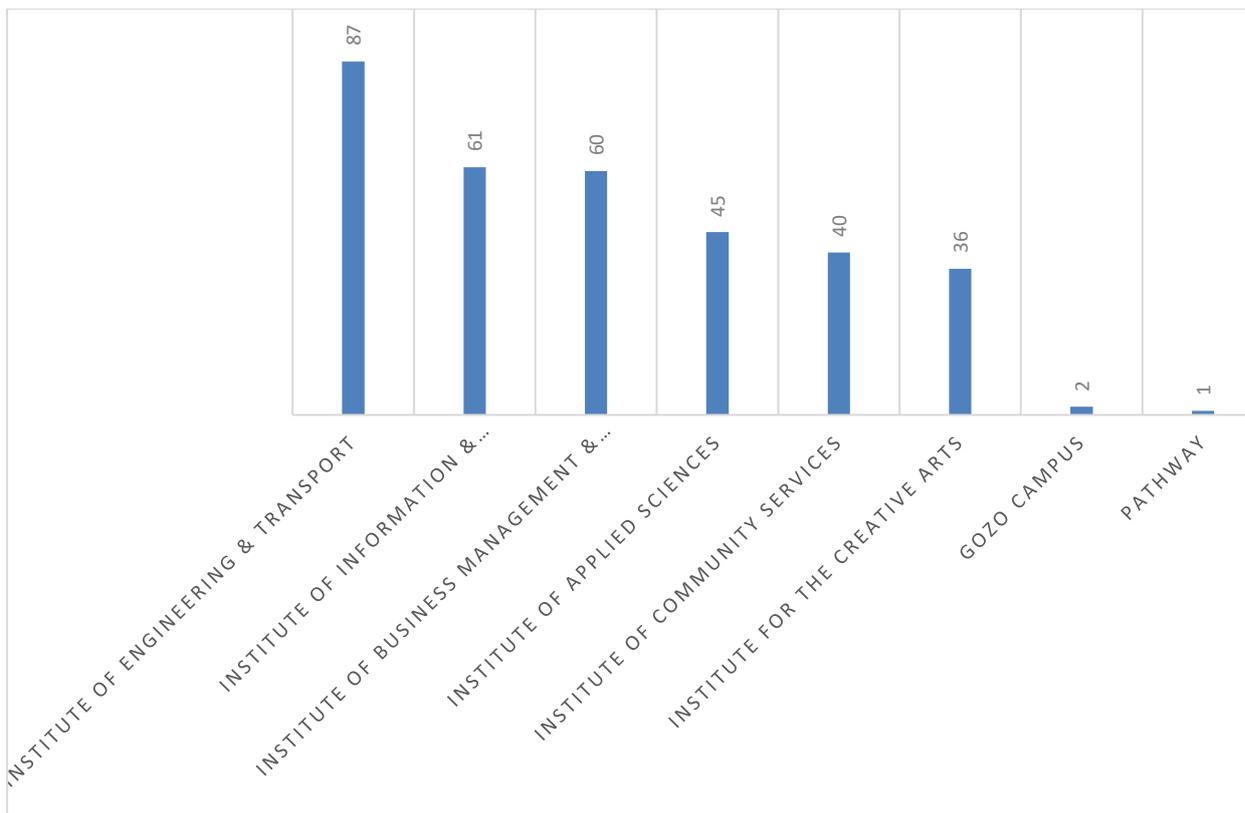
## MCAST International Students 2015-2016

Bulgaria	39
United Kingdom	38
Libya	20
Italy	19
Eritrea	17
Romania	12
Serbia	12
Hungary	11
Russia	11
Ethiopia	10
Nigeria	10
Kazakhstan	9
Turkey	8
Ukraine	8
Syria	7
Somalia	7
Egypt	6
Philippines	6
Pakistan	5
Poland	5
Sudan	5
Slovakia	5
France	4
Germany	4
Ireland	4
Sweden	4
Iran	3
Netherlands	3
Palestine	3
Portugal	3
Spain	3
USA	3
Austria	2
Belgium	2
China	2
Lithuania	2
Morocco	2
Thailand	2
Tunisia	2
Brazil	1
Canada	1
Chad	1
Congo	1
Croatia	1
Czech Republic	1
Estonia	1
Georgia	1
Greece	1
India	1
Latvia	1
Sri Lanka	1
Switzerland	1
Zimbabwe	1



## MCAST International Students 2015-2016

Institute of Engineering & Transport	87
Institute of Information & Communication Technology	61
Institute of Business Management & Commerce	60
Institute of Applied Sciences	45
Institute of Community Services	40
Institute for the Creative Arts	36
Gozo Campus	2
Pathway	1



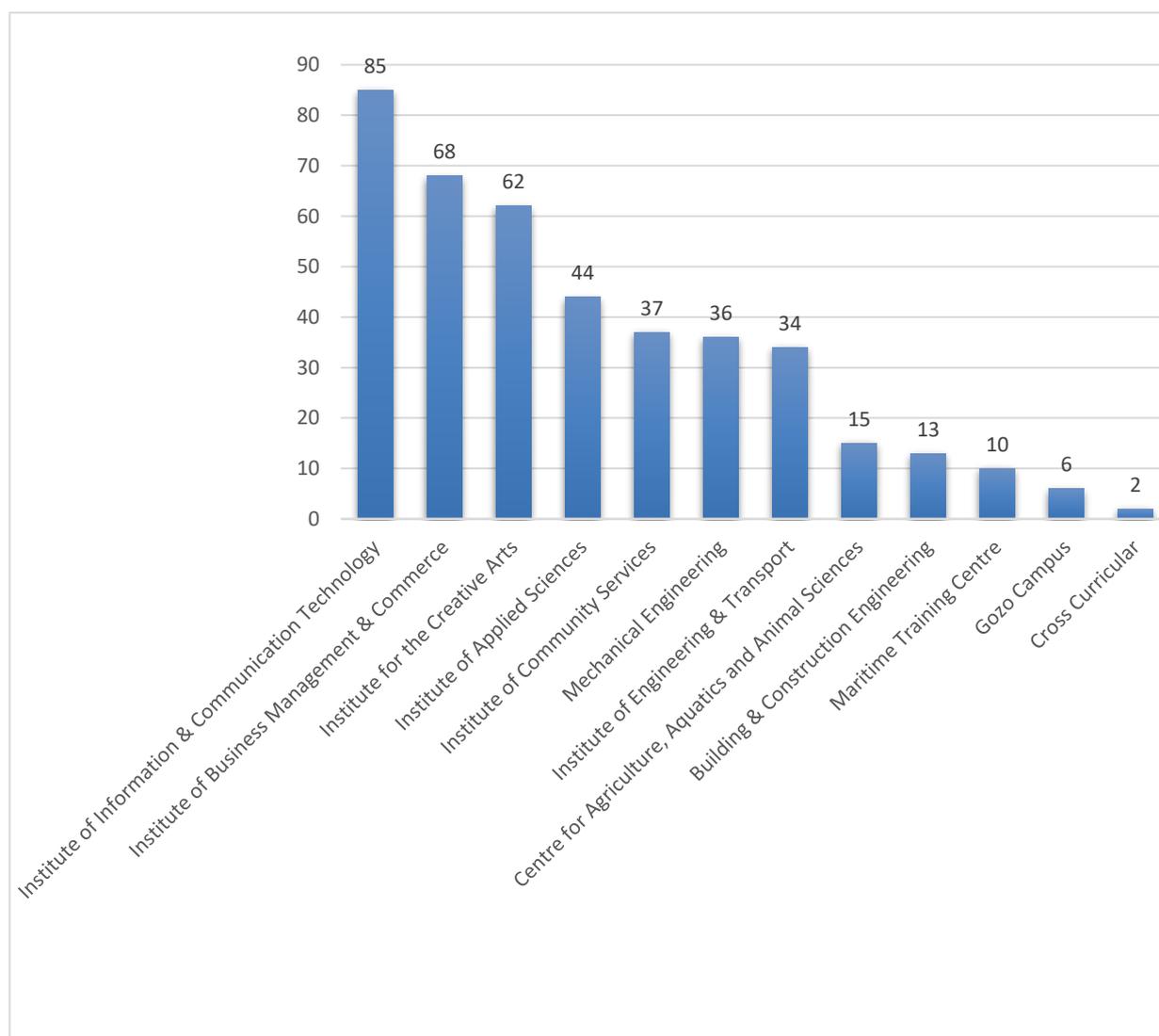
### MCAST International Students 2016-2017

Bulgaria	50	Palestine	3
Libya	43	Thailand	3
United Kingdom	36	Tunisia	3
Italy	33	USA	3
Eritrea	20	Brazil	2
Romania	15	China	2
Russia	15	Ghana	2
Ukraine	12	Greece	2
Hungary	11	India	2
Philippines	11	Iran	2
Serbia	10	Morocco	2
Syria	10	Nepal	2
Ethiopia	9	Portugal	2
Nigeria	9	Sweden	2
Turkey	9	Zimbabwe	2
Kazakhstan	8	Belgium	1
Poland	7	Bosnia	1
Sudan	7	Chad	1
Somalia	7	Congo	1
Egypt	6	Croatia	1
Germany	6	Gambia	1
Ireland	5	Georgia	1
Pakistan	5	Macedonia	1
Spain	5	Moldova	1
Slovakia	5	Netherlands	1
Austria	4	Qatar	1
Lithuania	4	Slovenia	1
France	3	Switzerland	1



### MCAST International Students per Institute 2016-2017

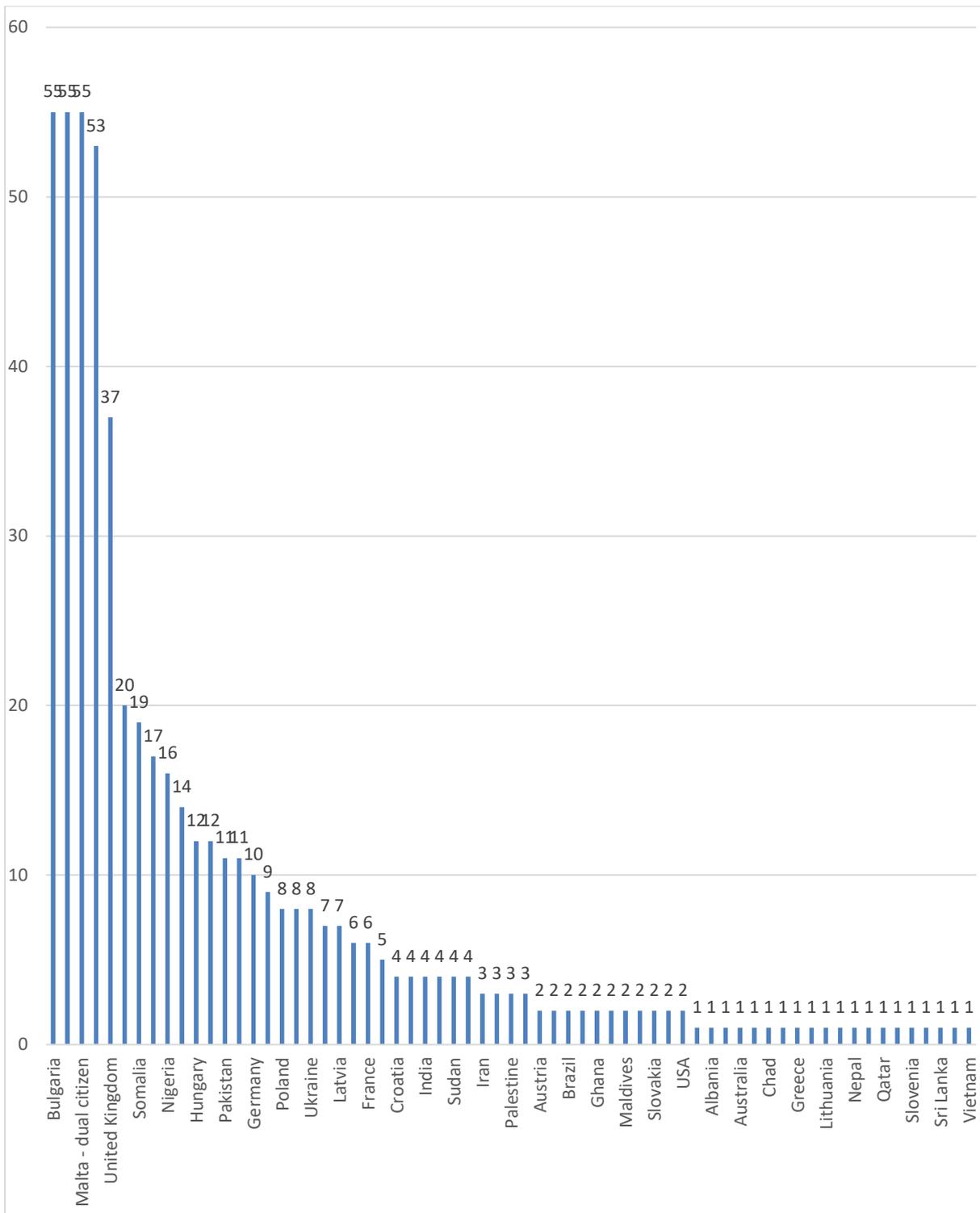
Institute of Information & Communication Technology	85
Institute of Business Management & Commerce	68
Institute for the Creative Arts	62
Institute of Applied Science	44
Institute of Community Services	37
Mechanical Engineering	36
Institute of Engineering & Transport	34
Centre for Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences	15
Building & Construction Engineering	13
Maritime Training Centre	10
Gozo Campus	6
Cross Curricular	2



### MCAST International Students 2017-2018

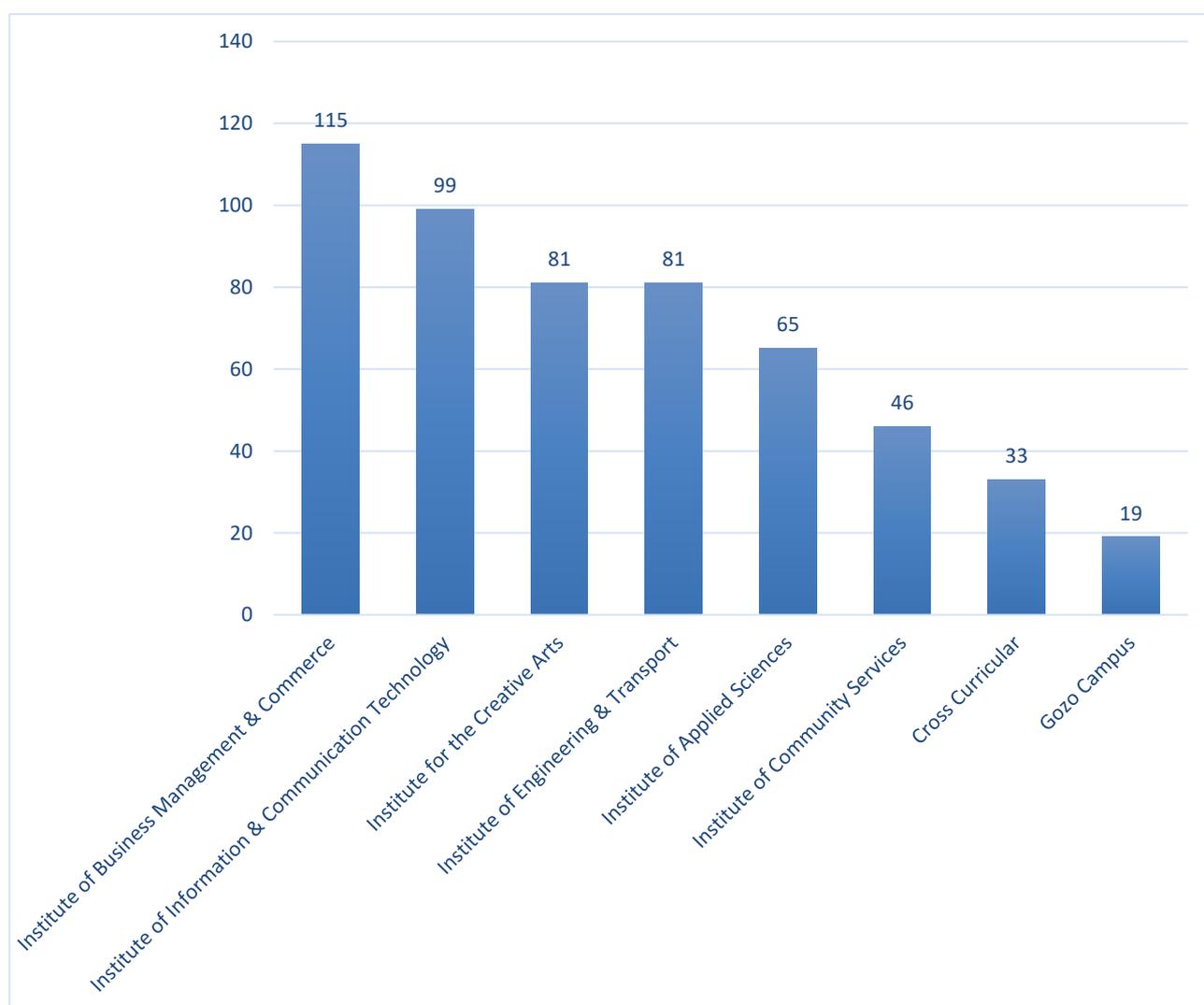
Bulgaria	55	Zimbabwe	3
Italy	55	Austria	2
Malta - dual citizen	55	Bosnia	2
Libya	53	Brazil	2
United Kingdom	37	Czech Republic	2
Serbia	20	Ghana	2
Somalia	19	Kazakhstan	2
Eritrea	17	Maldives	2
Nigeria	16	Morocco	2
Syria	14	Slovakia	2
Hungary	12	Tunisia	2
Philippines	12	USA	2
Pakistan	11	Afghanistan	1
Romania	11	Albania	1
Germany	10	Argentina	1
Iraq	9	Australia	1
Poland	8	Canada	1
Turkey	8	Chad	1
Ukraine	8	Congo	1
China	7	Greece	1
Latvia	7	Jordan	1
Ethiopia	6	Lithuania	1
France	6	Mali	1
Russia	5	Nepal	1
Croatia	4	Netherlands	1
Egypt	4	Qatar	1
India	4	Scotland	1
Ireland	4	Slovenia	1
Sudan	4	Spain	1
Thailand	4	Sri Lanka	1
Iran	3	Sweden	1
Macedonia	3	Vietnam	1
Palestine	3		

### MCAST International Students 2017-2018



### MCAST International Students per Institute 2017-2018

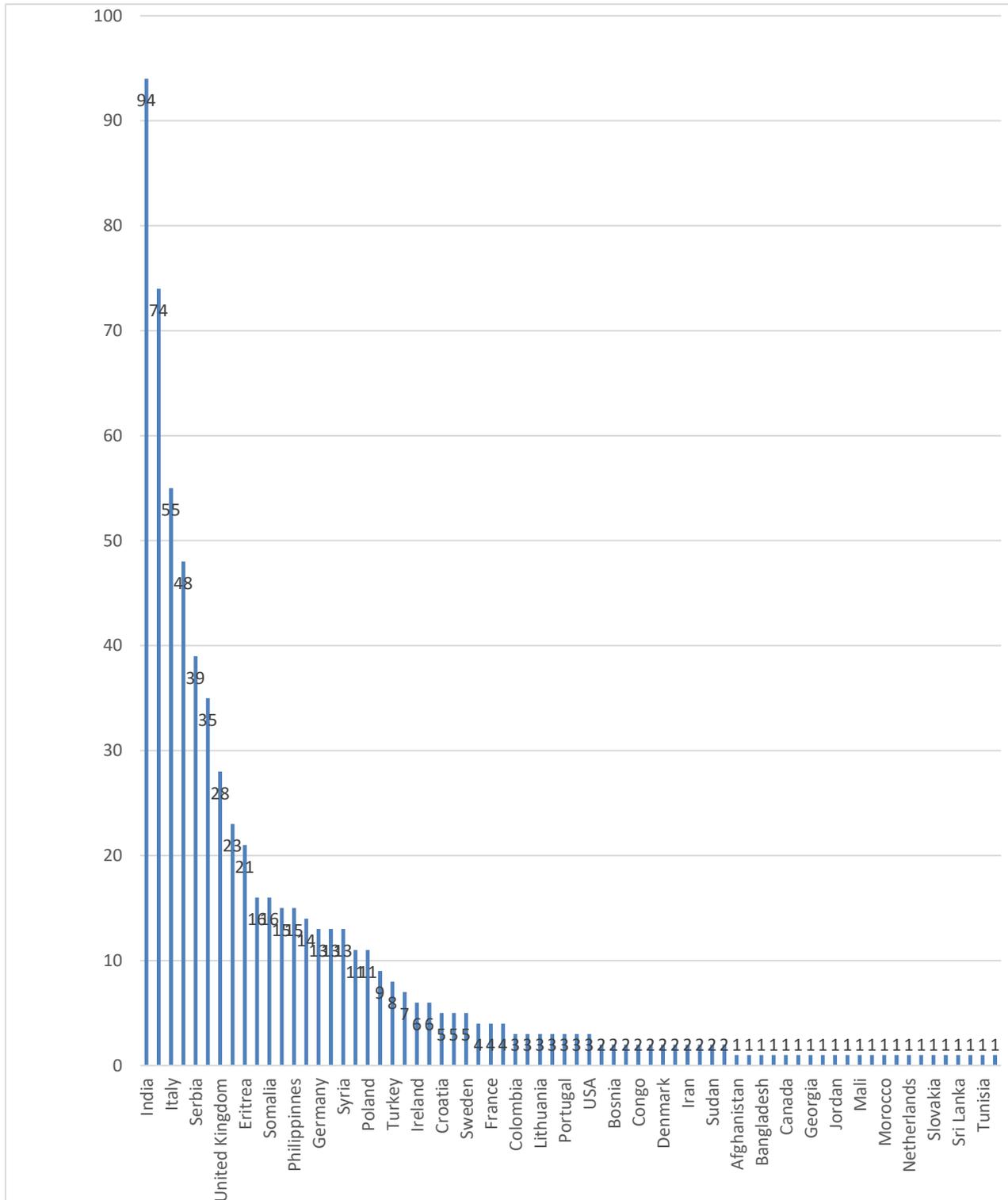
Institute of Business Management & Commerce	115
Institute of Information & Communication Technology	99
Institute for the Creative Arts	81
Institute of Engineering & Transport	81
Institute of Applied Science	65
Institute of Community Services	46
Cross Curricular	33
Gozo Campus	19



### MCAST International Students 2018-2019

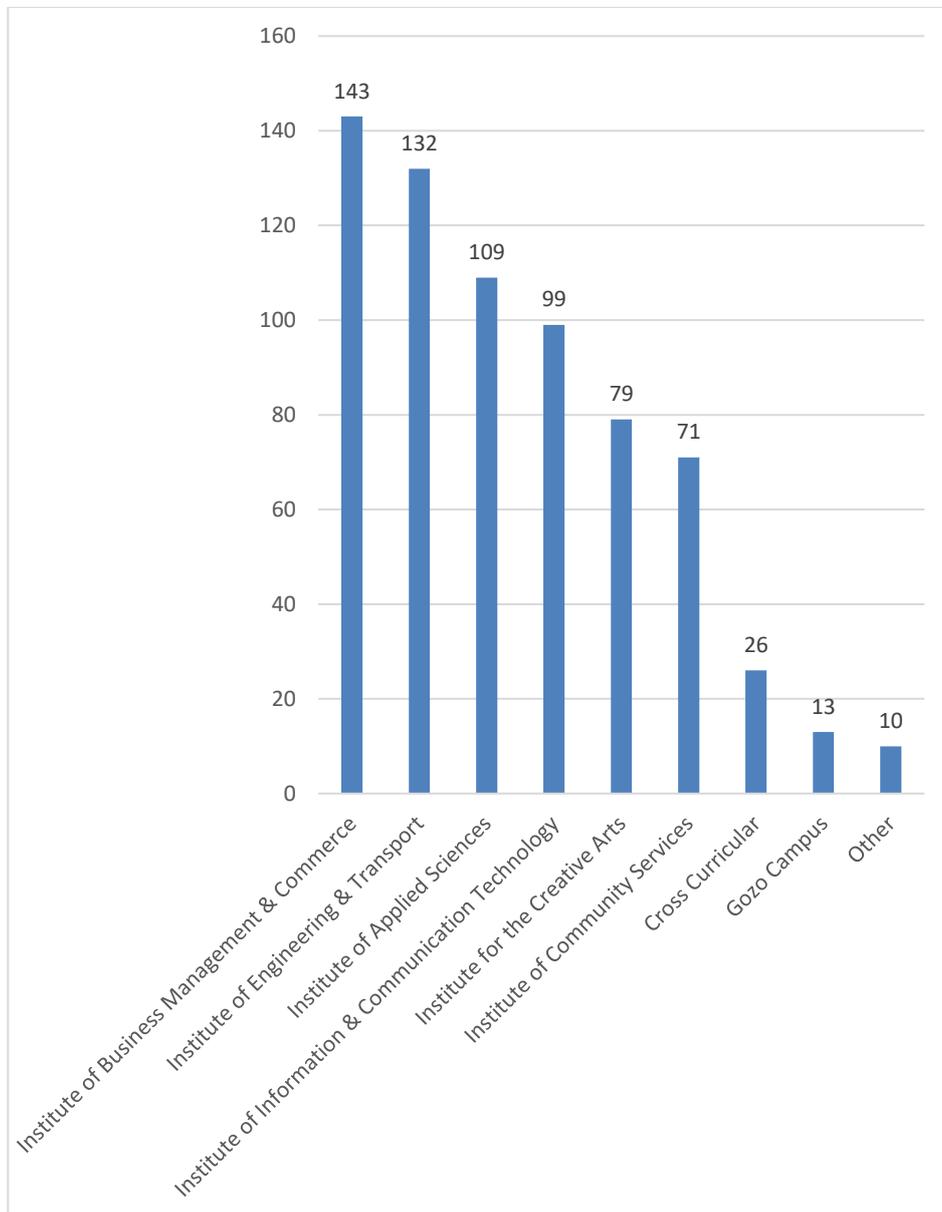
India	94	Thailand	3
Libya	74	USA	3
Italy	55	Belgium	2
Bulgaria	48	Bosnia	2
Serbia	39	Brazil	2
Kazakhstan	35	Congo	2
United Kingdom	28	Czech Republic	2
Nigeria	23	Denmark	2
Eritrea	21	Ethiopia	2
Pakistan	16	Iran	2
Somalia	16	Peru	2
Hungary	15	Sudan	2
Philippines	15	Zimbabwe	2
China	14	Afghanistan	1
Germany	13	Austria	1
Romania	13	Bangladesh	1
Syria	13	Belarus	1
Latvia	11	Canada	1
Poland	11	Chad	1
Ukraine	9	Georgia	1
Turkey	8	Iraq	1
Ivory Coast	7	Jordan	1
Ireland	6	Kyrgyzstan	1
Spain	6	Mali	1
Croatia	5	Mexico	1
Russia	5	Morocco	1
Sweden	5	Nepal	1
Egypt	4	Netherlands	1
France	4	Sierra Leone	1
Palestine	4	Slovakia	1
Colombia	3	South Africa	1
Greece	3	Sri Lanka	1
Lithuania	3	Togo	1
Macedonia	3	Tunisia	1
Portugal	3	Venezuela	1

## MCAST International Students 2018-2019



## MCAST International Students per Institute 2018-2019

Institute of Business Management & Commerce	143
Institute of Engineering & Transport	132
Institute of Applied Science	109
Institute of Information & Communication Technology	99
Institute for the Creative Arts	79
Institute of Community Services	71
Cross Curricular	26
Gozo Campus	13
Other	10



**Research Approval University of Sheffield**



Downloaded: 20/10/2016  
Approved: 09/09/2016

John Bartolo  
Registration number: 130113540  
School of Education  
Programme: Doctor of Education Higher Education strand

Dear John

**PROJECT TITLE:** How can a Vocational College of Further and Higher Education effectively support migrant learners: The students' perspectives.

**APPLICATION:** Reference Number 006843

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 09/09/2016 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 006843 (dated 29/08/2016).
- Participant information sheet 1019210 version 1 (06/06/2016).
- Participant information sheet 1014639 version 4 (25/07/2016).
- Participant consent form 1019209 version 1 (06/06/2016).
- Participant consent form 1014640 version 3 (27/04/2016).

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

David Hyatt  
Ethics Administrator  
School of Education

Appendix V.

## **MCAST Research Approval**

John Bartolo

From: Isabella Anna Zeno  
Sent: 18 November 2016 12:25  
To: John Bartolo  
Subject: Initial Research Proposal

Dear Mr Bartolo,

Reference is made to your research proposal, submitted to the MCAST Ethics Committee on the 09/11/2016. Please note that your research proposal and subsequent research endeavour has been approved by the MCAST Ethics Committee. You may thus proceed in line with the proposal that you have submitted. Kindly take this email as the formal response of the MCAST Ethics Committee.

Best regards

Isabella Anna Zeno

AO University College

Students' House

1" Floor Room 102

MCAST Paola

Phone: 23987172

## Appendix VI.

### Information Sheet Students

How can a Vocational College of Further and Higher Education effectively support migrant learners: The students' perspectives.

Since its inception in 2001, MCAST offered a variety of vocational training programmes to interested individuals from all walks of life. Migrants together with Maltese and other foreigners benefitted from the learning experiences offered at MCAST and in return the multicultural opportunity enriched the experience of life at college.

Migrant students are being invited to take part in a research study project which is a requirement for the Education Doctorate Programme, University of Sheffield. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. The aim of this research study is to shed light on the required Educational and Pastoral care of migrant learners following programmes at a Vocational College of Further and Higher Education. I intend to look into the shared life stories and experiences whilst recognising the individuality and dignity of each and every participant of the research. Through my study, I would like to hear from the migrant learners, and work closely together with the input of some of the College lecturers towards the identification and understanding of the migrant students' Educational and Pastoral care needs.

I started off by asking the College Registrar for the list of migrant students over 18 years of age and sent out an email to invite you for this briefing session on my research project. Those of you who are interested in participating in the study which is going to take place during academic year 2016-2017 would be invited to attend an informative interview to further explain what the whole study entails and clarify any misconceptions. A maximum of six students will be sought to participate in the research study. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you accept to be a participant, you will be asked to sign a consent form, however you can still withdraw at any time without any disadvantage to yourself.

The research would include a focus group session followed by three individual interviews to be held during college hours themed Our Past, Our Present and Our Future and another focus group session for the lecturers. The duration of each session should be of about 60/90 minutes where participants are expected to share their experiences and aspirations. Confidentiality will be respected at all times and pseudonyms will be used in place of the participants' names in all written accounts. All sessions would be recorded and transcribed so as to facilitate the data analysis. Material transcribed will be forwarded to the participants for their approval and/or comments. All information collected during the course of the research will be protected and kept strictly confidential. At any time you will be free to pause or to end the interview/session. Moreover, if needs be one can make use and benefit from the support of the College counselling unit as well as that of the Support Services Coordinator at your Institute.

If something goes wrong, you can contact me, John Bartolo as the main researcher by email [john.bartolo@mcast.edu.mt](mailto:john.bartolo@mcast.edu.mt) or by phone <tel:23987134> / 79438041 or the College Principal Mr Stephen Cachia by email [stephen.cachia@mcast.edu.mt](mailto:stephen.cachia@mcast.edu.mt) or by phone <tel:23987303> / 99828993. If you feel that the complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction you can contact Dr Caroline F.S. Hart, the University supervisor on [c.hart@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:c.hart@sheffield.ac.uk) or by phone <tel:441142228178> as well as the EdD Programme secretary Ms Jacquie Gillott by email [jacquie.gillott@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:jacquie.gillott@sheffield.ac.uk) or by phone [tel: 441142228096](tel:441142228096).

Thank you.

John Bartolo

## Appendix VII.

### Information Sheet Lecturers

How can a Vocational College of Further and Higher Education effectively support migrant learners: The students' perspectives.

Since its inception in 2001, MCAST offered a variety of vocational training programmes to interested individuals from all walks of life. Migrants together with Maltese and other foreigners benefitted from the learning experiences offered at MCAST and in return the multicultural opportunity enriched the experience of life at college.

Lecturers who have experience with migrant learners are being invited to take part in a research study project which is a requirement for the Education Doctorate Programme, University of Sheffield. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

The aim of this research study is to shed light on the required Education and Pastoral care of migrant learners following programmes at a Vocational College of Further and Higher Education. I intend to look into the shared life stories and experiences of both migrant learners and lecturers, whilst recognising the individuality and dignity of each and every participant of the research. Through my study, I would like to hear from the migrant learners their stories, and work closely with some of the College lecturers to obtain their input towards the identification and understanding of the migrants Educational and Pastoral care needs.

I started off by asking and obtaining from the College HR office the list of lecturers who have lecturing experience with migrant students and sent out an email to invite you for this briefing session on my research project. Other sessions are planned for migrant learners who are registered at College and are over 18 years of age. A separate email was also sent out inviting them to participate in my research project. Those of you who are interested in participating in the study which is going to take place during academic year 2016-2017 would be invited to attend the informative meeting followed by time to meet individually to answer any queries and clarify misconceptions. A maximum of six staff members will be sought to participate in the research study. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you accept to be a participant, you will be asked to sign a consent form, however you can still withdraw at any time without any disadvantage to yourself.

The research would include a focus group session for the lecturers to be held during College hours. The duration of the session should be of about 60/90 minutes. During the session, lecturers are expected to share their classroom experience with migrant learners and also suggest what would be appropriate to further enhance the pastoral care and integration of migrant learners. Confidentiality will be respected at all times and pseudonyms will be used in place of the participants' names in all written accounts. All sessions would be recorded and transcribed so as to facilitate the data analysis. Material transcribed will be forwarded to the participants for their approval and/or comment. All information collected during the course of the research will be protected and kept strictly confidential. At any time you will be free to pause or to end the interview/session.

If something goes wrong, you can contact me, John Bartolo as the main researcher by email [john.bartolo@mcast.edu.mt](mailto:john.bartolo@mcast.edu.mt) or by phone <tel:23987134> / 79438041 or the College Principal Mr Stephen Cachia by email [stephen.cachia@mcast.edu.mt](mailto:stephen.cachia@mcast.edu.mt) or by phone <tel:23987303> / 99828993. If you feel that the complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction you can contact Dr Caroline F.S. Hart, the University supervisor on [c.hart@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:c.hart@sheffield.ac.uk) or by phone <tel:441142228178> as well as the EdD Programme secretary Ms Jacquie Gillott by email [jacquie.gillott@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:jacquie.gillott@sheffield.ac.uk) or by phone <tel:441142228096>.

Thank you.  
John Bartolo

## Appendix VIIIa.

### **Participants' Focus Group Guiding Questions**

- Name
- Surname
- Date of birth
- Country of origin
- Place where you are staying in Malta
- First recollection
- Hobbies
- Interests in life
- Describe your character

Appendix VIIIb.

**Guiding Questions - First Interview**

- How would you describe your childhood?
- What are your memories of your birth country?
- What do you miss from your past?
- Do you have any experiences you wish you never went through in your life?
- If you had to relive your past, what would you change, make different?
- What kind of feeling is generated by your past experiences; how would you describe the overall feeling?
- Any lessons learnt from your past experiences?
- Mention someone you hate/dislike from your past?
- Mention someone who you praise and are grateful to?
- What would you tell your son/daughter about your past?

### **Guiding Questions - Second Interview**

- What was your first reaction and feeling when arriving in Malta?
- How was your experience at the detention centre?
- How long did you stay there and how were you treated?
- What helped you to engage yourself with the Maltese community?
- What motivated you to apply for an MCAST course and who helped you?
- What were the main challenges/difficulties you had to face to join MCAST?
- In Malta do you feel you have been treated differently compared to others?
- Do you feel that at the college you have been treated differently compared to other students?
- What are the barriers that you had to face or are still facing here at the college?
- What did you find helpful to integrate yourself in the college learning community?
- What do you wish to see happening here at the college for the inclusion of asylum migrant learners?

### **Guiding Questions - Third Interview**

- What are your plans for the future?
- How would you rate the chance of reaching your future aims?
- What did you find discouraging in pursuing with your future plans both at college and outside?
- What did you find difficult in pursuing with your future plans at college: what were the main challenges?
- What are the challenges you had to face, if any, outside MCAST?
- What did you find encouraging in pursuing with your future plans and who encouraged you at college?
- Did you find any support and help outside college?
- In your opinion, what would be the ideal world for you as an asylum migrant learner?
- What would you like to see happening within the Maltese community to help you in reaching your future aims?
- What would you like to see happening further at college to help you in reaching your future aims?

## Transcripts

### 1<sup>st</sup> Session Participants' Focus Group 16/12/16

(J) OK so to have an idea of the questions that we are going to go through, just guiding not to stay strict with these questions is self-introduction, name, surname, date of birth, country of origin, place where you are staying at the moment in Malta. And then first recollection - what do you remember from your past. The first memory that you have, the youngest – some of them they remember when they were three or four years old and in your case what do you remember, something of the past. The first recollection from your early childhood, what do you remember. Hobbies, interests in life, maybe you describe your character even by using images like I consider myself to be - happiest moments in life, difficulties and challenges that you had to face. So basically, that is what we are going to discuss. Who would like to start?

(1) We go ascending order.

(J) Pardon

(1) Ascending order.

(J) Ehh ascending order starting from the first one. It means starting from .....?

(1) If you do not mind

(J) No problem. This time we start ascending, next time we start from descending. So you are numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6. Did you write your number on the consent form? OK number 1 is ..... Tell us .....

(1) I am ..... from Zimbabwe. I was born in 1983 in Harare. I started my primary school there and then completed my senior secondary school in 2005. From there I wanted to continue my education. I started to work for a while. In my days there was political chaos, I lost my father. But then I left to try to find a place to help me continue my education somewhere. Unfortunately, I tried to enter South Africa but then because of political care order no people were crossing the border as the border was closed and were not accepting anyone to enter South Africa. There was no political democracy in African countries as you know the situation. There is no political stability, democracy or tend to support refugees in their country. I tried to find a solution, somewhere to settle, so I tried to wander my way through the desert. Finally, I ended up in Libya and I didn't know what to do. By then 2011, there was this political chaos in Libya led or supported by the Americans and the Europeans which overthrown Gaddafi. This brought another step, a lot of people from a lot of countries came to take out their people and brought back the people to their countries at least there was no one from Zimbabwe losing time to travel from South Africa to Libya. I do not know, very few, I do not know. And finally with Gaddafi's fall whoever wanted to go there was a free boat. I joined, I participated, and I crossed to Malta in 2011 on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April. Then in my interview I told them that I am a student, and I would like to continue my education after the freedom. I also met the refugee's commissioner but by then I

stayed one year in the detention. They released me in 2012 on April 12<sup>th</sup> and on October 27<sup>th</sup> I started my Foundation Studies at MCAST Mechanical Engineering course. By then I changed to Applied Sciences. I did not understand the educational system in Malta. The educational system is different from ours. Later I found out the certificate in Mechanical Engineering in Higher National Diploma. However, I tried Applied Sciences but found chemistry a little bit, not tough but found it a little bit difficult and obviously I didn't like the course. I got merits and distinctions and I passed everything but the rest I didn't like. I didn't pay much attention, I feel odd and I dropped back to Mechanical. In level 5, I failed three units. I am repeating the failed units. A lot of challenges, you cannot say you have it easily. Yes my challenges, I am fighting hard and studying hard for my repeated units and try to seek another way if I can to progress to my top up degree in the next two years.

(J) What are your hobbies ..... your interests in life?

(1) My interests are my studies, playing volleyball and watching football and running, athletics.

(J) And where are you staying at the moment?

(1) I am staying in Gzira, near Kappara roundabout, near the new bridge which is under construction.

(J) And you have an apartment; you share an apartment with someone?

(1) Yes I share an apartment with my friends.

(J) So you have been here in Malta since 2001, no since 2011, almost five years, actually over five years. And what do you think of the Maltese? You have been here over five years.

(1) Well everybody has his/her priorities and perspectives of looking at the individual behaviour and character. Sometimes it is you yourself, the way your behaviour, your attitude towards someone, even your own people can say something bad about you but I have been here for almost four or five years in MCAST and I never felt any discrimination or something like that not with my lecturers, my tutors they all love me. My failure does not depend on the lecturers. It depends on me it's my own attitude, my own habit that put me to the failure of the unit, not because of the lecturers. The lecturers are eager and willing to do their best to help me to pass, but I didn't help myself so in no means to criticize the lecturers in a way that they are careless or discriminating. That is not the case. The case depends on me.

(J) And do you work?

(1) Currently I am doing, I am working as a GD assistant, a design technician.

(J) And what is your experience at the place of work? How would you describe your experience?

(1) For a part I use to work at Hilton. Before I stopped and started my job as Design Technician at Zamco. At Hilton there is a lot of business. I can say to some people, not everyone is polite because we are individuals, not everyone is polite so you cannot take one person to generalize everyone.

(J) You cannot say the Maltese are all .....

(1) Yes. Like my new work, they treat me like a family, the way they treat me is more than enough. I will in no means criticize or say anything bad about these people. That is why I say that in every case we have the bad and the good so no matter how it goes you will feel the bad - that does not mean that everyone is like that.

(J) OK. And what is your first recollection, what do you remember from your childhood, from your early childhood?

(1) In my childhood I use to dream to be someone great and, in the future, to be in politics, a politician, something like that. That was my thought when I was a child and that is still how it is in my mind. In the future I would go back to my country and liberate people and maintain democracy all over the place, and freedom of speech across the land and freedom of movement.

(J) You stated that you lost your father. Do you have any other family members? Are you in contact with your family members?

(1) Not only my father I lost because in 2008 I lost one of my brothers and my sibling. It was political because it was ..... It is not something that is going to end this political thing. We Africans, we do not understand democracy; our democracy is different from the one we practice so this creates a lot of tension, everything in chaos. They tell ..... the politicians to mingle with the tribes so at the end there will be hatred between the tribes. This is political so if you create something like hatred between the tribes, it will always resort to different problems, all around and these are the problems we are facing.

(J) So you are not in contact, you do not have any family members that you are in contact with?

(1) No sometimes I contact my mother and sometimes I contact my younger brother because I have my mother and my younger brother.

(J) But they are still living there in Zimbabwe?

(1) No my mother is in Ghana at the moment and my younger brother is in Nigeria.

(J) Ok. Are there any questions, anyone would like to ask P 1. something about what he said?

(4) So throughout your journey, five or six years besides of your family, it is really hard. What is the feeling you get from this life?

(1) Well from experience one can achieve a lot, experience bad and good. The feeling of my failing units last year based on hardship. This is really an experience I am facing in Malta because I do not have any support from anywhere everything was me even sometimes, I feel inferior because of even lacks money to pay fare, to take a bus to come to school. And there are challenges even thinking on how to pay the rent, even how to buy food, how to top up to pay internet you will need to do research at home for the assignment, all these kinds of things, a lot of things.

(4) Besides the financial problems, do you have any difficulties with feelings and emotions?

(1) Yes that is what I have already said because the different ways of how to look at individuals as you as my brothers as today I am talking to you I met you for several years. I am not

somebody who is interactive I am not interactive with people. If you do not approach me it's very hard for me to approach you. So it is hardly difficult to get to know the residents all around people like me are doing resits but I never see them. Because if I stand quiet on my way there is no way you call me black ..... you do not know my personality, you do not know who I am. The more your behaviour, how you behave yourself will let someone knows at all. Can tell you what he/she wants.

(J) Ok thank you very much for that, I really appreciate your genuineness, your openness. Thank you. We move to number 2.

(2) My name is ..... I am from Ethiopia. I have been here almost three years

(J) One year?

(2) No three years.

(J) How did you arrive here in Malta from Ethiopia?

(2) I crossed from Ethiopia to Sudan, then from Sudan to Libya and Libya to Malta.

(J) Ok. And date of birth. How old are you .....

(2) Twenty four

(J) So you were born?

(2) 1992

(J) Ok and at the moment where are you staying?

(2) Sliema

(J) With friends?

(2) I stay alone, just a flat. I am not paying for it because last year I got problems with my life so they try to help me to stay there until I get something stable. I was not working at that time so I stay like with residence .....

(J) With a Maltese family?

(2) Yes. I also work with them. They give me work and I stay with them and give them something, not that much. I am working as a carer.

(J) So you are like fostered, sort of. And how do you find this family that you are living with?

(2) The family they are from different countries like nine rooms with me ten residents. We have two from Russia, two from Somalia, two from Ukraine, the rest are Maltese so I work with them. I take care of them because some I give them medicine, tea and some they cannot help themselves so I like to help them.

(J) Ok what are your hobbies and interests in life .....

(2) My hobbies - play football, running, I use to run marathon when I was in my country. I stopped before I left my country so I hope I will start again with my training. I do not know if I will get a chance. I also wish to get my training to run to get more experience, do more so I will get more experience. If I will do more training, I will play football and start running out again.

(J) And what about your first recollection? What do you remember from your early childhood when you were a little boy?

(2) What I remember is maybe when it's like I was seven or eight and my wish – I like to help people so that is what I always put in my mind. That is why I get some being dependence on helping people, sick people and poor people. That is what I had in mind when I was very young.

(J) Happiest moment in life?

(2) At the moment there aren't because life had made me terrible so I missed a lot and it also make me to become a strong person because I had a lot of problems, but that problems I learnt from them. I learnt from my past. I wish it will change everything but right now it is difficult, but I am pushing hard. I do not want to give up to .....

(J) This is a very important point what ..... is making that terrible experiences can break you but at the same time can make you stronger. It is how we look at these terrible experiences and we can learn from them and become stronger to face more challenges in life. Life is full of challenges. We can either take these challenges as they are breaking us, be lethargic, doing nothing or else we fight them to overcome them and become stronger persons. Very good. Now tell us something about Ethiopia. I do not think, have you ever been to Ethiopia the rest of the group? Any one of you have been to Ethiopia?

(3) I saw it on television.

(4) I passed from there.

So Ethiopia, it is - we have problems with the government. So there are problems not because of the people, not because of economy, not because of other problems. The big problem is what the government decides for the people to do. It is shameful how the government keep people.

(J) And what about the country? What is its main activity? Is it agriculture, business, what is it?

(2) I do not know. Not because it is my country but Ethiopia is really a good country. You can do whatever you like, like business, agriculture for the wood life. It is really good. The problem is when everything is decided by the government, there is like .... The people needing by head life, bad life, nothing changes every year. Because you need just to stay for a long. On the other hand the people have to live with the government and they get more depression, they get more bad economy, they change from time to time good business, but the people do not follow the government or accept. The government for example staying for 30 years, there is nothing changed but new generation and they do not get anything, so but on the other hand side, if the government or the people who work with the government, children who go out and get more chances to get more study, more experience but on the other hand they do not go to get more education or any positive thing - so that is the problem.

(J) I have the impression that when I hear the word Ethiopia, what comes to mind is poverty. Is it true this perception that I have of Ethiopia?

(2) What do you mean by poverty?

(J) Poverty it means that people are very poor.

(2) No not because of the people, it's because of the government.

(J) Yes but the situation is that the majority of the people are very poor?

(2) No not that much.

(J) OK.

(2) For example the people because in Ethiopia people depend on farming so the government every year he decides like new plan for example we have two big problems 2013 – 2014 because he decided on a master plan. A lot of problems, especially right now. So the people they are going to lose the land where they grow crops or where they have their farms and it is, the government is pushing people back and he takes for his own any house or any land.

(J) Do you have any family members that you are in contact with?

(2) My family they live there in Ethiopia.

(J) How many brothers and sisters do you have?

(2) I have three sisters and three brothers.

(J) Two sisters and three brothers, so you are six in all. They are still there? How come you left out of the family? Are you the eldest?

(2) No I am not. I lost my brother. My brother, my sister and me.

(J) So you are the third and you lost your big brother?

(2) Yes.

(J) Ok. Happiest moment?

(2) Not at all, because I always wished to change, time to time, day to day, month to month and year to year to get something better and to be independent so I for example, if something happens to me, I write down and put it and read it again so it can help you understand your past. So I need to improve from yesterday, so that is my dream – I need to change. And it is by that situation and with that life it is really difficult. But I am pushing by hard so it is not that much happy but I thank God where I am, I say I'm better.

(J) Ok. Thank you ..... Any questions for .....? No OK Thank you.

(J) Next participant ..... Tell us

(3) Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. My name is ..... I always start with my name because it is hard to pronounce it and since I arrived here in Malta very few people pronounce it. I am from Sudan. I was born in 1995. I left my country 3 years ago and when I left it was a very hard moment. I remember I was only 18 years old and it is very difficult to make such a decision like that. To leave even the hard days that I had back there. I went to Libya. I stayed there for seven months and I made my journey to Malta. I am here in Malta since July 2014. And after detention I walk out and first my impression in Europe I said that maybe this is the opportunity, I cannot miss. Rather of getting the protection and seeking for asylum, it is my opportunity to develop my skills and there is always room for improvement. I seek for opportunities and there in Hal Far Open Centre is a very helpful woman. She brought me an MCAST booklet. She told me that you can have an opportunity there. And I saw the book and I am really interested in Electrical and Electronics. I choose the course and I applied for it and then I sat for the exam. It is like a short interview face to face and I passed and I started my life as a student again. Through my two and a half years ago I started from Foundation level 2 and now I am in level 4. I developed some skills and learnt a lot from the students here, from the lecturers, even from the environment. The first thing that comes to my mind when I came here at MCAST is that I will not, I will face great difficulties because the system here is different from the education system in Sudan. Even the education system in another language because in our country the official language is not English and even for the school you just take English as a subject not as the main. And I came here, although I know a lot of things because I studied till secondary there and I have like 'o' levels in some subjects, but when I tried to interpret them I found difficulties. In Maths I know the subject, the formula but when I want to express it, I found difficulties in the language. I always do my homework and show interest in lecture but when I come to say it in front of them, I find difficulty because of the limitation of my language. Then I started to improve my English, went to some different courses and improved on my English language skills.

(J) And today you have very good English, very fluent. You are improving a lot.

(3) I believe there is always room for improvement, if you practice makes perfect. So my hobby, I have a lot of hobbies. Unfortunately I am not professional in any one; I play football, basketball and sometimes I swim and I will be swimming so much and I run. I watch football live and I like travelling but I am limited with documentation and financial but in the future if I can I will travel.

(J) Ok. Any family members?

(3) Here in Malta?

(J) Yes.

(3) No I am alone. My family members are living abroad.

(J) Where?

(3) They are all at Sudan there.

(J) And how many brothers and sisters do you have?

(3) My father got married twice.

(J) Ok.

(3) And we have brother from father and mother and other from father. In general we are thirteen. I am the youngest. Not the youngest but only in terms of boys and I have two sisters after me.

(J) And you are in contact with your brothers and sisters?

(3) I am always in contact with them.

(J) You miss them?

(3) I am home sick.

(J) Do they dream that they will come and see you one day?

(3) No I work out for, to save and go to see them. Even though the situation there is difficult, but still whenever you have family you will be surrounded with the love and mercy that is what is surrounding.

(J) What made you leave your country?

(3) First, if you do not know that in our country we have conflicts that started in 2003 and in area called Darfour. Some countries like USA, they declare as genocide because what is happening there is really something that has to be recorded for the history as well. The government block the media to go there and report and record what is happening there. And before the war started we were living in peace. Families were surrounded with mercy and love. Unfortunately the things went like 100% turn it and I go crazy and sometimes I face hardest even in thinking. I think those problems changed my life. I use to be a very intelligent, mature student. My hobbies use to be engineering, I studied but in that time when the worst started and I ..... My family were ok but the part of the family I loose neighbours and friends. My village was burnt all and we moved to another place and in that place we were staying in a refugee camp. It is inside Sudan in another safe area but we are still not seen like as our place because since you are raised in place and move on, you will be seen differently. I decided to move to Europe because of the dream that I have. I use to say maybe I go there and continue my studies, will do my degree, my Master and that is why I came here, but my family sometimes they encourage me to do whatever I want and if there is a chance I go and visit them. But now I am an asylum seeker and I cannot go to my country according to the United Nations Law Dublin.

(J) Ok. What do you remember from your early childhood?

(3) I remember the children even though my childhood, I cannot say it was nice. I started working at the age of seven. I use to help my father sometimes I needed to go to play but my father tell me you have to play but there is always ..... let me not describe this because I do not feel like say it.

(J) And what kind of job were you doing?

(3) Farming.

(J) Ok so you remember those days when you used to go in the fields when you were seven helping out with family.

(3) With the family. I wanted to play football but my father took me to the farm and farm is far away from where the children are playing.

(J) But at the same time there is some form of affection, peacefulness in that memory of the farm?

(3) Always there is affection and peaceful memories because my father did it in the sake of helping me because at the end he wanted the best for me. But I was a child and I wanted to play like all the other children wanted.

(J) Ok what about here at MCAST, how are you coping? And where are you living at the moment?

(3) I live in Swatar, B'Kara.

(J) You share an apartment?

(3) Yes I share an apartment with two of my friends.

(J) And your experience at MCAST how would you describe it?

(3) I say so and so. Part of the knowledge, I developed skills and knowledge, but the students sometimes have bad reputation about migrants and they always put them in just one box. You are a migrant, you have these criteria, and you have to fit in it even thou you try to proof differently. They ask some questions. Even sometimes I feel I can answer it and do not find the right words to answer the question, but still this is the life, it is tough, it is as my friend here said, it will make you stronger.

(J) So that proves to be a challenge, what you are experiencing at the moment.

(3) Yes.

(J) Ok. Are there any happiest moments in life?

(3) I am waiting for that moment.

(J) You are waiting?

(3) Yes.

(J) When is it going to arrive? Do you have any clues when this happy moment is going to arrive?

(3) Soon I think.

(J) Soon? Wish you luck then. Good. .... Thank you. The next participant is .....  
Tell us .....

(4) My name is ..... I am from Somalia. I come from the Sovereign Somalia. I was located from a country Trazantan. I crossed from Ethiopia to Sudan and to Libya.

(J) Sorry to stop you. So we have five different nationalities. It's a coincidence. And the girls are from Eritrea. So we have five different nationalities in this group. That is very good. Sorry for disturbing you ..... You were telling us that you crossed different countries to come to Malta.

(4) Yes three countries Ethiopia, Sudan and Libya after arriving in Malta in 2013.

(J) And when were you born?

(4) I was born in Somalia.

(J) When?

(4) 1995. I was lost one year in detention after I got the freedom in 2014.

(J) How was your experience in the detention?

(4) Detention is very hard. You are unable to do anything. Everybody would like to feel free. When you are inside you have a lot of problems with yourself. And then when I got the freedom in 2014 September, I decided to keep going into Education to get and to make a change in my life. So I tried carpentry at that time. I was not effective at the Building and Construction Engineering Naxxar.

(J) So you were at Naxxar, at the Construction?

(4) Yes but I was not attending continuously as it was not my hobby and I was not interested about that faculty. Now I started electrician. Still now after that I try to continue in my education because I was not at home, have no documents and the country was new for me. I live that year I spent how to make improvement and to get the time to go to College, to get a work to get financial to buy a computer because of that I was up to nothing and no one helped me.

(J) You work at the moment?

(4) This time I started, I work some part time at night.

(J) What kind of job?

(4) We collect for the cleaning, something like that, and cleaning for some places. But I still have no good job so this moment if I learn to get a certificate or to get a skill to go to work, but what I like, I cannot work what I would like to be.

(J) What is it? What would you like to do?

(4) I want to learn the school to go to work to pay everything by myself. Me I do not like somebody helping me somebody behind me.

(J) Ehh ehh

(4) I like to get confidence in myself. I like to deal myself with everything so this year I decided I make a plan to make a change in my life. This year I started level 3 Electrical Installation and if I pass the examination I will look for the six months of work.

(J) So at the moment you are doing which course – Electrical Installation?

(4) Electrical Electronic Installation. So in the summer I look for work to get economy and to start part time work and I want to be in a better position. I wasn't trusted, before in my country I was learning two years in nursing. So unfortunately I do not have any certificates and the country is in a civil war.

(J) I am seeing ..... that you are moving from one course to another. You started in the Building no, then you moved to Electrical installation but you are interested in the Health Sciences, in Medicine. Am I right?

(4) Yes.

(J) Ok.

(4) Because of, the reason I am going to move to electrician is that if I get a job, I can do what I want. If I do not get a job I cannot go.

(J) So you are going to start working to earn money and then you continue follow your dreams.

(4) I still need a year to get a scale. After that I start a job. After that I would go in my dream. That is why I am doing that.

(J) Your first recollection ..... from your early childhood?

(4) When I was young I was playing football, I was, like to play a marathon, a ten kilometre, half marathon, that time I was very good, I was running ten kilometre but after that I left.

(J) Any hobbies, interests in life?

(4) This time nothing but I like to be a doctor.

(J) Ehh ehh. What are the challenges here at MCAST?

(4) This subject that I took, it is my first year because of the course I was in before. This is my first year to become an electrician.

(J) So that is a challenge. Are you finding the course difficult?

(4) No it is not difficult, its good, no problem - its good.

(J) And where are you staying in Malta?

(4) I live in B'Kara.

(J) Any questions for .....? This brings us to the next participant.

(5) I am ..... My parents are both from Eritrea but I never visited the country. I was born in Dubai on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2000 where my family use to live at that time. I arrived to Malta from Norway together with my mother and two brothers in 2014. I was very happy there and I wish that one day I would return back to Norway.

(J) What made you leave Norway?

(5) After one year, the Norwegian authorities stated that according to the reading of our fingerprints we originally had arrived to Malta as our first destination from Dubai. According to European law we had to return to our first destination as the records indicated that Malta was our first European country. Although this is not true we had no other option but to come to Malta.

(J) And where are you staying in Malta at the moment?

(5) I live with my mother and two brothers in Marsascala.

(J) And what about your father?

(5) He left. He is not with us anymore.

(J) What are you studying at MCAST?

(5) I am studying Applied Science at level 2.

(J) And what about your first recollection, what do you remember from your childhood, from your early childhood?

(5) I remember I had a normal childhood. I was always quiet and shy and still am. But at the same time I get nervous very quickly. I remember the joy of my birthdays with my family and friends.

(J) What is your overall experience here in Malta?

(5) I use to attend St Theresa Secondary School and then Lily of the Valley School Mosta. I experienced a lot of racist comments by both teachers and peers. The hijab is not accepted by the majority of the Maltese people. They keep staring at you as if they are seeing something weird. But no one is going to stop me from wearing it as I strongly believe that it is my right and no one can interfere and tell me what to wear. At MCAST the situation is slightly better and since there are a number of us, slowly it is becoming more acceptable. This doesn't mean that we do not experience any comments to ridicule us but the lecturers in general are supportive.

(J) What about your hobbies and interests in life?

(5) I love to draw and paint, play football and spend time on my mobile.

(J) Any questions for ..... We move to our last participant.

(6) My name is ..... My family had to leave Eritrea because of the political situation of the country. I was born in Saudi Arabia on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1998 and visited Eritrea 4 or 5 times. We arrived Malta in August 2011. My family consists of eight members, my parents, four girls and two boys. I am the third. The two eldest siblings are students at MCAST, one following an Insurance course whilst the other is following an Applied Science course like me.

(J) Where do you live and are your parents employed?

(6) We live in an apartment in Zabbar and my parents are both unemployed.

(J) What are your hobbies and interests in life?

(6) I love to play basketball and use to play with an established team but I felt I wasn't accepted as part of the team. They didn't accept the fact that I must wear the hijab.

(J) They who?

(6) The players and coaches used to discriminate because of the hijab and the colour of skin. My mum bought me the kit for nothing. A student used to continuously pass on discriminating comments. Against my wishes I had to leave the team because I felt I was unaccepted and unwelcomed.

(J) And how did this experience affect you?

(6) Since I came to Malta I changed. Most of the time I am very angry, reply quickly and answer back to whoever passes any discriminatory comments. Whoever knew me before says that I changed from the outside but not from the inside.

(J) What are your overall comments regarding your experience in Malta?

(6) To be honest I wish to move to another country. I would prefer to live in England. Discrimination and racism are the top problems in this country.

(J) Thank you. OK, that brings us to the end of our first session. Any comments on how the session evolved? What do you think?

(1) I think it is interesting. It helps us to understand each other, helps us to get to know each other, what they like, what they dislike, how they understand and view the Maltese even at MCAST and how they see the environment. How to see the students, lecturers and colleagues and also how they, we also share with them the past route and the challenges they had to face. It also has been a lesson for some of us on how to surpass the difficulties, sort of a step to stand on, how to get another sort of way to build yourself and become stronger out of your challenges. I think it is very interesting.

(J) I would like to sincerely thank you. I see a lot of potential in this group.

(1) Even for us sometimes you need to speak to someone and do not have that opportunity, so here you find someone. At least you release the pressure that you have in you. Through your problems and his problems you can get well with your problems and failure. People they always succeed because if you do not fail, the probability of your success will be limited like the person who failed because who failed already know the steps and go through and just I want to know, not remind, just to give advice – there is no one open about it and speak freely about it, you are speaking yourself and it will help your emotions both physically and even more than that and I really thank you for this opportunity.

(J) Thank you, I am glad to hear that. I see that we made drastic development in the sense that the few minutes, practically one hour we got to know each other much better. Now I can say that we are a group. Before we were individuals but now we are group.

(1) Almost two years I have been seeing you and never spoke to you and now if I see you I have to stop and talk to you.

## David P. 2

### First round of Individual Interviews - The Past

(J) How would you describe your childhood?

(2) When I was very young because I have one sister older, sister and brother but he passed away. We are a big family, I am the third and I was .....

(J) You were five in all, three sisters and two brothers?

(2) No, no I mean I am the third because three sisters, but they are young. One big sister, the older sister and old brother, I am the third. I have two sisters and one brother behind me so we are six in all. I was very young, even at that time I was very, very kind for my mother and for my father. They like me and I started school when I was six years.

(J) In Ethiopia?

(2) In Ethiopia yes but the school is just like a day centre. You go there.

(J) Ok.

(2) They teach some lessons not that like a school .....

(J) Something that you play, do something ehhe

(2) We sing we learn something. The teacher just advises us. I started school when I was eight, two years later then. And also in the evening I was studying the Quran. In the morning I use to go to school and in the evening I use to go down to the lessons of the Quran. And that was I remember I just, I do not know but I need to and my feeling is you know when I see all the people crossing the road or working in the road, if they are carrying some things you know, I was very little, very young. Even I couldn't, if they give you some heavy things I cannot carry because its heavy.

(J) Ehhe.

(2) But in my mind I still say why not help that person? Ehh I do not know if some people, anyone come I just ask you where are you from, what is your name, how old are you, what is it like, I just see the person. That is why they like me, not because I need to show myself. No I do not have that behaviour but that actually that I have natural God gives me, I just, it is easy for me to make friends even when I was young. It is all that I am respectful. All the old people that come to home, I just sit with them like a friend you know.

(J) Ehhe.

(2) For me it is very easy to talk to people.

(J) It's natural for you.

(2) Yes it is natural.

(J) And from a very young age.

(2) Yes I do not differentiate and disrespect if he is sick, if he is in health, if he is old, if he is young. I guess I see him personally. I do not care what or who is like.

(J) Who of your parents was like this? Someone from the parents was caring?

(2) But actually because I couldn't get someone to ask. But the memory of my father, I still remember, my father use to say 'You have to be a good person'. He used to say that.

(J) Ehhe.

(2) He also is good; he is a very respectful person – my father and the people of our village all like my father because he is a very kind person and used to help a lot like poor people and sick people. Imagine I was twelve when ..... I remember I was twelve years old and we had one neighbour and she was very old without a family and my father used to tell me 'You have to go and help'. And I use to carry water because we do not have water inside. I used to go out and bring water for her. And she is not my grandmother. But she was very old I guess you know like my grandmother. I ask: How are you? Are you fine? You are doing well? What did you do today? I just ask during the evening. If she needs anything I will help her. I ask my mother to help, you know. Yes it is also from my father. Yes my father is a very kind person.

(J) Ehhe. So this answers what are your memories of your birth country. Would you like to add something to the memories of your country of Ethiopia?

(2) What I can say is because my origin, the origin of my family, we do not have if any person, even if we do not know the person where he comes from, it is very easy for my family to join with joy with them, to talk with them, to help to do something like group work. It is very easy for them. Imagine my mother use to like she is in charge of around eighty women. She just formed a group and they decide what to do every month. They put some money like in an account and if the person gets sick, or if the person needs to do something, you know to make like party or do whatever they like, they pay every month how much they can afford like thirty or less and they save them. With those savings they use to help people who do not have anything. Like when the children get sick and even when they also get sick.

(J) So it is a charity organisation.

(2) Charity yes. But not exactly charity to put something and give only one time.

(J) Continuous.

(2) Yes continuous, every month and they of one grows up and starts business ..... In fact my family they are very ..... Also my family members are very competitive because they wish to do something and not because of having many money or showing themselves. The reason why my family being like that is like natural you know.

(J) Ehhe Ok. What do you miss from your past? Example: you wish that you are still experiencing the moments that you spent with your .....

(2) What I miss I cannot say it all because when I was fifteen I started a business, a small business with my school. In the morning I go to school and in the evening I had a shop at that time, a small shop. Then I started a business which started growing with more money. I used to

help by small money like charity and like people who do not have everything. I was saying in my mind – I have to get some education and money will come. If you have education you will get money. If you get education you will get money easily and I was saying in my mind at that time - I have to get some education on how to help people not by money. I need to help the people on how to get experience, to get some skills, to change my idea of how to help people.

(J) What kind of shop you had?

(2) I had a small shop started off by selling eggs, soap, clothes because we do not have ..... maybe like separates, four metre rectangle and all the things in one shop. After two three years the business became big you know and changed. I started selling clothes, shoes and other things, what people needed. I was doing very well and was very happy at that time. But I missed for example, I didn't see my family, the happiness of my family at that time because I wished to stay with them to play, to spend time because I didn't see the happiness of my family, my mother and my sister because at that time I was young and I didn't care. I was running in my school and my money, my business.

(J) And your father? Your father was still living with you?

(2) Yes still living with my mum, still living together.

(J) They are both alive now?

(2) Yes yes that is what I miss. But I didn't see my family. For example – when I call they cry. I still wish to get time to stay with them, to spend time with them. That is what they need to get my help, and I need too, not to give them money or take money from them you know. I need to spend some time with them. I actually when I see myself you know from my past, I get terrible.

(J) You get .....? I didn't understand.

(2) Terrible - problems. When I get problems, the problems from my past help me to become stronger because I, a lot of things happened to me through my journey from time to time you know.

(J) Because you were focusing on school and your business and your family was like put aside a bit.

(2) Yes like put a side a bit.

(J) And today you feel sorry. You wish that .....

(2) Yes I feel sorry not because I hate them. I know that they very like me. In fact I know from my siblings and family that they like me more than anyone, they prefer me. And I just need to say sorry, to stay with them, to see what they need.

(J) Do you dream of visiting them?

(2) Of course but the problem is to go there and my schooling.

(J) Do you have any experiences you wish you never went through in your life?

(2) For example - I used to start in my free time running marathon and playing football, but I never have chance to get regular experiences to change my skills so that I am still wishing to get more training so I can get, maybe I will catch up because I am still finding it difficult to get training for running or for training football. I used to play in my free time when I was in my country but I stopped because I got problems. I still got .....

(J) What kind of problems did you get?

(2) The problem with the government.

(J) Ehhe, the political situation.

(2) Yes, yes that is why I miss a lot of things, my shop, my family, my school.

(J) If you had to relive your past life, what would you change, what would you make different? You have already answered a bit, that you could spend more time with your family. What else?

(2) I also need to give advice for my siblings and kind of new generation so I need to, because I went through a lot of things in my journey. I cannot pity them for my entire journey so they can understand what life is like. You know, I need to leave something, teach something, I need to have some document for the new generation.

(J) Ok. What kind of feeling is generated by your past experiences?

(2) Feeling its ..... because it is done everything you know it is all. I was saying when I was studying and in business, I was saying I was lucky because I was earning good money. When I was sixteen I was independent so I didn't need any help from my family. In the morning I just go to my school, I visit my family only in the weekend Sunday or Saturday. My business made me independent so I didn't require any help from the family.

(J) So am I right when I am saying that you have mixed feelings, like you have some feelings which are good feelings of satisfaction that you were successful?

(2) At that time yes I was saying in my mind, you know I am lucky.

(J) And successful.

(2) But a bit later on I said I missed everything so I just feel sad, but I am not feeling sad because of that because it is not the end of my story that one. I am just struggling not because I need to cover up something in fact I am feeling happy, starting my school again. Maybe three years ahead I will be successful in my education so I can start my working, what I want to do you know.

(J) Ok. And any lessons learnt from your past experiences?

(2) Ehh. Lesson, yes. From my past experiences to do by action is not very different when you are something just by saying it. And when you do something by action is not.

(J) So the lesson learnt is that there is a difference between what you say and what you do.

(2) Because, I guess the time I had planned for, three years I couldn't manage it my plan from that time to move forward because I left everything and started a new life. I started to build another one. In fact if I had continued from that time, I already finished now. Maybe I would have worked enough. I built another plan from that time you know but my lesson is if you make mistakes and if you learn from the mistake, when you try something, but if you do not try you do not get anything because I crossed from Sudan to Libya. I was saying how I cross the Mediterranean but in fact thank God I crossed. I was afraid when I was in Libya. Not really easy to do that, to do .....

(J) To go through Libya with all those dangers. Did you come across any dangers whilst crossing to Libya?

(2) Yes it is in fact, but I didn't see any problems you know because we spent two days on the sea, about thirty hours.

(J) You mean crossing from Libya to Malta, but what about crossing to Libya, the desert?

(2) Yes it is. For example we spent fifteen days in desert without anything. But we had some water and small things like cake and biscuits.

(J) And you were in a group?

(2) Yes we were a group and that helped us. It is really dangerous, it is not what humans do.

(J) And did you come across thieves? Because they say that from time to time there will be thieves and that they take everything that you have.

(2) Yes it is but before it was a bit better, but then they started doing whatever they like you know because they do not care that much. They just focus on their business. If they do not find anything on you they just shoot you. They use to do that but I crossed anyway thank god.

(J) Ehhe, Ok. Mention someone you hate/dislike from your past.

(2) Actually in my mind there isn't any human being. I cannot hate but since some people judge, judging others. People judge you.

(J) What about people in politics in your country?

(2) Politics. It is still..... They say what we are doing is unfair, but there is nothing unfair. In fact politicians say on media or in front of people, they say what they are doing is fair. But they are killing the children of poor people, the people who need the protection, the new generation. The people say what we are doing is unfair, but there is nothing unfair. I heard that people in my life.

(J) So there is someone who you dislike - let's not use the word hate, but dislike - do not feel comfortable meeting this person?

(2) Because through my journey I was learning a lot of things. I see a lot of people, different faces, the people I still see from my country, people with different behaviour. For example when you fall in front of them, they do not hand you up. When you are weak, feeling down, the people

don't saying to you something to give advice. Maybe if you do something for them they do not show interest in you.

(J) So the people that you do not like are the people who do not show any compassion with people in need.

(2) Ehhe.

(J) Ok. Mention someone whom you praise and are grateful to.

(2) In my past life, that person is coming, make me feel something. It could be a family member, it could be someone you have found very helpful when you were a child, and it could be someone who showed you empathy and support. It could be a teacher, a family member and it could be a relative. In fact I just can mention my father because my father when I was young he used to teach me a lot of things. During free time he used to take me out and give me more advice and I was still saying in my mind that I was lucky because he helped me to be a better person. He used to show me a lot of things. What is the life of poor people and what the life of rich people look like. What they are doing and some people don't have anything but they have a good a heart for other people. He used to show me a lot of things; he used to teach me a lot of things. I remember saying to my father but he said that he couldn't get the chance to be a teacher. Yes he used to teach me a lot of things.

(J) What made you leave your country? From what you said your past was with your family and you were successful in your business. Now you mentioned politics that made you leave your country. But how did politics affect you that much to leave everything behind you and go somewhere where you do not know what you are going to find?

(2) That is how life, like I said before, I had planned everything to do my future you know. I left everything and started a new life in a new country. I do not know where there is not even one person I know so all this affects because we are supported in our origin. Our origin is Oromo Liberation Front.

(J) And what does Oromo mean?

(2) It is a tribe.

(J) Ok. The last question - What would you tell your son, your daughter about your past?

(2) What I can say is that life is not easy, but who can make the life to be great, only the person who led to live life better. If I need to just live, so I do not go to school, to work so I do not go to anywhere, life is making nothing to the person. But the person who likes to work hard for a better life, and that is what I want to tell my son, my daughter. So they have to work hard for their life. They can give memory, documents for the generations to come after them. Also what I can say, to like to help people, you know to be sensitive to others.

(J) Ok, thank you, that was good. Thank you.

(2) Sometimes I find it difficult with the language.

(J) No, no its ok. It should be ok.

## Stefan P. 1

(J) How would you describe your childhood?

(1) Actually it wasn't negative, let's put it that way. It was normal. Normal childhood life though my family wasn't rich, neither they were poor to take care of me. But that is African community. You cannot compare African to European communities.

(J) Like the parents were neither poor nor rich.

(1) But they had enough money to take care of me from my childhood, my infancy so I would say it was normal. They provided all the money, were able to take care of me from the basic education to a certain standard. I think they did well.

(J) Ok. And what are your memories of your birth country? I mean you left there how many years ago?

(1) Almost six to seven years ago.

(J) Seven years ago. And what are your memories of your country? You are from Zimbabwe.

(1) I have a memory of my classmates. We used to be together in school and also when there was time for inter school games. How we fascinate things together and come together in a very unique way and be in a very communicable way and try to help each other and try to help our school to win all competitions to other schools. I used to be someone who likes sports a lot in my childhood. That is the one thing I would like to remember from all the time.

(J) Ok. And ..... what do you miss from your past?

(1) What I miss is ..... Because of the political issue that happened in my country, and I lost my father because by now I suppose I had to obtain my first degree or get into my second degree Masters, but due to the loss of my father things moved back, for six years I stepped backwards. This is not the time I suppose to be chasing my certificate in Higher National Diploma but I am supposed to obtain my first degree and try to fight for a second degree. By now I am lacking everything behind because everything pushed me back.

(J) Because of what happened to your father.

(1) He was the breadwinner of the family and I lost him. I do not have any support from anywhere. Everything I need to take care myself, I need to do everything.

(J) So you miss your father.

(1) Yes I miss my father a lot. I miss my father a lot.

(J) Ehhe. And he passed away through the political situation?

(1) Yes through the political situation in 2008.

(J) Ehhe. Do you have any experiences you wish you never went through in your life? I assume that this one, losing your father is one of the experiences you wish you never went through, no?

(1) Of course because it is not easy, being in a good mood and all of a sudden you find ..... not because he is sick or something but due to the political situation, all of a sudden, when everything just went like that.

(J) How did it happen .....

(1) They contested the election and the opposition disagreed. They won the election but the losing party disagreed. They did not accept the defeat. They wanted to go for a second run. And that is where the brutality started where the government in power deployed the strict orders trying to oppress the opposition leaders and then even the citizens.

(J) And your father was into politics?

(1) Yes he was supporting.

(J) Supporting?

(1) Yes he was supporting the opposition. That was the problem. He was attacked, just attacked. They knew he was a key member to the opposition. They wanted to finish him.

(J) How did it happen? They like shot him at home or what?

(1) No because this one it happened, it was in a rally. On their return they met them on their way. They beat up until you die and leave you. The time they stop, you cannot do anything. You will be vomiting blood. By the time you are taken to hospital, it will be too late.

(J) And you weren't there?

(1) Yes I was there. At that time I was not living there, I was attending school in Ghana. That is where I got my education. That was the second time I visited my country and this happened in front of me. And I didn't neither go back to Ghana, nor stay there, I just found my way out.

(J) You wanted to run away from it all.

(1) Run away. I don't even want to remember because it is very, very sad.

(J) It must have been very hard for you.

(1) Very hard. If you try to picture this, it is so difficult because you know, you miss your father like a normal human being. Very, very difficult, very hard.

(J) And it is a pity because it is not the result of illness but it is something that the people are creating - politics.

(1) Of course politicians they are like that, always lying. They do not do something good. They are greedy. They want something for themselves. They lie to the people of what they are doing. But that is not the fact; they know what they are doing.

(J) If you had to relive your past, what would you change, what would you make different?

(1) Nothing different but for politics. If I am to live the past and I would be any of the leaders, instead of having the opportunity to leave my country, I will try to create a very conducive environment for the people and try to create a democratic nation for the people to feel they are citizens of the nation and not to feel like strangers. They will be treated not the way they are treated at the moment as it is not the best way. African democracy needs to be mature because we need maturity in democracy in Africa.

(J) What kind of feeling is generated by your past experiences? The overall feeling of your past, how would you describe it?

(1) I would say it is ok. Let me use me as an example. I am someone, no matter how you know me. Immediately you like me by nature, that is my life, not because I am gentle, not because I am somebody who, that is how I live, all people I want to help. I never see someone, I pass near someone and I do not help, that particular person hates me in life. Then someone, I do not know because I always experience that in my life. Even here in Malta I still experience this condition. People who can take care of me 100% but I refuse here, I refuse. I have a catholic father who promised who promised me to take care of me in this education ever since I started. I never go to him; I refuse to go as I am someone who always tries my own way.

(J) Because you went to work instead, for yourself.

(1) I always try to be independent. I do not like to depend on people.

(J) Ehhe, ehhe.

(1) That is always my life.

(J) And this leads us to the next question. Any lessons learnt from your past experiences?

(1) Yes I learnt a lot. A lot of experiences, even coming through this journey. I will not advise anyone of my relatives or any of my friends, I know to follow this trip to Europe. I will not, I will never.

(J) Why?

(1) It is horrible in the sea. I nearly perished and I question myself why I treat myself up to this level. After all even if I lost my father, I can still sustain myself in the situation to maintain myself. What if I lost my life? If I lose my life, I lose everything, my father and my life.

(J) Because you risked a lot.

(1) I risked a lot.

(J) And what is the most dangerous part, crossing Libya, crossing the sea, what is the most dangerous, the desert?

(1) Everything, everything is so dangerous. Desert is dangerous and even the sea is dangerous. Maybe the sea is more dangerous because when we were crossing the desert, I didn't face any challenges. The only challenge that we faced was initially when we were crossing we were attacked by robbers whilst crossing. They took everything, all our documents, they took

everything, all money, they take everything from you. That is the challenge that we had and when we entered Libya, we were caught and detained for three months. That is the challenge I faced but immediately I left the detention, I left Libya and then I never faced any challenges. I am someone who always compose myself and try to avoid .....

(J) What were you eating then, you had nothing, no money?

(1) By then you would be close, and they do not take your food and everything; all they need is the money. They do not need your food but what they need is the money. So they take the money and the particulars you possess. They take everything from you They do not need it but they just throw it away. They do not need it. What they need is the money.

(J) And you couldn't hide the money somewhere?

(1) How can you? You cannot hide it anywhere. They make you naked everywhere and take everything. It is not easy. Even your shoes, they took mine to cut the bottom everywhere, to check if you put money in sole or somewhere like that. It is not something so simple, just like that .....

(J) And then at the sea how was it?

(1) Terrible, very terrible.

(J) Why?

(1) The weather, all of a sudden everything changed.

(J) And you had to pay to cross the sea?

(1) No I had no money; we didn't pay because my friend told me that there is a boat crossing. If I knew beforehand the courage required to cross, for this I will not cross because I could see death and my life is not to buy. But he convinced me that the boat is big and then told me let's go. So we went and it was free, but not free because you need to try to find a way to enter. We gave them what we had left, Libyan dinars because we wanted to leave and reasoned out that we do not need that anymore. For Europe we need euro so we decided to give it to them to allow us in since we did not register for the boat. If we are crossing I didn't give my phone, but all the remaining money I possessed equivalent to less than 200 euro. I gave everything to them at the seaport because I do not need after I cross. When we arrived in Malta they told us that if we have dinars we can exchange them to euro but it was too late as we had given everything to them at the seaport. Then we moved on, everything was ok when we were leaving. All of a sudden, it was in the evening exactly this time (5.00pm), all we felt is like a breeze, a big blowing then we see the water, the tide; the wave was taking the boat up. It was very very horrible. I do not want to remember it.

(J) Ehhe, ehhe.

(1) I save my life. I have a life now so I do not care what happened. What happened had passed.

(J) Did you see any people who passed away during the crossing?

(1) I didn't see anyone in my life because I think those in our boat all were saved.

(J) How many were you in the boat?

(1) I think seventy or something like that, maybe eighty.

(J) So everyone survived?

(1) Yes everyone survived because we were lucky. I think we spent three days in the water. We left on April 4<sup>th</sup> and arrived here on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Then the fishermen, the fishermen boat, they saw the condition we were and called the patrol boat. Then they came with a big ship to receive, to rescue us. Then I heard the people talking in Maltese and they say they are not good. For me not the people are not good but for saving my life. Even today if they take me back to my country provided that I didn't die, I do not know what it will be in the future, what I am going to get in the future. Life is not only here in Malta, not that I am going to make my life but I do not know what is going to happen in the future. If I lost my life, now I have life, I am working to get my certificate. By October or November I will achieve my certificate. This is better than if I die.

(J) Yes.

(1) So for me ever since I get down to Malta, I am grateful for saving me. Although here I do not have documents, the government has allowed me everything. Every year I go to the Minister of Education and decide for me to go to school for free. What is much more important than this? What can I say wrong about such people? What is there for me to criticize?

(J) Ok. Any lessons learnt from your past experiences? I think this is what you are mentioning now that you cannot think of any plan ahead so much. Live the moment and be grateful for what you have. Mention someone you hate, you dislike from your past.

(1) For me I do not dislike, I do not hate people. I cannot say I am hundred percent right to hate others. What should I do if you are my friend and he does something wrong? I cannot start judging because we are humans. Sometimes you see someone doing something wrong but to him what he is doing he thinks it is right. But to you, you see it, it is wrong. It is better you approach the person then. You communicate through communication and you would be able to understand his feelings. Then you need to express your concern and teach a lesson to the person and tell him that you understand. Tell him I think what you are doing you think it is good but if you explain so that the other person understands and let's communicate and do it this way, it would be better. All that they are bad and we are good, they thought that what they were doing is good but we see what they are doing is wrong. Everything is negotiation, talking to each other not by hating. If you try to hate someone, if you try to hate people, then you start hating everyone. That is not the best way. I do not hate people.

(J) Mention someone whom you praise and are grateful to.

(1) The only person I praise is the former president of Ghana, Dr Nkroma. He is intellectual and very visionary, very intelligent guy. But Africans sometimes, we always say the Europeans are not good but we ourselves are not good because he first achieved independence in West Africa and he said Ghana independence would be meaningless if other African nations are, do not achieve independence during the colonial era. So what he did, because the British left a lot of

money to Ghanaians, so he tried to use those money and fight for other African nations to achieve independence. But you see British are very wise, they went through ECOWAS, and they built African Union. They built these organisations within a short period of time and he did a lot of things in Ghana. Apart from him no government in Ghana have, does something like that. All the projects he made every government come and go. This one comes to power sell and go, all the big factories to individuals. All this goes to Europeans for the money and for nothing else, for their pockets to send their children back to Europe and I see this as a very stupid attitude. That money, they will steal and send it to Europe, to keep the money. They are not using this money for infrastructure for their youth and you let your people empty-handed. And they still send their children to Europe to go to school, to quality school to come back and rule our nation. If you are sensible enough why you keep that money instead of using it to maintain the nation and build quality education to educate their own people.

(J) Not only your son/daughter.

(1) Not only your son/daughter, educate everyone. One person cannot build a country. One person cannot build a town, a village. Imagine if you are the only person here at MCAST. Even if you have to walk in each and every section, walk from A to Z and come back to the office. Can you do? You cannot.

(J) No, no.

(1) That is why there are directors, secretaries in all sections. They check and give reports. There you will be safe. One person cannot do the whole job, move from one area to another and come back to the destination. It is very hard. But African leaders that is what they have to discover. This is stupidity and that is why the Europeans think that we do not have sense. Not because we do not have sense but it's the leaders, they are very stupid.

(J) I agree with what you are saying.

(1) They are very stupid.

(J) The last question. What would you tell your son/daughter about your past?

(1) For me what I tell them is to be courageous, determined and fearless and try to fight forward. They never give up.

(J) Ok. That was great. Thank you.

## Hans P. 4

(J) How would you describe your childhood?

(4) When I was young, I was originally from Somalia, I use to play football. Sometimes I use to help my father; he was a farmer and my family also, because my family was poor. When I was young sometimes I use to go to school. My father always encouraged me to go to school and I learn education. Sometimes I use to go to private school lessons. I was living in a very small village in my country. All the people in my area wished to go to America especially farmers and we were given harvest stock so sometimes when my father is making harvest in cultivation of a farmer, I was helping him. My father, he learnt at University before from Somalia so he was qualified in agriculture. So he was making some agricultural products and he always tells me and teaches me some things. Before I saw Red Cross he use to teach me some courses on First Aid, how to help the people in need. Sometimes we practised in our lessons. So sometimes at that time I use to play football although I had no chance to go because of my father, he was caring for me because of the civil war in the country because you cannot go everywhere. It was very hard and a lot of risk because he was afraid of the people who works for the government that they would capture me or create problems for me because they were killing people. That is why my father was always caring and he wanted to protect me. So a tragedy was happening in my country. That is why I was relocated from my country and to arrive here.

(J) Ok, thank you. I think that you already answered question two. What are your memories of your birth country? Would you like to add something to this? What do you remember from your birth country?

(4) I do not think I remember something else, may be that is all. It could be that I am forgetting something but for now only that I can tell you.

(J) Ok. What do you miss from your past, from when you were a child?

(4) I miss many things because for me when I was young, I liked to be a football player or a marathon. So that is why now, although I still wish that, I grew up now and maybe I cannot do it. Or I do not know somewhere I can go to get training. Nobody can give me training how to do it. But at that time I was thinking I must be a football player or for a marathon. There were no classes on how to play football so at that time it was a miss in my past years.

(J) So that was a miss, you miss it. Is there something else that you miss like for example something that has to do with the family, or with the friends, or with the culture that you were brought up with?

(4) Yes I had to forget everything because of my family they may have a problem where they are living still. They relocate themselves from my country and they live in the neighbour countries near my country just like Kenya and Ethiopia. My father escaped to Kenya and maybe now, I do not know the situation of his life now and my mother and the children, I am not sure if she is in Bornea in Ethiopia and they are living in there. They have not enough to live, sometimes they call me, access me to help them, but I cannot help them for the financial, I cannot from here in Malta. Now I have been married to a woman for five months. She is from Switzerland and she is offering me a lot of help. She is working in the morning and I come to school in the morning. She is making a productive of what we consume and in how we help each other for our family. Now I have this wife, she has no

documents and the government' I go to the marriage office and they tell me 'You have to go to the refugee commissioner' and at the refugee commissioner's office, they tell me that she had her finger print in Switzerland but she has no documents from Switzerland. Maybe they transfer from Switzerland but they are not giving her the documents before. She was an asylum, she only has access, and she says 'I do not know where I am going, I am an asylum.' They have taken her finger prints and she is not to do the interview and she is just staying here and she is helping me. She is working with the permit and she has a weak permit. I go in Mosque and I collect a certificate, then I go down to the Marriage Office in Malta and tell me we cannot accept this certificate. They tell me you have to go to the refugee commission for the communion letter and when I go no one answers me. I was getting confused in the past months because of that, but now I recovered.

She is living with me and she is back as she was leaving me before. We were ..... in this area when I am going to home. Now I am better. If I now have lessons I am much better than before because she is helping me, she is washing my trays, she is cleaning in my house, she is making my food – all of that is help for me now. But unfortunately I am not thinking we will be living together for long because I have my fingerprints in Malta, I am Maltese, I have the documents and she has not documents in Malta or in any other country and I do not know what we are going to do. I am waiting for UNHCR, I have a temporary documentation and UNHCR promised they will give me a foreign number for registration. They tell me we will call you if you get a chance to get residency in another country. I do not know but the majority of people living here especially in the country, they get a chance to go to America, but this moment me and my wife, I do not know how we can live together. I have no one, somebody to help me about the law, I do not know what rights I have and have not, and that is the problem.

(J) I see. So it must be very uncertain for you this time, you do not know what is going to happen in the coming days. Like - you have a lot of questions.

(4) Yes, yes a lot of questions I think and that one is the problem about me. When I come to school I work on the assignment and my wife she is working, she has no information and she is worried. I do not know maybe I, she is going tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. And she is my life I love her and she loves me. We do not know somewhere where we can live together in Malta or anywhere else. This moment I am worried about that and most of the time she is worried as well. Now we are living together in one home, she is contributing for the money of the house, and for me I take it only 75 euro per month to make it for the bus transport. But my wife ..... she ..... I do not know, maybe I go to a lawyer or to the refugee commissioner and maybe the head of school writes a letter to help me. I have no peace at the moment, I am confused, all I wish is good luck.

(J) Ok. Do you have any experiences from your past that you wish you never went through in your life?

(4) Yes, I have a lot of experiences because I lived with a lot of people and I worked with a lot of people in different countries. I was in social integration programme before where I was living in Libya. Some people that I was living with were coming from other countries. Some people were coming from Asia; some people were from Africa, different countries. We were working together in Libya. Now in here I am living with Maltese, I learn at school, I have a lot of experience living with people.

(J) But this you wish it never happened or it is OK for you that you went through this experience of living with different people?

(4) No I am not living with different people because of now, I love, I mean I like to meet different people because I get a lot of experiences.

(J) Ok something you wished you never went through, something horrible, something bad you wish you never went through that experience, what would it be?

(4) The experience I like it to be to write a book to make people aware of when I was at rival at my country and the immigrating experience. I like to be of awareness to people and I will be hoping to write this book to make people aware to stop immigration and to work for peace. I wish about that and through the other people thinking of migration to other countries just like me, to cross the sea, we need to make a lot of awareness because it is very, very risky and very, very difficult life. I do not like people to see the life I saw before. That is why I want to make people aware.

(J) What kind of life did you see before?

(4) I saw a hard life when I emigrated from my country. I saw different countries especially when I was passing through the desert; I saw the fighting in different wars at borders, border of Libya, border in Chad and border in Sudan. I was crossing the desert of forty days in there, I saw an aeroplane bombarding the army of Libya President Muammar Ghaddafi. They were attacking us because they thought we were an army. People going in the desert, they are just army because we were passing the desert by car. One day I saw an aeroplane coming very close to us with bombs ready to throw. The driver he slowed because he knows the place from where he can escape and the next day some aeroplanes were taking photos of us. Maybe I do not know, maybe the one of the day before was coming from them. After they took photos of us, we left the place. Maybe some other people were working together with the aeroplanes and also the people moving to Sudan or Chad, they attack us and create problems for us. So some people they take the food that we have, some people they take the money that you have, some people they catch for you by power and tell to call your families to give money to send us and your families maybe they do not have money – they kidnap you by force, they take your money. A lot of people are dying in the desert. I know someone, we were together and there when we were crossing the desert he died, lack of water and the heat of the desert. So like that, the problems when you enter Libya, I saw a very difficult life. So if one access you, you are either of the army of Muammar Ghaddafi or of the Revolutionary army. Every place we go they tell us you either come from this side or from this side. For my uncle he was helping me, we were together and he died in Libya accidentally, they killed him by car. Actually I do not know if they killed him accidentally or they wanted to kill him.

(J) Your uncle?

(4) He died in Libya. When he died after weeks there, they arrested me. I was taken in a centre sentenced for one year because I didn't have any documents. When I arrived in Malta three years I lost out of my time. In the desert I was very young and immature from the inside.

(J) Ehhe, ok. This I think you have already answered. If you had to relive your past life, what would you change, make different? You said that you would like to write a book on peace, that people work together rather than leaving their birth country. Is there anything else that you would like to add to that one?

(4) Yes, I would like to teach people that hard life can teach you the best life. Maybe if you see hard life for the first time, you will be overwhelmed but you can never give up. You have to take a step, not stay at the place you were before, you take another step, and you go for work if you can access it.

I encourage people to go to school and to learn education or to learn skills, to learn how to make people aware, so I would like to tell the people that.

(J) Ok. What is the feeling generated by your past experiences? Looking back at your past what is the feeling?

(4) I think pain.

(J) Pain, very painful.

(4) Yes yes, I do not like to go back every time. Sometimes when I go back I feel a lot of problems. Every time I try it, to make peace with myself, my lesson, and my other problems from the inside. Now every time, everywhere you have other problems different from the past problems. So everything I like, what I have now, I try to find a solution, but past ones forget all except when to have the chance to write a book.

(J) Any lessons learnt from past experiences?

(4) I was going to learn at secondary but maybe some few days I attended. One man in management gave us lessons for few days on how to manage a new office and when you go to an office, how to talk to people, just like that.

(J) What motivated you to leave your country, what was the reason that made you leave everything behind you and go, leave everything?

(4) For me at that time I was young, but my eldest brother.....

(J) How old were you when you left?

(4) I was sixteen.

(J) And you left on your own or with relatives?

(4) No my uncle was helping me and he died in Libya. At that time my eldest brother, he was going to marry a woman. Her family, they were rich, they had money more than us. So they refused to give him the lady and her brother fought with my brother. My brother, he tried to defend himself and he killed the other one. And the family they attacked us and it is also a two different, one is El Shihab and the other is the government, one is El Gada and the other one of the government army.

(J) Like two different tribes, or not tribes?

(4) Yes we are two different tribes and the tribe that were fighting my family were in control at that time. So the army in control at that time was El Shihab. They attacked us all, the whole family because of extreme Islamic, they believe if you kill someone they kill you and my brother had to escape after that. So they were attacking my family and captured me but I escaped because they wanted the revenge on me. Somali people they have the culture of El kalkishna. If you do something or even your brother, they revenge against you, they live for it and that is why I escaped. So that is why I escaped because I was in target because of my eldest brother.

(J) Ok mention someone you hate, dislike from your past, a person that you hate?

(4) Yes I do not hate anyone and I do not like to make a problem or be a criminal. If somebody is making me something wrong, I like to live with it, if it is my own I live it because I do not like to go

to court or in prison to make the people extra harm. I like to tell the person if he accepts me, if he does not accept me I think that person would be a problem for me and I prefer to apart from that person.

(J) So you met this person?

(4) I like to leave him and to go away for myself because I do not like to make it terrible for myself.

(J) And on the same lines mention someone whom you praise and are grateful to, someone that you found help from, ehm whom would you choose?

(4) My wife, this time my wife

(J) Your wife.

(4) Yes.

(J) Ok. And from your past?

(4) From my past my uncle.

(J) Ehhe your uncle. You are very sorry that your uncle passed away, they killed him. What would you tell your son/daughter about your past?

(4) My daughter?

(J) If you had to have a son or daughter, what would you tell them about your past, about your birth country?

(4) If I have, I would tell him 'If you have to go for peace in a place, I will help you'. I would also help him to make it in school and to have a better life. And I would like to live with them and to encourage them to go to school. I would also like to make people and organisations aware of migrants and to make a story about immigration.

(J) But do you tell him/her like that you had to run away from your country and that you .....

(4) No, no I do not like to tell my past, my bad things but I encourage only to start the new life now.

(J) The new one, the new life without problems.

(4) Yes but when they access me, I will tell them and take part in this life now.

(J) Ok, that is it. Thank you.

### Nagi P. 3

(J) Today we are going to speak about the past and the first question is 'How would you describe your past?'

(3) It is a very tough question. But like every human, the childhood is the best time of everyone even when it is hard and difficult, it is the best moment. At that time you do not have much of responsibilities, no stress on you and I guess you will be looking more to nature, do your daily basis without any stress. I can see my past, I can say it was not quite that good, but it was ok. I am willing with it, I find some difficulties but it is still ok with friends that I have, the family that I had supported me and when I go back home after for example if I went to play football ground or something, when I come back home I feel like I had something home and .....

(J) To look forward to.

(3) Yes to look forward to, even I feel more secure.

(J) Ehhe.

(3) And my things, I know that my things when I left I leave them at home and I come back, I know that they are in a secure place.

(J) Ok. So you described your childhood that although it wasn't problem free, it was ok, it was good.

(3) It was good.

(J) Ok. What are your memories of your birth country?

(3) My memories ehh, the friends, the family and unfortunately some conflict in front of me and some part of my family, they are involved in it e.g. my friend he was getting trouble with that because he was ..... I said last time, and he does not know much detail about the war and things like that but unfortunately he found himself inside this zone and he had to act like them. It is really hard to see someone you care about and you do not have any ability to take him off from that situation. Even sometimes it is by luck, if it is not him, maybe it is you who will become in his place.

(J) Ehhe ok. And what do you miss from your past?

(3) I miss a lot, I miss a lot from my past.

(J) In spite of all the difficulties and the problems you miss a lot, and what do you miss?

(3) I miss the support, the friends, the food and even the area that we go and play. Now unfortunately it is not there and even our friends, if I had to go to that place now, I do not find my friends because some of them they left the place and some of them they moved and maybe others

because of their daily life basis, maybe they are involved in other things. So if I go there, I guess I only have the memory of that place. And it is gone.

(J) It is just the memory. And you miss that life there.

(3) I miss the life there.

(J) Ehhe. Do you have any experiences you wish you never went through in your life?

(3) Can you explain in more detail what you mean by this question?

(J) Ok. Like are there any experiences that if you had to choose, you choose not to go through that experience? For example, I am inventing, whilst crossing to Libya the thieves attacked you and you were beaten up. You wish that that experience never happened to you. Are there any experiences that you wish they never happened to you?

(3) Yes I experienced once when I was in my country playing football with my friends and suddenly there was an accident with the goal keeper. He got a very bad accident and we got involved to take him out, out from there. There was a car that crashed in him and we went to help him but unfortunately the car driver was drunk or something, he gets us in trouble, he captured us and with the corruption he was linked with the police. We were driven to the police station. We were beaten there and were facing so much harshness and we even regret our time to be there. This one, and the second one when I was crossing the desert - I think everybody knows what is going on there, smugglers, human trafficking and things like that - we got involved with smugglers and they treated us so badly, some of them they were beating us and sell us to somebody as well. If you do not know what is Sellas, I hear you go somewhere and they would capture you. Say we are going to be driven to the next city and when you go there you will find yourself in militia places.

(J) In a...?

(3) Militia place.

(J) What is that?

(3) Like smugglers. It is more like a military place but it is with smugglers and you have the phone number and you have to call the family in order to send a sum of money to send you free. If there is not, you will be there for so long time. It is very hard.

(J) It is like kidnapping.

(3) Like kidnapping, but it is modern kidnapping.

(J) Ehhe ok. So you have a couple of experiences that you wished you had never been through in your life.

(3) Yes.

(J) If you had to relive your past what would you change, what would you make different?

(3) If I had to relive my past, I will never leave my country even though with those, so much problems.

(J) So you regret that you left your country.

(3) Yes I regret that I left my country because even though now I am studying and I am improving myself and my life is a better one, I miss my country, I miss a piece of me. How can I say ..... some ..... some .....

(J) Something internal.

(3) Something of me is still there.

(J) Ehhe, ehhe. And what kind of feeling is generated by your past experiences? The overall feeling what is it?

(3) Sadness, sometimes is happiness mixed with sadness as well even though I was, the happiest time I will get is still that sadness will become or is coming with me everywhere. And last year, not last year, last week I was attending the graduation ceremony of my last year, level 3 and when I was at the graduation ceremony with my colleagues fortunately they had their family there and they come with them and I looked in front of me and behind me and there was no one there for me. It is not kind of jealous but something in your heart will tell you 'where are your parents? You are supposed to be with your parents in this moment,' and it is really sometimes eye tearing.

(J) Ehhe, ehhe. It must have been difficult for you at that moment.

(3) Very difficult yes, because the happiness you want to share it with someone dear.

(J) Exactly. When we are going through rough experiences or joyful experiences, we want to share.

(3) Yes, yes.

(J) And the fact that we do not have the loved ones with us to share, that would be painful.

(3) Actually.

(J) But you are in contact with your family, you phone them and you were able to tell them that you had the graduation.

(3) It is still, I am able to talk to them even sometimes with skype but it is still not like you are in front of them because the family is not the part but the part within the place.

(J) Ehhe, ehhe. What motivated you to leave your country? What was the reason?

(3) Change my life to the best and my ego. Now I blame my ego so much.

(J) Ehhe. So it was like in your country, leaving your country it was like you were doing something very good.

(3) Like you are .....

(J) A hero.

(3) Being successful, a way of success. If you are being away from the country or if you manage to get out of the country, then maybe you will be in a better condition, you may help your family financially, even sometimes with advice through the experience; you can develop links and things like that.

(J) Ehhe. Any lessons learnt from your past experiences?

(3) Yes a lot of things.

(J) Like....

(3) Things that I learn wherever I go, no place is better than your home. This one and secondly despite of all differences and hardships that you face, if you have the challenge on you and you look in front of you, you will achieve what you are willing and aiming for. Before I didn't realise that life would be so much hard like that and the thing that I am passing through if I was in my country I will give up from a very early stage. But now I learnt how to live my life. I know now that difficulty is part of my life and I have to live with that.

(J) Ehhe. But on the other hand there is a future. We will discuss that later on that there is a future and maybe you can go and visit your family no?

(3) I am willing to.

(J) Mention someone you hate, you dislike from your past.

(3) Actually 'hatressy' is not my cup of tea and even though in Libya I was treated so very badly, when I came here I coped well with Libyans and made so many friends with them and I do not even have the space to hate because I learnt through life that if you hate, you develop hatressy and then maybe you hate someone and because of you he will become a hate man so it is better if someone hates you, do not treat him the same because his way of treating you is not good.

(J) What happened to you in Libya that made you feel this anger and hurt and .....

(3) In Libya, when we were in Libya, it was a very tough moment. There was a mismanagement of the country, as you know Libya now is under militia. Groups are everywhere; you see guns and some places are monitored by those human traffickers and things like that. And they are controlling the area and so when we were passing through you have someone, you know he is not officially government but he will ask you to pay him the fee for example of the crossing. If you ask why, he will then tell you that there are no whys because you will be in their area. They will say 'this is our territory and we do whatever we want.' If you question you will be risking of being beaten up or detained. Maybe you will be shot and I saw many people in front of me, they were not shot but slapped on very bad because they were old people you know. Someone is like in the place of my father; he got beaten by a very young man. You know he was army man. You have to interfere but you have nothing in your hand, only you keep an eye and see. When you see everything happening in front of you, it is not easy.

(J) Actually it is very tough.

(3) Yes.

(J) Now the opposite. Mention someone who you praise and are grateful to?

(3) I think of many people, I think I am very grateful at ..... From difficulty from that life, the people that I got help from are many but if I am going to mention, I think the space is not enough for them but there is a woman here in Malta - she is a Maltese woman. I met her during my detention and she is very helpful. She told me how I live my life, how life had become more difficult and she gave me so enlightenment. She actually guided me on how to go to MCAST and develop further up my studies as well. And I am still in link with her.

(J) Is she a psychologist or a counsellor?

(3) She is a social worker.

(J) Ehh a social worker. And the last question: What would you tell your son/daughter about your past?

(3) A story to forget.

(J) Ehh.

(3) I tell him it is a story to forget.

(J) It is a story to forget. So you do not mention anything about your childhood, your country or your family?

(3) The part of the sad thing yes but maybe I am not understanding the question. But about my life then maybe one day I write a book about my life and I will handle them a copy of the story of my life and they can read it.

(J) Ehhe, ehhe ok. That's it. Thank you very much. That was very, very interesting. Now I will write it again like I did last time and give it back to you so that you will confirm. Now when you can, please give me the papers back with the corrections and the markings. Ok, thank you.

## Lara P. 6

(J) We go to the first question, How would you describe your childhood?

(6) Normal, but I do not know in which way you want your answer.

(J) It is not something that I want, how would you describe it in the sense, do you describe it as a good childhood, ok, very disappointing, I do not want to delve into it because it was horrible ..... How would you describe it?

(6) Very good, very nice.

(J) Why?

(6) Because I was ok, I had a normal life. No problems, maybe my father had but I wasn't aware. I didn't know.

(J) That is a very important point that your parents protected you from what they were going through, not to disrupt, not to interfere with your childhood.

(6) So, but when I reached thirteen I got to know that we had problems and we had to leave. From that age I started to know the problems and what we had. Up to thirteen years, I was very happy, enjoying life. I was leading a very normal life.

(J) You were born in Saudi Arabia, but have you visited Eritrea?

(6) Yes, several times.

(J) What do you remember, what are your memories of Eritrea?

(6) Everything like ..... Maybe now it has changed because I didn't go for ages so .... It was good. We had our relatives there.

(J) But are there any specific memories that you would treasure for your whole life about Eritrea, things about Eritrea that you would not forget in your whole life?

(6) Yes the time we use to spend with my grandmother and grandfather. He died two years ago.

(J) How did you spend the time with your grandparents?

(6) Normal, like I will stay with them when on holiday to visit them. They couldn't manage to come to where we were staying so we went to Eritrea to see them.

(J) Ok and what do you miss from your past, from your childhood?

(6) My friends of course, my life how it was, everything.

(J) So you miss your friends and your life how it was. How was your life? Can you explain a bit?

(6) It was very nice particularly the way how people were living.

- (J) Ok, do you have any experiences you wish you never went through in your life?
- (6) Yes there are a lot of things.
- (J) Can you mention something, one single thing?
- (6) No
- (J) But why do you want to forget them, because they hurt you, because they are shameful, why do you want to forget them? There is hurt involved?
- (6) Everything, like I do not know how to describe it in English.
- (5) She understood it the wrong way.
- (6) What I mean is the first time I came to Malta from the place where I was, I didn't like the island. It is true, I do not like it.
- (J) Where, here in Malta?
- (6) Yes from the first time I came here, I didn't want to stay.
- (J) Think about it. It was a detention centre?
- (6) I do not know, I do not want to talk about it. The way we were ....., the place I do not like it. It is not where humans live; it is like where animals can stay ..... even animals cannot stay there. The food ..... everything, everything. For example, if you have a daughter and you bring her there, she will die or something.
- (J) About Malta we will speak another time. At this time we are talking about your past before arriving in Malta.
- (6) No no everything was ok. All I wanted to forget is when I came here.
- (J) Ok when you came here. But when you were not in Malta, there is nothing you would like to forget, not to remember, something like that.
- (6) No.
- (J) If you had to relive your life (this is imaginary), what would you change, what would you make different from what you did?
- (6) If I had the chance and I was eighteen, I can for example know my father's problem and try to solve it with them or something so we do not go to Europe.
- (J) So you do not go to Europe ehh. Can you tell us something about the problems of your father. Was it something that had to do with politics?
- (6) The issue was residency permit. We were deported from Saudi. That is why.
- (J) And why did you leave Eritrea? Actually not you. Why did your parents leave Eritrea?
- (6) It was like the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

- (J) Your parents left because of the war. Ok. What is the feeling when you look at your past?
- (6) I do not know.
- (J) Is it happy, sad or disappointed?
- (6) Ehh happy, happy yes. I like to see my past not the present.
- (J) Your childhood when you were in Saudi it was ok.
- (6) Till I was thirteen it was ok.
- (J) Then after thirteen it was the problem, the problem started because you got to know about your parents' problem of residency. Ok.
- (6) Yes.
- (J) This probably you cannot answer because the question is – What motivated you to leave your country? It wasn't your choice. Your parents left the country and you were made to leave Saudi because the residency permit was not reviewed. Ok.
- (6) Yes.
- (J) Did you learn any lessons from your past experiences? Did you learn something, for example: I learnt I would not trust anybody or when I am happy I do not show it because something crops up and the happiness disappears. What are the lessons learnt from your past?
- (6) I learnt that in the future for example my child does not see what I saw. I do not want my children to go through the suffering that I went through.
- (J) And can you tell us something about the suffering, what you saw?
- (6) No I cannot.
- (J) You cannot. OK. Mention someone you hate, you dislike from the past. Someone you hate.
- (6) The one who told my father that the visa of Malta is very cheap.
- (J) Ok, the one who sold the visa to your father.
- (6) Because we wouldn't know the price, how much it costs, you know so we were going to take of Italy and then we were told that Malta is very cheap and it is good so let's take it. We just said ok.
- (J) So basically you are not happy here and you prefer to go in another country.
- (6) I am happy because I am studying. Some people do not study. I do not want to say I am not happy but it is not what I want.
- (J) What do you want then?
- (6) To live in another country not here, to leave Malta.

(J) To leave Malta, but what are you looking for, what would you like to find in another country?

(6) Like everything. What I do not like is the inequality.

(J) When you say inequality or equality you mean because you are foreigners, because you are dark or because you are females?

(6) No no of course not.

(J) Ok because we know that in some countries, females are discriminated compared to males.

(6) No we are not referring to this one. If you take me to another country, England, Sweden, Norway anywhere, take like six months, seven months they treat you like one of them. And here in Malta I have been here for five years and I still feel I just came now, you know.

(J) So you do not feel welcomed here, you do not feel part of the Maltese?

(6) No, even if I had the papers, the documents, no, nothing.

(J) Ok.

(6) They need more lessons, someone who can give them a good lesson and show them what is happening there. They do not know anything. Their mind is so closed so .....

(J) And although this issue we can discuss it next time, even at MCAST you experience this?

(6) Not a lot, sometimes.

(J) Now mention someone whom you praise and are grateful to. A person whom you respect a lot, to whom you are grateful, thankful. Definitely not the one who convinced your father to come to Malta. It is the opposite.

(6) My parents.

(J) And the last question – What would you tell your son/daughter about your past?

(6) Nothing, I keep it to myself.

(J) You do not tell them anything about yourself, your origin, from where you are coming, your family?

(6) Some things yes but others I do not mention.

(J) Ok thank you.

**Emanuela P. 5**

(J) How would you describe your childhood?

(5) Normal

(J) But tell me something more. What do you mean by normal?

(5) Like a normal childhood, playing, going out with friends.

(J) Where? Country?

(5) Oh Dubai.

(J) Dubai. Ok. And what is the difference - you were a little child in Dubai. Imagine being brought up a child here in Malta. What is the difference?

(5) No it is the same.

(J) So children brought up in Dubai and children brought up in Malta, they are the same.

(5) Yes, the same.

(J) Tell me something that you remember from your childhood, that you would not forget about your childhood.

(5) My uncles and my aunties, they use to live near our house in Dubai. I used to go out with the cousins to the kind of a beach. We used to enjoy walking and talking.

(J) And are you still in contact with your cousins?

(5) Yes, yes.

(J) So your memories of your childhood are with cousins, aunties and uncles playing which is something very positive, no? You are from Eritrea, but you were born in Dubai and you never visited Eritrea.

(5) No.

(J) So you do not know anything about Eritrea.

(5) No.

(J) So it is like your birth country is Dubai.

(5) Yes.

(J) But your parents are from Eritrea. What do you miss from Dubai?

(5) My house, my friends .....

(J) Why, tell us about your house, describe it a bit. We are not going to go and find it in Dubai. How was it?

(5) It was a flat, three rooms, two living rooms and a big balcony from where one could see the sea, a kitchen and two bathrooms.

(J) So you miss the house. What was so special about your house? How was your room?

(5) Yes I miss it. We had two living rooms, one for my parents and one for us, me and my two brothers. Most of the summers we use to stay there like it was our room.

(J) And your bedroom, what colours did you have.

(5) No, it was white.

(J) Ok. Besides the house is there anything else that you miss from Dubai?

(5) My friends.

(J) Are you still in contact with your friends through e.g. Skype?

(5) Yes I am, but through chatting.

(J) Do you encourage them to come for holiday in Malta?

(5) No. However it doesn't mean that I do not want them to come but I never told them.

(J) And what about the food, do you miss the food?

(5) It is normal, the food we cook here is the same.

(J) It is the same. Ok.

(5) The restaurant we go here is different.

(J) So you go to a specific restaurant.

(5) Yes.

(J) Do you have any experiences you wish you never went through?

(5) No.

(J) If you had to relive your past life, what would you change, what would you make different?

(5) I would stay in Dubai, never go out.

(J) Never go out from Dubai.

- (5) Not like never, never ok. I can go .....
- (J) For a holiday but not to migrate. What was the reason, the motive to leave your country?
- (5) It was my dad's work.
- (J) So because of your dad's work, you had to leave Dubai and you went to Sweden?
- (5) Norway.
- (J) Ehh Norway but then you had to move to Malta.
- (5) We had to come back here because they told us to .....
- (J) And your father remained in Norway?
- (5) No, we left him.
- (J) So you are here with your mother and two brothers. And are you in contact with your father?
- (5) No.
- (J) What kind of feeling is generated by your past experiences, what is the feeling?
- (5) Nice.
- (J) Ok. Any lessons learnt from your past experiences?
- (5) Never to leave your birth country.
- (J) Why?
- (5) Because there is different you know. I do not know how to explain it. But that is like the place that you were born, it is very close to your heart. When you go to another country it is more like you miss it. Even if you go out for one day and come back, you will still miss your country.
- (J) Ehhe. I heard this one from other participants this one, not to leave your birth country.
- (5) Ehhe.
- (J) Mention someone you hate/dislike from your past?
- (5) No one.
- (J) No one, you do not hate anyone. Someone you praise and you respect a lot.
- (5) My parents.
- (J) Your parents. What was the job of your father? You said you left from Dubai because of his job.

(5) Here you have like Vodafone and Melita , in Dubai there is Doo and Sala. He used to lead one of them.

(J) And he is still working with that company?

(5) I do not know.

(J) Ehh you do not know because you are not in contact with him. Ok. What would you like to tell your son/daughter about your past?

(5) Nothing. It was nice.

(J) You tell them that it was nice in Dubai.

(5) Ehhe yes.

(J) Is there anything that you would like to add?

(5) No.

(J) The issue of coming to Malta, we will discuss it next time. Do you still hold that equality in Malta is not practised?

(5) No it is not.

(J) It is not and that is why I am doing this, to explore and find out what is happening with the hope of enlightening the subject and improving.

(5) They treat someone white for example different than me. Let us say that we were in a line, they put you in front of me you know.

(J) Personally I do not agree with that approach, in fact I remember .....

(5) You are not us, you are not someone dark. We experience this not you. You think we are lying but .....

(J) No, no I am not saying that you are lying, in fact .....

(5) You do not trust us.

(J) In fact I am doing this study because I believe there are things we need to improve on.

(5) Ehhe. But do you think I am the only person seeing this thing of discrimination?

(J) No no I think it is the general feeling in Malta that the Maltese are racist. I think yes the Maltese are racist.

(5) But not all of them.

(J) No, not all of them. I do not consider myself as racist. In fact I was telling you, I remember arguing with the Principal of the College to convince him that in the cover of the prospectus we should include in the photo a coloured student, dark because in the College we have dark students and the cover should respect and should portray the message of the actual audience that we have here at MCAST. Not the present Principal but the previous one. And he said no as if he was going to do that and my reaction was but why?

(5) You see.

(J) Yes I agree, I agree. But on the other hand, although they do that, I do not think that they are harmful in the sense that they hate coloured people.

(5) But there are some who hate.

(J) Yes some yes, but very, very few. In general most of the Maltese they prefer whites but they do not discriminate out rightly against coloured people.

(5) They do not hate but their non-verbal would be very obvious when they see you. You can even hear them talking to each other saying things like, look at her she is black, she is different, like I never did something wrong to them. I usually stare at them sort of to tell them, '*I didn't do anything to you.*' Even today when I was coming in the bus, the driver he was white but a foreigner and I was standing whilst people were sitting at the back and there was this woman and she came in and told the driver something in Maltese. He didn't understand and someone from the back told her that he is a foreigner and that he speaks English. She told him something in English and started saying bad things about him and me. Like I didn't do anything to her, even he was a foreigner.

(J) Ehh not to excuse the Maltese but that is in our culture because we are a small island and we experienced a lot of invasions from foreigners along the years.

(5) But it doesn't mean that every dark person you see, every foreigner you see, you say bad things about him.

(J) Definitely not, but it is in our culture that foreigners come to Malta to take advantage of us Maltese. And nowadays it is not the case.

(5) That is why their mind is like closed.

(J) Ok thank you very much.

(5) You are welcome.

## Second round of Interviews - The Present

### Lara P. 6 & Emanuela P. 5

(J) Hello, so this is the third session and we are going to focus on the present. Our first question is: What was your first reaction and feeling when arriving in Malta?

(5) Really hard to explain.

(J) Why? When arriving what was your first reaction? You came by plane or by sea?

(5) By plane.

(J) When you landed here in Malta what was your reaction?

(5) Surprised.

(J) Surprised by what?

(5) By the country.

(J) In what sense, you were expecting something different?

(5) Yes.

(J) Like?

(6) When I came to Malta for the first time OK. I said it is OK. When I entered, first I came by plane; we stopped and went outside the airport. I was like ok, maybe I will see something. But then, when the police were with us to take us to Hal Far, I was like, yes I was silent.

(J) Why were you silent?

(6) Because I wasn't expecting that of course.

(J) You weren't prepared?

(6) No because first when we came to Norway, we went to a camp and like houses you know. They treat people there in a very good way, so when we came here we said maybe it would be the same like of Norway, same routine. But we found different people, different country. Then we said, 'Ok let's go.' When we saw the containers, the office, the people who were working at the office, nothing was good.

(J) So you were very disappointed.

(6) Yes of course but with our faith we continued with our life.

(J) And you (P. 5) you had the same experience or it was different?

(5) You mean about the detention?

(J) Yes.

(5) Horrible. Never can thought that someone can live in a container. I know that containers are for some things but not for people to live in.

(J) And for how long did you stay in the detention?

(5) I do not know exactly, three months maybe ..... three months.

(J) And how was life in those three months?

(5) Horrible.

(J) In what sense? Can you explain a bit? I do not know anything about detention.

(5) What do you want me to explain?

(J) Why is it horrible? Did you have privacy? Did you have facilities?

(5) Yes we had. It is like it is your container, you live there with your family but you do not feel like home. It is not a house you know. Not safe that is for sure.

(6) Yes in the nights for example we sleep but not all of us. My father stays awake to make sure that everyone is asleep and the door is locked but nothing was safe in there. Even if I go to the toilet, it is like really far. You have to wake up someone like your dad to come with you. I feel sorry because there are still people living there. I feel very sorry for them.

(J) And what about food? Were you supplied with good food?

(6) It was ok but it was cold.

(5) And the same for every day, chicken, every day chicken, chicken. You have to buy your own food.

(J) You can buy your own food?

(5) Yes, you have to go outside and someone buys for you.

(6) Of course, but it is far away.

(J) So you will be free, you can go out from the detention centre.

(5 & 6) Of course, of course.

(5) You are not locked inside.

(6) But still nothing changed, it's like you are closed. Even the officer there was not treating people in a good way.

(5) Yes.

(6) Because people came and the way they were treated it wasn't good especially for the single not for the family. With the families they were ok.

(5) But for example, if they need you to come to the office, they like do not come to you like in a house and knock the door normally; it is like you did something wrong and they knock very hard. It is like you did something.

(6) And when you tell them why they did that, they start saying: 'Listen, listen, we need someone to translate, to know English.'

(5) They do not say 'Please can you come, there are persons who do not speak English.' They say 'Come and translate now.' They do not care. It is like you are .....

(J) This attitude doesn't make you feel welcomed and appreciated at all.

(5 & 6) No.

(J) It is a pity that at this time and age these things are still happening.

(6) And we are in 2017 not in 1900.

(J) Then what happened when you moved out from the detention centre?

(6) We felt it was weird, like we said: 'Wow we went out of that place,' but still you know you have memories of the experience.

(J) The memory yes.

(6) I spent there like four months.

(5) We stayed there so long. It was really hard to find a house. So that is why we stayed there so long. If we found the house earlier, we would have just leave you know.

(J) So it is like instead of staying out in the streets, you had that place. Ok. What helped you to engage yourself with the Maltese community? Do you feel that you are.....

(5) One of them?

(J) Yes, one of the Maltese.

(6) No, I wish I am.

(J) But can you mention something that helped you to get to know maybe information about something that you needed services?

(6) You know I was in secondary school when I was in Hal Far.

(J) Ehhe.

(6) I went there; I was in a school. It was in Hal Tarxien ok. So I was speaking English and people were coming around me asking, 'How was your life in that place?' I used to tell them that I was ok and that I was trying hard. I do not know why I was explaining to them but I was telling them you know in the container, when it was raining we didn't feel comfortable because we were living in a container. And people were surprised like they did not know anything about these places you know. No one shows them, you know, people are living like that. In the previous life I was one of them so I was explaining to them so I was like you know in the rain you do not feel comfortable. Some people say yes it is raining but for us we do not feel, we do not, I do not know how to explain. Ehh, it is the

sound you know tick, tick, tick. You cannot sleep, you have to close your ears and try to sleep. People like were surprised ohh, ohh. They were feeling sorry but I told them, 'Why are you feeling sorry, that is the realty, that is what I was living you know, you cannot change it so do not feel sorry.' I do not know how to explain but I was always explaining to them and repeat the story and they feel like, they just feel not know what to do. No one is showing them what people coming from their country are experiencing, they were suffering you know and now they do not lead a good life like them you know.

(J) Do you think they wanted to know?

(6) Yes of course. They were like asking 'Where is this place?' I was showing them but they were asking 'You can go out?' I was replying 'Yes but we live far away, you cannot go for example to Valletta, no it is far. You spend the time in the bus, you cannot go, no need to go, it is like a community you know.'

(J) Ehhe, ehhe.

(6) They were like ohh, ohh, ok.

(J) But how was the effect of their reaction, how was it on you, how did they affect you? Like they were caring in their attitude or like they wanted to know out of curiosity and that is it?

(6) They weren't accepting that people at this age were living this life.

(J) So they were caring. They were upset with the situation as is.

(6) Upset and say 'Oh my God, if I were in her place, I will die you know '. Like I understand you but what can I do.

(J) So you found Maltese that were compassionate and understanding.

(6) And they are here at MCAST as well. They are here still.

(J) And you (P. 5) is your experience the same or different?

(5) Yes, when I was in Hal Far, I went to school but I never told them where I live. I didn't have a lot of friends over there because I was the only one with dark skin over there.

(J) And in which school?

(5) Santa Lucia.

(J) Ok.

(5) I was the only girl who was dark skinned over there and so I didn't have any friends.

(J) And no one approached you to go and talk to them, make friends with you.

(5) My classmates they were ok but not telling your life stories and talking to them. There was this one girl, she used to come and sit next to me. We had two breaks and if she comes and sits next to me during the first break, in the second break she used to sit with someone else. You know she was not always with me. I used to be always alone and teachers used to come and enquire why I am always

sitting alone. I used to reply that I do not have someone to stay with. I stayed for about three weeks and then I left.

(J) Where did you go?

(5) Mosta.

(J) Lily of the Valley?

(5) Yes Mosta.

(J) And how was the experience there?

(5) It was nice because there were a lot of dark skin girls. They got used to it.

(J) And you made friends with Maltese?

(5) Maltese no, maybe only one but the others they just say hi.

(J) And how would you describe the Maltese now as people?

(5) Some of them ok but some of them bad, not bad but .....

(J) What motivated you to apply for a course at MCAST?

(6) What do you mean?

(J) What was the reason, what helped you to apply here at MCAST?

(5) Someone like helped us to apply.

(J) From where came the interest in MCAST? Who gave you the information to apply at MCAST, to come and study here?

(5) For me my religion teacher.

(J) Your religion teacher.

(6) In school, in school.

(J) In school but who in school?

(6) Form 5 they guided us.

(J) The guidance teacher?

(5) No like the board is there to see and from there onwards I applied and I am here.

(J) Ok. And you?

(6) The same.

(J) It's the same so it was part of the school's activities, part of the preparation of Form 5s. So towards the end of the academic year they prepared you, gave you information about MCAST and you came and applied. The choice of course, who helped you to choose the course?

(6) It was my choice.

(J) It was your choice, you looked at the prospectus.

(6) My choice from the beginning.

(J) From the beginning. And you (P. 5) as well? Where there any challenges when to apply here at MCAST? Did you find any difficulties here at MCAST like to register, to apply?

(6) Yes we had a problem with the stipend because ..... we should take it from the beginning ..... nothing because this year had changed you know from last year and from the previous year. It wasn't that you have to be here in Malta for five years. This year we applied because we have been here for five years but the system changed and it is taking long you know. I have brother only with the stipend. I have brother and sister here, you met them no?

(J) Yes, yes. And now is the problem sorted?

(6) Yes, after two /three months.

(J) But I think it is the procedure that students would not receive the stipend, all MCAST students would not receive the stipend before December. They start in October and the first stipend they receive it in December if I am not mistaken.

(6) Ok I didn't know that.

(J) Otherwise lessons, timetable, transport to come here.

(6) You know my sister had a problem. Is it ok to speak about that?

(J) Yes, yes ok.

(6) My sister had a problem with the teacher of Maths, IT, no English, I am not sure. Anyway they kicked him out last year.

(J) The teacher?

(6) Yes because he was like make my sister in the lesson, like treated differently, not the same as others you know. And he was laughing because of her handwriting. She reported him to the director and he is an old man. He shouldn't be like this. If he was like, maybe like twenty something, ok no problem maybe he will learn, but he was old.

(J) Sometimes it would work the other way round, old people they find it hard to accept and to change.

(6) Yes and every time they say, they take our country in the .....? Every time. Even if you speak Maltese, they like get angry. Why you speak Maltese?

(5) And if you don't speak Maltese they will be asking why you don't speak Maltese. You cannot understand them.

(6) So the present is very, very like weird. If we talk on the past I can help you but the present not so much.

(J) I would like to know even the present so that we would have a brighter future. How would you describe your present life at MCAST? Do you feel that you are well treated here, how would you describe your present situation?

(5 & 6) Normal.

(J) Normal, so you do not experience any problems more than other MCAST students. You are treated like all other MCAST students.

(5 & 6) Yes.

(J) Now outside College. Do you feel you are being treated differently compared to other Maltese?

(5) Yes.

(J) In what way?

(5) In a lot of ways.

(J) Can you mention some concrete examples?

(5) Let's say you have a paper you wanted to be signed by someone and you have to take it somewhere. Let us say I will go and take it, I just want him to sign it. For example, if I go and try to give him the paper, he reads it and then he will tell you to go to that place. When you go to that place then they will tell you that you have to go to another place. But like for the rest, for someone who is next to me, he will do it for him.

(J) Like you are treated differently and even in institutions. Is it civil services like for some services or something?

(5) Yes, ehhe. Even if you want to buy something, even in a restaurant or in a shop wherever, where you go to buy something, the woman who helps you, you do not feel she really wants to help you, you know. She even sometimes thinks that you are going to steal something. It is weird.

(J) But do you see this concretely or you imagine it?

(5) No I see it. Even if like someone is with me, I ask, 'Did you notice what she did to me,?' or something. Yes.

(6) Last Wednesday we had a meeting with a German group. They came from Germany to meet us, so they were not young ok. So one woman asked like for example: 'If a tourist came here in Malta, will you like tell him we are around Malta, refugees are around Malta say home or go back to your country, we will scare you? It was like you do not accept she is going to say that ok. Everyone was saying, 'What do you mean by this question?' For example if my people come to Malta what message do you want to give them? Which message? We are only humans. It was like unacceptable, unbelievable she is asking that question. We were asking, 'What do you mean by that question?' Our members were saying that we are just humans and we do not eat people. We will tell them, 'Welcome, welcome to Malta,' or 'Welcome you' or 'Hi' or 'My name is Muhammed,' not like 'Stay away, stay home, we will eat you.' It was unacceptable for us. She was like a medical officer being near someone dying, refugee or scarecrow or putting your staff next to him, you know.

(J) Ehhe.

(6) Yes.

(J) And at college have you experienced this or no?

(5 & 6) No.

(J) At College no, so at College you feel more accepted?

(6) Oh yes, yes. They have to accept us because they are in a College, but if we are outside no.

(J) But is there anything that you would like to avoid – barriers, difficulties that you are experiencing here at College because you are migrants? Are there these types of difficulties here at College?

(5 & 6) No.

(J) Ok glad to hear that, at least we are doing something good here. What helped you to integrate at the college community?

(6) What do you mean?

(J) What helped you here at MCAST to feel that you are accepted?

(6) Ok we can say we are accepted here at MCAST. They accept us but we are not like very friends with the Maltese. For example during break, if you notice like foreigners stay together, Maltese stay together, only the lessons can bring us together. So in break you will see like groups of foreigners and other groups of Maltese.

(J) You do not have Maltese friends?

(6) No, in break, no I don't. Even the way they think it is very different so .....

(J) And the last question: 'What would you wish to see happening here at MCAST for better inclusion of migrant learners'?

(6) More activities like to promote integration, sports activities and leisure activities.

(5) Yes.

(J) I think that even applies for Maltese, they wish to have more activities.

(5 & 6) Yes of course.

(J) Ok, anything you would like to add? Thank you very much for your time. Wish you luck and enjoy your Easter Break.

## David P. 2

(J) Ok, so this time we are going to focus on the present since the time you arrived in Malta up to the present day. So what was your first reaction and feeling when you arrived here in Malta? You came by sea I remember last time you told me. What was your feeling when you arrived here in Malta, when you saw the land, the country?

(2) Between the sea and land we saw a lot of difference. At that time to enter, to try to cross the sea, it was not easy because you do not have a choice. In fact you know, in Libya it is very dangerous, you do not have any choice, that is why it is either die or cross.

(J) So seeing the land, what kind of feeling was generated?

(2) You are still alive because at that time you would feel that you already died. There is nothing maybe you can do to hold the death, so seeing the land you feel you still have life.

(J) So for you the land was a sign of life, a sign of salvation, sort of.

(2) Yes.

(J) Ok. And do you remember where you landed and what happened when you landed here in Malta?

(2) I do not know exactly but I can say it was Floriana near Valletta. There is a big police station down there.

(J) Hay Wharf it's called.

(2) I do not know. At that time, I wasn't in a good state. Yes I know where it is but I do not know exactly the name. We came by bus because we came by ship of police 63 kilometres away from Malta. We got some support in the sea. The ship in the sea called the police, and they came for us and brought us here.

(J) And when you came here to Malta, then you were put into detention centre. Where?

(2) Hal Safi. They put us in Safi detention.

(J) How was your experience at Safi detention centre?

(2) The detention, it wasn't easy but now we accepted it because we can do nothing. Because they kept about 3,300 people sleeping top and under you know in beds, one top and one under.

(J) Bunk beds.

(2) Yes. And we used to sleep there for about ten months but some people they spent one year six months and it is not easy. What I can say is that the detention is not easy but the people accept. They cannot do anything you know. I was surprised by myself. I was just close to give up because I put in my mind when I was in Africa to cross the Mediterranean and expected to see something better. Putting us like in prison is not something you know, it is like prison because I

was not going out, I just remained in class, and maybe I just go to the toilet. When food comes they open the door, give food, close the door and I do not go out.

(J) And the food was good?

(2) No we cannot say food was not good but always the same, one kind of food maybe they change it after one week. There is no different food. In general, the detention was not good for everyone. They put pregnant women, children, wife and husband all in the same way. It is not easy you know but thank God it is over.

(J) So it is like disappointing when you arrive here - say ohh I am in Europe and then you find yourself in the detention.

(2) Of course, they put us on the bus which took us to the detention. Then they said, 'Take off your belt and go in.' 'What do you mean, what, this is camp?' - 'No this is detention. You have to remain at the detention until the process is concluded.' I was very confused for three days. No communication. My English was very bad and I couldn't even communicate with anyone and we got a translator after three days, they came JRS and gave us information. I could settle down you know feeling you have to do an interview, you have to finish the process and then you go out they said. So I still had to find out about the country.

(J) What helped you to engage yourself with the Maltese community? Then after the detention you moved out, and then what happened? Where did you go?

(2) They put me in Marsa Centre and it is the same but I got certain freedom. I can go out, I can find some things, I can go ask for some information, do what I wanted you know. A bit better because in one room three by three square metres. You know we used to sleep twenty people in Marsa but what you have is the choice. Maybe if you have some helper, anyone, if you get help or get a job or maybe help with some solution, now you can find, not like detention. But the way they put it, it is still like detention but with more freedom.

(J) Ehh, ehh. So what helped you engage yourself in the Maltese community? The fact that you had freedom, you were allowed to go out and ask for information, that helped no?

(2) Yes, in fact my plan since I was young in my country was to finish my school and get more educated. I also like to give feedback to anyone even those people who helped me although maybe they are no longer helping anyone. I like to give feedback to anyone. I like to get more education maybe I can help you but to get more information after detention going round asking anyone to get information which way I apply for the school and which way I can find a job, I had to get close to the Maltese community.

(J) And who guided you to get that information?

(2) In fact I cannot say because there is JRS and UNHCR not that much, but the rest you know I have been asking people who have been long years in Malta and anyone, refugee or migrant anyone. I was asking them how I need, what the country look like and what the country is giving us. Those people who have been living here for long years, I used to ask them a lot of questions. There is no one who can provide me with details more than them with the right information. I just used to ask myself, for example there is AWAS, UNHCR and I used to ask them what I have

to do, what are my rights and what are not my rights, what are the rules that I have to follow, I used to ask them just without any reason. Some people used to say why am I asking those questions and used to think that I am crazy. 'Why are you asking this question?' 'No, I guess I need to ask, and if you do not have an answer leave it because I need to ask, I need to know.'

(J) Ok. What motivated you to apply for a course at MCAST? Who helped you? How did you get to know about MCAST?

(2) I was asking, there was a social worker at Marsa Centre. I asked for the language course and they helped me for two months. Then I asked from where I can get more information to get qualified because I only got one hour of tuition a week at Marsa. Then when I asked again they sent me to Floriana, Ministry of Education Life Long Learning. I applied for an English language course but they asked for money and to be honest I didn't have any money at that time, it was just one month after detention. I went to JRS office and told them I wanted to apply for the course but I have no money and they were asking for one hundred and something euro. JRS gave me a cheque and I found a solution to the problem. I applied and gave them the cheque. The big problem is that there are no policies in place because if you go somewhere, if you ask, there is no one to give you information because they do not know. After I finished the six month course I applied again but at that time it was free. I applied; I had the right to apply because before, they asked for money although I presented my refugee certificate. Apparently they asked for money because they didn't have the right information, that is the problem. Then I asked them, 'How I can get good education, maybe I can attend full time?' Then they suggested to apply at MCAST from the Floriana, Ministry of Education. Then I came in 2014, I applied and I got accepted for level 2 in Building and Construction but that time I asked them 'I applied for an MCAST course and got accepted, if I attend I get money?' Because that time I started signing for social benefits and work. They said, 'We will not give you money if you are going to start attending MCAST'. Then I stopped it, I didn't start.

(J) So you stopped it because you needed money?

(2) Yes. Then I tried to find a job but I couldn't find. In 2015 I decided that if no one helps me I start school. Even if I will be homeless, I had to start school and time was running. I didn't have a penny and I spent a year without anything. I said I better get some good qualifications, in fact what helped me was that during my free time I used to listen to English conversation.

(J) Going back to detention, do they have televisions?

(2) Yes there is a television. Sometimes around 300 people would be watching one TV. Although some people do not care about watching TV, other people are different and like different programmes. For example, when some people would like to watch news, others would want to watch football or drama. That is why they are always fighting for the TV. For two months they didn't have TV because they broke it. Then after two months they fixed it. It is really a difficult life but we accepted it, we managed it and we moved on.

(J) Good. What were the main challenges or difficulties that you had to face to join MCAST? To come to MCAST and apply and to get the information, what were the difficulties you had to face?

(2) It was the biggest challenge when I applied to MCAST because I got accepted in level 1 and I started. From October till December it was good because the money I had got from social security, I saved it. Like I used to get 300 euro, I pay 150 euro rent, 20 or 30 euro for food or anything and the rest I used to save. Then in October I applied because I cannot come anymore since every week I had to go to sign at the Social Services Office to register. Then I told them in October that I was not going anymore because I will go full time to MCAST. They told me to give them a letter as a proof. I gave them the acceptance letter and they told me that they will send back after four weeks. I was waiting for three months to receive the money. I moved from where I was living, rented another room somewhere else and it was a bit more expensive, 200 euro a month. Then after four months I got out from where I used to live because I didn't pay for one month. All the money I had saved finished. The owner came one morning and told me if I do not pay I have to leave the place. I left but before I packed my clothes in a bag and asked him if he can keep it for me until I find a place where to live and he kept it for me. I asked for help and told me to contact Fr Philip from Valletta AWAS and JRS for any help and information. I slept out one night near MCAST in the garden of mosque and during the day I met a friend on the bus stop and asked him to help me. I went to his home where he was staying with his family but he had only one room. I slept in his garden and came to school and I spoke with Ms Marina (MCAST Students' Liaison Manager) and Ms Marthese (College senior counsellor) but couldn't do anything immediately, everything takes time. That time I was going through difficult time, I couldn't even come to school. I was really tired and after four months I said I am going to stop attending school. So I didn't have any choice and I asked JRS as well maybe after one week they would offer help. I think it was end of February and we had exams. I told them maybe if they wish to help me and they said, 'All right, may be we will find someone to help you.' They said that there is 'Dar Hosanna Pia' in Sliema run by Fr Savio and they will ask him to help. He accepted me. He is a good person and I still live in there. But before that it was like very difficult, stopped my school, I didn't have many choices. I used to say, 'This is not a country that helps migrants,' because at that time I was going through so much. I completely shut down everything because I wanted to get something, I wanted to open my mind and although I encountered so many difficulties, I didn't give up even at that time. I know a lot of students who applied together even in different Institutes and courses but they stopped. I need something for a better future, that is why I continued and I managed, yes I managed.

(J) You were determined, you wanted to do something. How would you describe your present life at MCAST? How is your life here at MCAST?

(2) It is not what I want but what I can think of hundred per cent it is, I improved and I am better than I was yesterday and before. Today is a bit better.

(J) You see improvement.

(2) Yes when I come to MCAST it is a bit boring because certain lecturers are disrespectful, I am sorry to say that.

(J) No, no you have all the rights. That is why I am doing this. It is important to say the truth.

(2) Some lecturers yes they are helpful. I found it a bit difficult with the language at MCAST. I need to do something. I need to challenge myself to every solution, what comes to my mind. I

was promising myself to do something better, to accept any challenge, but some people are less human. Some lecturers are helpful; if you ask them a question sometimes they do not understand me. They try to help and do their best to understand you. However, some lecturers do not care about you, when asked a question, they look up and avoid doing something.

(J) Do you think that this is something that has to do with you being a foreigner or they even treat the Maltese like that?

(2) It is showing that they are depressing you because some of the Maltese students, if they do not understand, they ask the question and they can understand the language so they are in an advantage. I always ask, 'Who is the problem, the lecturer or me?' But sometimes it is the lecturer who would be causing the problem.

(J) Ok. In Malta do you feel you have been treated differently compared to others? Now not at MCAST but in the country in general. Do you think that foreign people, asylum seekers, migrants are treated differently?

(2) With me or with the Maltese?

(J) Maltese to you.

(2) When you come to the reality of what you are doing and what the others are doing it can say something, it is good what I am doing. But I do not know because some people, I have some people in mind like refugees and they have more education are lucky and find the right chance. This kind of being clean yourself, how you, if you are active, trying to do everything, if you are managing, have patience, if you are pushing, I think you will manage everything. It is not that difficult although nothing can come by easily. You are trying in the pushing, pushing you know, you will do something. For some people yes I know they just do the pushing two, three times and give up. But when you compare Malta and migrants, most people give up – because if you are pushing, something they give you this point you go back and sit down. You need to struggle.

(J) You need a lot of energy.

(2) Yes to push something, yes kind of pressing but you need to work hard; you need to struggle to push that point. You can do everything, doesn't matter where you are, but sometimes it matters because of you have something you are saying. Like if you for example, if you come to apply for a course at MCAST and get the information at one go it helps you. But sometimes you do not get all the information. The people who work at the office, members of staff they do not have the information – that is the problem.

(J) But do you think they do not have the information, because they are not given the information because too many changes are taking place, or because they do not want to be helpful?

(2) I do not say anything about this because some people when you go to them they are very helpful, but some people when you ask they send you from one office to the other. I have one question, one is for you and another question is for another office, you will get different feedback. I ask one question and people give you different answers. I do not know if the problem is from

the head for more and accurate information. Or they do not have a good heart to be helpful. It is not that easy to judge them.

(J) No, no, ok. What about at MCAST, you had already mentioned that some lecturers are disrespectful. Have you ever come across people who treated you differently compared to other students maybe because of your skin colour or of your country of origin or anything of the sort?

(2) Yes when we come to a student it is a challenge because what I am seeing is not only me but even other foreigners, some people like European students they are lucky because they are not dark skin. It is a bit different between Maltese and foreign students but you will get a certificate. If you are from Africa your skin would be different, they face you differently. Because even we have some group work in class, we are seeing something challenging, struggling. If it is not only in my class how are they managing to do e.g. work in groups. It is not the first time for me, I used to do group work in my country as well. But to work in the group it is not something light, it is discussing one point, discussing between if we are four or five, we have to do the hearing. If in the group there will be four Maltese and me, they are going to discuss and finish before involving me and I will be struggling a lot.

(J) Do you understand some Maltese?

(2) But I am not mentioning only me, some people if they do not understand Maltese completely. There are two students who do not understand anything as they are new for this country. I understand something, it is not that difficult. If they are repeating I understand but some students, they are new to this country. If they finish by the Maltese, it is kind of difficult to find work with the group so it is very difficult in MCAST what I am mentioning.

(J) What did you find helpful to integrate yourself in the college learning community? What helped you to integrate?

(2) What helped me is my behaviour because I do not have problems with my behaviour with anyone. Although they may face me with the dark skin I have. Maybe because I am not that educated and qualified otherwise I do not have any problems, I can talk to them because some people they do not take notice of how to whom they are talking to look like. They see your personality, they talk to you, you can do whatever you like. What helped me is my behaviour, to get to know some people. I used to meet a lot of people, kind of old people with high education, people who used to help people like me. I met a lot of people like this even like you or other staff. They used to work in schools or other areas where those people who are educated and I used to get advice from them. I also take note of what I needed to do to improve myself and to improve my mind. I was seeing always this point.

(J) What do you wish to see happening here at college for the inclusion of migrant learners?

(2) What I wish to improve maybe the way students are seen through their faces, skin. If you are not white no one talks to you, that is what I meant. There are Maltese students who need to improve a bit in this regard because even if you talk to them, they do not accept you for sure. Very few students accept you. Accept means for example when you work in a team. Maybe when you come and help the others, this must improve. This kind of thing needs to be seen by

some of the lecturers because when they give group work, they must see who is working with who, and to tell them to speak English. The language is very important to understand. If they speak only English language, this has to improve. I hope that migrant students give feedback to the country. I wish that also.

(J) Ok thank you.

## Hans P. 4

(J) What was your first reaction and feeling when arriving in Malta? You arrived by sea.

(4) When I arrived to Malta in 2013 I had a situation that the Maltese helped me and saved me. So that day I was happy about my own safety. I saw people that they were not disturbing me, punishing me and/or harming me. They welcomed us and I say thank you all of them for the workers what they have done for us, providing food clothes and everything. I was very tired in fact I slept for eighteen hours. When I woke up I saw the security at the detention. They gave us the food and later they asked us about health issues. They took a chest x-ray and checked for all of my health. Then they gave us some awareness on how we live in the detention and on how we live in this country. They explained about the JRS agency and representatives visited us to give us awareness more than the security did to get good information and we were happy. There were no problems; no one disturbed us as we had to stay there. They did an interview about what happened in our past.

(J) Why did you have the interview? What kind of interview?

(4) They asked where we came from exactly. They check everybody and then when they get to know the person, where he is coming from, the citizenship and nationality because at that moment we wouldn't have any documents at hand. The reason being is that at the birth country there was no peace, there was no offices where to go for social benefits and documents, there was nothing. During the interview they try to get out information as much as possible about our birth country and our past. And when they collect the information on everybody, somebody they give rejection, somebody subsidiary and somebody they give him redeductive how about the information they give.

(J) And what is your status?

(4) For me I have a subsidiary but after some time they were going to give me a rejection because they were telling me that I was not giving them a lot of information about the region and where you come from and for me I was not understanding well what they needed, a lot of information and they gave me another chance to sit for another interview.

(J) So you sat for another interview?

(4) Second interview yes, and I gave the information they wanted also and they gave me a subsidiary. Before I had subsidiary, I had a lot of problems. I was eighteen months of detention and two months later when I went to the father at the Immigrants Office to help me, he sent a letter to take me again for the interview. The answer I got for this request was that they refused it for two reasons: You are not giving us a lot of information about the country and your tribe. And then I gave them the requested information and they gave me my documents. Also at that time I was taking another step to apply and to find a job. Unfortunately, I was not successful at that time but again I tried. I applied for some jobs but people sometimes give you a clean job but then they tell me you know, you do not understand and I didn't have any skills at that time. Although I

was learning nursing in my country but I do not have any certificates. So I would like to be a doctor or maybe I was going to learn Health.

(J) On Health. Going back to the detention, how was the experience at the detention centre?

(4) I get a lot of experience, you meet a lot of people, some people come from Africa, some people come from Asia, different countries because Africa is very big, different countries. They do not have the same culture, the same religion, not the same language. We are not the same, multicultural, so I saw a lot of cultures, a lot of languages and a lot of behaviours of people. Some people their behaviour is like crazy, some people are very good persons and their behaviour is very nice. But some people their behaviour is not good, the people they are not the same like us. Then I got a lot of experience from different people. Some people are only interested in work and they respect you and you respect them.

(J) Do you think you were treated well at the detention centre or you weren't treated well? Do you feel you were treated well/good at the detention centre or no?

(4) No because I was not happy there. I lost a lot of time in there.

(J) What did you stay doing eighteen months in there?

(4) In the detention I was only waiting for my results because when you get the result of the interview until they get you good information about your status.

(J) They would not release you.

(4) They do not release you until they know what you are and then they let you go.

(J) How did you spend your days at the detention? Doing what?

(4) I attended some lessons, they gave us books. In the morning I used to sleep until 11.00 o'clock. When I wake up I used to eat, I go and have a shower, I brush my teeth and after, when I come to my bed, I clean it, after I go to the living room, I eat my food and later I go back and talk to other people and always tell me come on translate. I was helping the people; I was better than the majority of the people in there. So I helped in what they wanted with the security and the people in there. So when I used to help them, I start at 2.00 until 3.00 o'clock translating their stories. Then at 4.00 o'clock they used to organise football for us to play. I used to go there playing football from 4.00 until 6.00 o'clock. Then when they close the door for us, I go for the shower and then I go to watch television for one hour. After one hour I go near the other guys and then I go to play monopoly and I spent all the time like that.

(J) OK. What helped you to engage yourself with the Maltese community? What was that helped you to become more, have more information about the Maltese community? Details on how is life in Malta and where to find the basic services?

(4) JRS helped us a lot about that; they gave us a booklet some in English and others in our own language, with information so as to understand. Even UNHCR, they visited us and gave us some information on Maltese culture and how to get to the people and things like that.

(J) What motivated you to apply for an MCAST course? Who helped you to apply for an MCAST course?

(4) First time I saw some people coming to this place, I didn't know, I asked somebody from the bus stop and he showed me where the school for skills and Higher Education is. Then I visited the school and asked for information at the main office/reception. Then I met a guidance officer from there and told him that I was there to apply for a course. For the first year I was still not happy and did not go because it was difficult. You are living in ..... If somebody helps you, it is better, you help yourself. I mean, when I come in here I get some information about MCAST and also I get a book. I wanted to first see the place, go for a walk around the place and second to prepare what I wanted to be and what I need to pay from my money, my home, my wife and to save all of myself. Anyway I tried during the first year but wasn't successful. The second year is this year. I applied for electrical installation. Anyway I am trying but I have some circumstances about myself. I was trying to solve them to keep going although I see I am weak if I am by myself. Sometimes it is hard but I try to keep going. If I survive this year, I say next year it will be a success but you have to keep going until now. Anyway I will continue like that and also I will be hoping to be successful in the years to come.

(J) Ok. What were the main challenges you had to face to join MCAST? You have already mentioned some.

(4) My friend he used to tell me a lot of things; he arrived in Malta in 2008, so he knows. Also someone gave me some information about JRS. They told me that MCAST is a school, even the Life Long Learning. They gave me a book with information to go through.

(J) From JRS?

(4) Yes from JRS. Also I have that information but I didn't know the location. When I have been here I remember the man I met told me about the school.

(J) So more information would have been helpful for you particularly the place where it is and if someone had to explain what the courses are would have been helpful for you to make the right decision.

(4) Yes.

(J) How would you describe your present life at MCAST?

(4) Now I am well. The first months I was not happy about myself. Some circumstances, that is all about me, it is not MCAST and it is not about my school. Sometimes I was away for a problem about my other half, about my family and my love. Sometimes also, I was feeling like sick mostly during the lessons. I felt like I was living without a scope, but later what I understand, I do is for my wife and mostly if I was not given a chance. At that time my wife was arriving here, she was at sea and she needed my help. And also at that time I didn't have a home.

## Stefan P. 1

(J) What was your first reaction and feeling when arriving in Malta? You arrived in Malta by sea, no? What was your first reaction when arriving in Malta? Do you remember when you arrived in Malta?

(1) Yes, yes, I remember. It was 2011, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April.

(J) And how was it?

(1) It was, because I was happy, I was excited because due to what we faced, the challenges that we faced at sea for we nearly perished. We saw different fleets passing by, we tried to wave to rescue us but since they had no rescue boat, they couldn't come close to give us the required aid. But finally, I think on the 4<sup>th</sup> day some group of fishermen saw the waving until they called the rescue, the rescue group.

(J) Of Malta?

(1) I do not know because that was the first time I got to know about Malta or the hear Malta. I never knew before that there is a country called Malta. Because when they called we saw a helicopter that came to rescue us, it circled around the boat for three times and went away. After forty minutes time we saw the rescue boat coming, a big one and we were imagining which flag was that because we saw the flag white and red and we didn't know so we were imagining Tunisia or maybe Morocco, but we also imagined that it was from an Islamic country coming from the east. So we didn't know which flag of which country was that. So we said let's wait and see where and we were thinking of Cyprus, maybe Cyprus or something like that but for me I never, I never heard of Malta before, I never know it existed. I then learnt that the island was called Malta.

(J) And then what happened? You said that you came with the rescue boat.

(1) They came, they gave us life jackets, they told us to come down and gradually the dispatch, some speed boats to come around to take about four or five people to the big ship and they were allowed to come near our boat to save the people on the boat. The rest they stay away hundred or hundred fifty metres away from us. Then the speed boat comes to rescue six or seven, go and come like that till it comes to my turn and rescue me and everybody was saved.

(J) And then you went on the big ship?

(1) Yes off load all of us onto the big ship, then definitely we spent a night and then we landed in Malta the next day early in the morning.

(J) Where in Malta? In Floriana?

(1) I do not know. I think Floriana. Not sure because the boat was very unstable and it took me more than three months and I never knew what the place is and when I am walking it is like I am on the sea.

### Nagi P. 3

(J) What was your first reaction and feeling when arriving in Malta? You arrived here in Malta about three years ago and you arrived by sea. What was your first reaction when arriving in Malta?

(3) Yes exactly. Firstly, when I was crossing I needed a secure place where to land. When I arrived here in Malta, I said here there is a hope and at least now I will be rescued by someone so I give a chance but to be fair I do not know exactly what reaction I had at that moment because I was not in a mood, even to recognise myself because of the state I was in. Sometimes I was thinking I was unconscious, but slowly I started realizing I was here in Malta and I started asking myself where this place is. Is this Malta and where exactly is Malta because I did not know anything about Malta before. I learnt about this part of the European Union later by the time I was here.

(J) Ok. And do you still remember like when you were on the sea and you saw the land? How was it? What were the people saying or you weren't conscious?

(3) No there was a continuous update. The rescue team, they were telling us – 'Now we are about to arrive in Malta' and we started seeing land, buildings and stuff like that.

(J) And so the general feeling was that when arriving there, there is a sign of hope?

(3) Yes at least finally I was going to land somewhere.

(J) Ok, then when you came down on the land what happened exactly?

(3) When I got down on the land many people were gathering around me, taking pictures and then they brought a big van, a bus I think, a police bus. We went in and they drove us to the police station. After that they started the procedure of doing the fingerprints and stuff like that. Then we were totally shocked because they drove us to a detention centre where we were searched like we were going in a normal prison.

(J) Ehhe.

(3) Even if you have some stuff like pocket money, fifteen euro, the police take it and after recording it they tell us that after our release from the detention, they will give us back the money that was taken.

(J) Ok then you were taken to the detention centre? At which one?

(3) Hal Safi

(J) And how was it your experience at the detention centre?

(3) It was very bad because the first time I was detained, I didn't know even the mistake I did, just because I was sick or because of help or go out from war country to another safe place, it

requires me to go through this process or it is a normal process that the country does it for everyone. At that time I started to say, 'Do I am a criminal or I committed something wrong?' and a lot of this stuff running in my mind and even at that time I was seventeen years old, underage. I used to say how come let's say this is Europe there is the reinforcement of law, an underage boy, he can be detained with adult people you know.

(J) And how were you treated at the detention centre?

(3) When we went in the detention centre, yes it was nearly a self service place. They put you in, they lock the place, no police go in, no other staff goes in, only migrants are in there. In the morning they bring food, put it in and lock the door. Sometimes the NGOs come and visit, they open the door for them, stay for fifty minutes or one hour, do their job and go out. After that they will lock the place.

(J) And you had your own room or you were sharing?

(3) No it is like a big hall very crowded with more than 200 persons with cross-sectional area, it is like a normal hall not that big. Beds were bunkbeds on top of each other and the space between you and your friend is less than half a metre like a corridor just to pass in.

(J) So you do not have any privacy?

(3) No, no privacy at all.

(J) And what about your personal belongings?

(3) You have to keep your stuff that matters to you. Actually there are no things that you can keep because since you had been searched, you would have nothing, only clothes and you do not have that much. Two or three sets of clothes put them under the pillow on the mattress and that is it. No lockers or cupboards to put your things in.

(J) How long did you stay at the detention centre?

(3) Then there was an NGO coming and asked if there were any minors there. I wrote my name and told me that they will inform the office. It took about one week and they informed me to go to another place where it is set for teenagers to be there at Hal Far Open Centre. But in detention I think I spent only one week, eight days to be exact.

(J) And then at the open centre?

(3) Since the time I went there I became, the first day January 2015 I reached to the age of eighteen exactly, I went to Marsa Open Centre. They told me that my time at that place had finished because the place is only for minors so when you become an adult, you will move to the Marsa Open Centre and if you want there is Hal Far Open Centre. At that time I was a student, I started my first year here at MCAST so I said Marsa is better because of transport, I can walk to arrive here.

(J) So basically you have been to Hal Safi, to Marsa Open Centre but Hal Far no.

(3) No, Hal Far no.

(J) And how would you compare these two places? I mean how was your experience at the Marsa Open Centre?

(3) I think that the Marsa Open Centre is a detention but it is open. But it is the same with all the services and stuff like detention services even the door where you go through safety checks, security on the door, they always lock the door and you go in and out with a card. It is like detention services but it is a bit different because you have the freedom to walk out you know.

(J) And over there you had your own room?

(3) No still not, no room but the amount of people is less from that much, instead of two hundred in a room; we will be eighteen persons in a room. Big rooms have more than twenty beds but the room that I went in had eighteen persons with bunkbeds but there is a locker at least where to put your things. And it has one fridge to share it. That is all.

(J) And you told me that at that time you started a course here at MCAST. Who helped you? How did you get to know about MCAST and its courses?

(3) When I arrived to the Hal Far Open Centre, the minor place, there was a care workers' office and I used to go there very often. There were English lessons held at that time and I used to attend. Over there they told me that there was a chance there because there was a social worker/care worker. She had a direct link with the Education system or something like that and she used to visit the Centre every Tuesday. They told that if I wanted to meet her I had to go there on Tuesday at 2.00 o'clock and she should be there. And then one Tuesday I went, saw her and spoke with her. She told me about MCAST and at that time it was the time to apply. It was August and the course had to start in October but applications and registrations were going to close very soon so she told me to hurry up. She also told me about the place I needed to go. That time I didn't know Malta that much, even the places but luckily enough she told me near the Mosque because a friend told me about the mosque, the place where sometimes I go to pray. So the place was known to me. I came here, I asked the security at the door and told me to go to the reception. I went to the receptionist and told me that the applications were still open and I can apply and sit for the initial examination. They told me that examination was in two weeks' time and after that they will see the result and tell me in which course/level I should start.

(J) And who gave you the information about the courses? How did you decide to go on electronics? Did someone help you?

(3) The woman, the care worker, she got the MCAST book (Prospectus) and from there I searched for Electrical Electronics and since I was interested in that area, I chose the one. I said I think I will study this one. And I came here even if I didn't ask so much detail about it. At that time, I wasn't that well in English to ask questions.

(J) It was at the beginning of your stay in Malta.

(3) Yes it was the beginning and at that time I wasn't well to ask questions for every detail, you just pick the one, sometimes you do your own judgement. So I went to the course and they sent

me a letter to my flat and told me that I was accepted and that I passed the test. I was asked to prepare myself for the study.

(J) Ok. What else helped you to engage yourself with the Maltese community? This is one thing of MCAST, what else helped you to get to know more about the country and to engage yourself with the Maltese community in general?

(3) First there was a woman I mentioned in my previous meeting. She was very helpful; she always gave me advice on how to survive here in Malta, the life and the difficulties. And she always used to tell me that wherever I go I do not worry, just to feel free and represent myself, no worries here because everybody takes care of himself. No harm, no one is into your business and stuff like that.

(J) And what was her role?

(3) A social worker.

(J) And where?

(3) At the Marsa Open Centre.

(J) Ok. So you always wanted to study since you were in your birth country.

(3) Yes I was always willing to study.

(J) What were the main challenges that you had to face to join MCAST? What were the problems, the difficulties?

(3) Actually the difficulties, somehow I cannot describe them but they appear from time to time. They do not come all at the first time. When you go first you find certain problems and when you go to the second stage you find another set of problems. But thank God I managed to go through all those problems. But the challenge is that if you are a young migrant and you have no one around you, the system here in Malta even when we arrived, they didn't give us so much detail about the country. They didn't give us a course in the Maltese language, about the behaviour and how you interact with the society. So it is very difficult, you have to do it all on your own.

(J) So I don't know if I understood you well – It would have been helpful if you were given information about the island.

(3) Yes.

(J) And information about the Education system and whom you should seek if you need something.

(3) Even a course in the Maltese language, it would have been great you know.

(J) They gave you one in English.

(3) But only voluntarily not a programme from the government.

(J) Ok. How would you describe your present life at MCAST?

(3) I think I improved. I went through those rough days, but they made me strong. Now I am willing to finish my studies. Still the problems are there until I develop knowledge, the problems develop as well but I hope that in the coming days I will manage.

(J) And the problems you are referring to are they problems related to the technical aspects of the course or problems related to relationships, management of the College and of the Institute?

(3) Relations, management of Institutes, some of them relate to life daily basis. For the Institute for example, the support you need, there is an issue of lack of support and if you go for example to the offices, they are providing the information and support for the students, you go there but you leave empty-handed you know. For example, I have a big issue with the stipend office. They told me you cannot have any stipend unless you have been living for five years in Malta. I cannot understand that because I came here not by my willing. I guess I found myself here and to survive I had to, at least if you are applying for a full time course you have to have some initial grant or stipend to buy your stuff.

(J) So what do you do for living, you do not have money?

(3) No I do not have money. Now I have lack of accommodation because the place I rented, now the owner wants it back because he wants to increase the fee.

(J) And from where do you get the money?

(3) I have the social security allowance only. Social security, I deal with my life, rent, food, stuff, transport and all of it.

(J) So it must be very tough.

(3) And here, a challenge of this school, I can say I will manage to pass it but for daily life in some certain point if I try and try, sometimes you will give up, not because you want to give up, but because some things really stop you. I am afraid I will end up like that, trying to finish it but I do not know about next year.

(J) But do not give up ehh.

(3) I am trying my best.

(J) Keep trying do not give up.

(3) I am trying my best.

(J) I want to see you succeeding and achieving the results.

(3) Succeeding is my issue but what I am going through is . . . . . I cannot describe it.

(J) In Malta do you feel you have been treated differently compared to others?

(3) In some areas yes. Here the system, Maltese people are very nice people. But the system of the government is discriminatory, always putting migrants in one box. They reflect the bad views about them. For example, I come from a country where we have everything, bad behaviour, good behaviour, normal life like everywhere. Only when I came here I saw the image of the bad things, the poverty, the criminals, the hunger and desert. When you see someone, first things coming to mind are those things that the media pumps in and we usually always put everyone in one box. If you are successful, you are not recognised because you will be treated like all the others until you prove that you are different but you have to suffer a lot to prove who you are.

(J) And what about the college, do you feel that at college you have been treated differently compared to the other students?

(3) From my experience at MCAST I do not feel any kind of discrimination or treating me different from the other students or stuff like that. But even sometimes my lecturers, they do so much to me, much more than with other students to help me in some areas. I remember in the first year, they gave me extra English lessons and stuff like that.

(J) Ok. Regarding barriers, we covered this. It is mainly the financial and accommodation.

(3) Basically it boils down to the financial.

(J) What did you find helpful to integrate yourself in the college learning community?

(3) Representing the good behaviour of yourself, being yourself here I think is a key of integrating into any society. And sometimes you have to understand the community you are in. Some behaviours in my community are more but is not so you have to be tolerant, balance the stuff.

(J) And the last question, what do you wish to see happening here at college for the inclusion of migrant learners?

(3) For the inclusion of migrant learners, I will be very happy if I see a system which gives every migrant a chance to succeed. Migrants are suffering and some of them are very strong and they do not tell that they are suffering but they are all suffering. Financially, mentally, they need a lot even psychological lessons they need and some of them they go through difficult time. For the system here, if they are supported financially, and if they provide them with the physical and mental health that they want, I think they will be in a very good chance to achieve the social inclusion.

(J) Ok that is it, thank you. I do not know if you would like to add something.

(3) No I do not think so.

(J) Thank you very much. That was very helpful from your end. Now the same procedure, I will write everything and give it to you to approve.

(3) Ok. Thank you.

## Stefan P. 1

(J) What was your first reaction and feeling when arriving in Malta? You arrived by sea in Malta no? What was your first reaction when arriving in Malta? Do you remember when you arrived in Malta?

(1) Yes, yes I remember. It was 2011, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April.

(J) And how was it?

(1) It was, because I was so happy, I was excited because due to what we faced, the challenges that we faced at sea for we nearly perished. We saw many fleets passing by, we tried to wave to rescue us but since they had no rescue boat, they couldn't come close to give us the required aid. But finally I think on the 4<sup>th</sup> day some group of fishermen saw the waving until they called the rescue, the rescue group.

(J) Of Malta?

(1) I do not know because that was the first time I got to know about Malta or to hear the word Malta. I never knew before that there is a country called Malta. Because when they called we saw a helicopter that came to rescue us, it circled around the boat for three times and went away. After 40 minutes' time we saw the rescue boat coming, a big one and we were imagining which flag was that because we saw the flag white and red and we didn't know so we were imagining Tunisia or maybe Morocco. But we also imagined countries of Islamic influence. So we didn't know which flag of which country was that. So we said let's wait and see where and we were thinking of Cyprus, maybe Cyprus or something like that but for me, I never, I never heard of Malta before, I never knew it existed. I learnt that the island was called Malta.

(J) And then what happened? You said that they came with the rescue boat.

(1) They came, they gave us life jackets, they told us to come down and gradually the dispatch, some speed boats to come around and take about four or five people to the big ship that they were allowed to come near our boat to save the people on the boat. The rest they stayed away 100 or 150 metres away from us. Then the speed boat comes and rescues six or seven, go come like that till it comes to my turn and rescue me and everybody was saved.

(J) And then you went on the big ship?

(1) Yes off loaded all of us onto the big ship, then definitely we spent a night and then we landed in Malta the next day early in the morning.

(J) Where in Malta, in Floriana?

(1) I do not know, I think Floriana. Not sure because the boat was very unstable and it took me more than three months and I never knew what the place is and when I was walking it was like I was on the sea.

(J) Ehh you were feeling dizzy.

(1) Yes.

(J) So you were seasick.

(1) Yes it wasn't easy so I was happy when we were rescued. Not because I landed in Malta.

(J) Because you landed somewhere.

(1) Not because I landed somewhere, but I was saved. I landed on a land.

(J) A land exactly.

(1) Because I did not know where we were going. So when I landed on a land I was happy. I cannot die again. I said now even if they take me back to my country, I am safe, I am alive. I was very very happy and I never thought of Malta. I remember that someone saved me to be alive. It is a big thing in your life because when you die you lose everything, but when you are alive you still have a lot of things to achieve in life, so I am really appreciative and happy for that.

(J) And when they told you that you have arrived in Malta, what was your reaction?

(1) My reaction, because when they take you to the process, to write your name, where you come from, they give you the police number that would be the number for immediate identification. When they come to detention they would be using your number to know who you are because it would be much easier than the name so they will call the number, and when they call the number you know they are calling you. So they give you the number according to the boat.

(J) So you are recognised by the number, the number of the boat. Then you were taken at the detention centre. How was it your experience at the detention centre?

(1) The detention centre was very bad. There is the problem that really made me fed up. I signed to go back but they refused to send me back. I signed because I saw it a waste of time because I didn't commit any crime. Even if I came here illegally, that is not the right procedure. Italy and other European countries, they will see my case that is what they will be doing, they will give you the freedom. But we were limited, just in the camp; you cannot go even beyond 40 metres, always with security within 20 or 30 metres for more than a year, which was very boring.

(J) And how long did you stay there?

(1) I stayed there for 12 months. I applied to go home in the first four months and they refused and they refused to send me back.

(J) And you applied to go home because you got fed up?

(1) I got fed up and because of the conditions and I told them that I am a student and I came to further my studies.

(J) How old were you when you were at the detention?

(1) I was 26 years old. But I wanted to continue my education and I have nothing else to say.

(J) Did you consider going back to your country even to face the consequences of returning back?

(1) That time yes because it's not an issue of consequences but when something happens and it affects you; you do something out of normality. At that point I was not seeing any reason to stay here. Whatever I find myself doing let it happen.

(J) Besides the lack of freedom what else happened during detention? Can you explain more?

(1) You cannot go more than 50 metres like we were quarantine, like to keep in a corner and do not even try to go to other people or something like that - quarantine. If you are sick they take you to hospital, they put handcuffs on your hand which is the worst thing to whom it may be, treating humans like animals which is the worst thing. But for me, my perception, my intuitive of thinking, I do not consider those things to be nothing to me. I take those to be part of life, either if it feels good or bad, I do not like those ..... you need to stand higher than those things and try to fight forward, that is my belief.

(J) OK. What helped you to engage yourself with the Maltese community? Then after one year you were given, what status do you have?

(1) They gave me a reject.

(J) A reject?

(1) Yes.

(J) And you were free?

(1) They said you can stay one year, twelve months with freedom to come out, to work, to study.

(J) But the status was rejection, is it still like that?

(1) Yes it is still like that and it can go to action anytime.

(J) So you can go back anytime.

(1) Yes but they know those people they want them back, not everyone.

(J) And did they tell you why they rejected the status and gave you a rejection? Did they explain to you?

(1) Yes. Because I have two backgrounds, Ghana and Zimbabwe. My mother is from Ghana and my father is from Zimbabwe. So they told me Ghana is my country of origin and I can go to Ghana and I have nothing to lose.

(J) And what helped you engage yourself with the Maltese community? Then you went out from the detention. Where was it Hal Far or Hal Safi?

(1) Yes Hal Safi.

(J) And then what happened? You walked out; you had the freedom to go anywhere.

(1) Until the time when they come to release you. After one year they came from the commission and allowed them to come and free us out from the detention. They only came and

went to the Police Station to fill some form. They took all our registry information in Floriana, no, down there, near the sea Valletta, the ID card office.

(J) Ehh yes Evans Building.

(1) Yes Evans Building. We went there; they gave us some forms to fill. I think after one week we received a letter to go to Evans Building for the ID card.

(J) And where were you staying?

(1) I was staying in Hal Far. I was staying there for one month and started looking for rent.

(J) And you looked for a rent. How were you paying, from where did you get the money for the fee of the rent?

(1) We were four people and we were paying four hundred euro, hundred each.

(J) And you were earning some money at that time?

(1) No I was not earning any money at that time. I was only doing casual work but after three months I got a job at Hilton as a cleaner. Then I started searching on how to do my studies. I first came here and I think I .....

(J) Who helped you to find a job at Hilton?

(1) Nobody, nobody helped me for nothing. I do everything myself.

(J) But how did you know the Hilton wanted a cleaner?

(1) For me, I prepare my CV everything with my email.

(J) But you had to look for names of hotels, where did you find them?

(1) Even here, I didn't know there is a hotel Hilton because we used to look for a job at St Julian's down next to the police station. So every time we went there, I saw the building. So one day I asked what was that building and one day I asked and was told it is a hotel and I went and left my CV.

(J) About this thing of casual work, can you explain a bit because this is interesting? None of the other participants were involved in casual work.

(1) It is not a proper work, working permanently.

(J) Like when one goes out in Marsa square?

(1) I never go to Marsa. I have no time to go to Marsa. The first time I went I was ashamed. I will never go there because they literally abuse you. I used to manage myself well. Then I started working on the destiny I wanted. I went to JRS, the Institute Office.

(J) Ehh, so the JRS helped you!

(1) No I went there for CV. They helped me to prepare my CV, curriculum vitae that I used for my jobs, for all my jobs till now. So I used that one. I used Malta Park as well so I went to Bugibba and started distributing my CV. I didn't fill in any forms, just presented my CV and Hilton was one of them.

(J) How many CVs did you send?

(1) A lot, a lot, at least hundred. If I presented hundred and two called me, I cannot work at two places at the same time. Only one will take me and I didn't take care who else called me but a lot called me and I didn't go.

(J) So a lot called you and you didn't go?

(1) Yes.

(J) But why? Were you happy at Hilton?

(1) No because it is the same job, cleaning, same cleaning.

(J) And at Hilton were you happy?

(1) No at Hilton I was happy; not happy but it was ok.

(J) It was sufficient for that time.

(1) At Hilton they helped me a lot; they gave me the job to earn money and to study here. I got free tuition, free tuition from the Ministry of Education based on the working permit and without that permit I need to pay. Because of that I hail Hilton a lot because through Hilton I studied till now. From there I came here to apply.

(J) Who told you about MCAST?

(1) No, when I was at the detention centre I did my research; I did my research because I am a student.

(J) With whom did you do your research?

(1) I did my research with JRS. They brought the names, they got me MCAST, University of Malta, an institute, I think ITS and another one, four schools in all. They told me MCAST is free and the University of Malta you need to pay. And when I got the freedom, I went to Fr Philip in Valletta and when finally I got the reject, they told me I need to pay. I said no I am not going to pay. I went to JRS and I told them the whole story. I went to MCAST, went to the secretary and she told me no this time round the school is about to close, July and August they do the registrations. So I went in July, I got the job in Hilton, so when I got the job at Hilton, I asked my department manager that my main mission is to go to school as I cannot focus all the time on the cleaning for the rest of my life. I want to study at MCAST, so the response was: 'Yes it is good. Before you start with your studies we are ready to help you.' So what they did? They withdrew me from morning shift to only evening shift so after school I go to work in the afternoon till midnight. So from Hilton it was July, August I came here to pick the forms. Besides the application form she gave me a form to go to the Ministry of Education and apply in Valletta for the exemption from tuition fee but at that time I knew nothing. After the forms they told us we

have interviews so we came for sitting for the exams in the big hall up there. So I do not know what exactly happened but they picked all the people.

(J) And you started from which level?

(1) I started from Foundation level because I didn't know the system. I have 'A' levels but I cannot prove it.

(J) So you have been here six years?

(1) No I started level 2, one year and stop. I started level 5 Applied Sciences and went back engineering level 5.

(J) And you didn't do the level 3 after the level 2?

(1) No, no only level 2 I did. And I did level 2 because I did not understand the system.

(J) Then how did you enter level 4?

(1) I didn't go level 4.

(J) Ehh you did the 'A' levels?

(1) I did the 'A' levels. I did not understand the system. Level 2 is Foundation and was very basic for me. So I stopped and went to level 5 straight away.

(J) And where did you do the 'A' levels?

(1) I did the 'A' levels in my country.

(J) Ehh in your country. And you have certificates?

(1) I have certificates and I presented them to MCAST.

(J) That is good. How come you managed to save the certificates when you were at sea?

(1) No because I requested a copy of my certificates. Now I am afraid of nothing. Whatever they do, let them do it. I do not care what is going to happen. Do it if you want to do it, do not fear.

(J) I am saying this because the others, they said I have certificates but they do not have them with them so I am glad that someone has the certificates with him.

(1) I think I have my certificate with me. Yes, this is one of my certificates. I am not a coward; this is one of my certificates. This is from West Africa. This is my certificate, why should I hide?

(J) Good.

(1) I gave a copy to the Registrar and another to the MQRIC.

(J) OK to give you the equivalency.

(1) I didn't care what was going to happen. I used this to apply for level 5 MCAST because they told me to present it for level 5.

(J) And when you applied for Foundation level 2 you didn't tell them that you have 'A' Levels?

(1) No I didn't know the system; I didn't know how the system works.

(J) And no one explained it to you?

(1) No, no one explained it to me. Just I thought everything by myself. So honestly one day I said 'What am I doing here, this is not mathematics, what am I doing?' I checked the system and found out and I then applied to level 5.

(J) OK what were the main challenges you had to face to join MCAST, challenges and difficulties?

(1) Yes difficulties, financial problems, financial problems.

(J) Did you have any problems besides the financial ones? I know that the financial were the main problems for you although I know now you are working and maybe now it is better but it was a big issue for you.

(1) Big issue yes, that was the main problem.

(J) But besides the financial were there any other problems?

(1) No I didn't have any other problems besides the financial ones.

(J) I do not know, did you face any language problems?

(1) I am English speaking guide and so I can speak English.

(J) What about, I do not know, I do not want to suggest but maybe religion or not being included in society?

(1) No, not being included, religion, I am catholic, I am a Christian. I do not go to church, not because I do not have a Church, we have a Church, and we go.

(J) A lot of Churches.

(1) Yes a lot. I decided not to go; I prefer to stay at home not because someone is preventing me from going to church. God is not for somebody, God is for everyone. So it is not because I am black you do not want to stay with me, we all want to go to heaven. And what if God calls me, you do not go to heaven.

(J) Irrespective of the country you were born in, irrespective of the colour of skin, if you are called to go to heaven, you go to heaven.

(1) For me, I do not go because God created the black. God created two persons Adam and Eve, and we know only them if we believe the Bible and we are Christians so we believe in the history of Christians. Only two people were created on this earth. So if you tell me because of this and

this colour, then we need to tell God why that and not me. You cannot blame me, I am not the creator. (J) Ok. It would be interesting to see you as the creator, I am joking. How would you describe your present life at MCAST? When I am saying your present life, I am not only referring to this year, even your last year at MCAST, how would you describe it - life as a migrant at MCAST?

(1) The challenges and difficulties as a foreigner in another country. You are not as easy as when you are surrounded by your own people. Definitely there would be a difference between you and a resident student.

(J) What kind of difference?

(1) Like you cannot be so close too much with each other although you are not talking to others by hey hey, you go your way but in your country you will be freer, you move together, play together but here you cannot have it like that. You cannot let anyone living in oppression and because of that you cannot focus on your studies. For me that factor affects my studies at all. No that is not on because I understand, in life what you are doing. First you need to understand what you are doing. If something small happens you will stop doing what you are doing and start complaining, you understand. For me I do not care if someone who talks about me, what he says about me. My issue here is to study and get the certification – that is it.

(J) You are very focused.

(1) Yes.

(J) You are clear of what you want from life.

(1) What I am doing, I do not care on what you think.

(J) The others.

(1) Always I say they do not do me races. Not even today do not do me races and I do not have time for what you say. It is you see, I am black, I am black. If I am black, so what is going to insult me? If you insult me in Maltese I do not understand Maltese so you will deceive yourself. What you say I do not understand and it wouldn't hurt me. What you say, if I understand what you say it hurts me. It would affect me anyway so I do not care of what you say and focus more on what I am doing. And when they try to do something and I do not take any notice, they stop it. But if you try to counter back it gives them the ability to do it more. Forget about what they are doing, if you forget, they will stop what they will be doing. But if you try to argue all the time it doesn't pay.

(J) OK another question. In Malta do you feel you have been treated differently compared to others? What I am saying is not limited to MCAST but in Malta in general. Do you think you have been treated differently?

(1) Yes of course, that one is common and not only in Malta. Everywhere you find it even in my own country between one tribe and another, you cannot expect to be treated the same as the inhabitants, those living in that area. So that one is usual, it's normal to me. Those who didn't experience that before they are either very lucky or else are not aware of it.

(J) Can you give some examples of how you have been treated differently?

(1) Even at the workplace although where I am working now is different, but before like everything they want you as a foreigner to do everything, something that is wrong they try to blame it on the foreigners.

(J) I am going to draw the attention on what you said 'as a foreigner'. So if it was an Austrian or an Italian, do you think that they will be treated the same as you or different?

(1) For me I do not see the difference.

(J) For you but in practice did you notice any difference like within the foreigners? You were saying that as a foreigner you were treated differently but the foreigners themselves are they treated differently or they are treated all the same as foreigners?

(1) No they are treated all the same. When I worked at Hilton, we the foreigners were all treated the same.

(J) Irrespective of the country of origin?

(1) No they are treated all the same. Yes all those foreigners coming from Bulgaria, Armenia, Romania, Ukraine and all other countries. But what people would like to say most of them would complain – because of our colour, anything that is linked to racism, but that is not the fact. The fact is that when something is happening you need to stand up and say the truth. For me I didn't see the difference between those guys and me.

(J) Ok, all right. Do you feel that at the college you have been treated differently compared to other students? So in simpler words, do you feel that you have been discriminated at college for whatever reason?

(1) No that is what I have been saying. The first day I told you, the day that I started studying this programme, I said, I feel due to my character more than anything else and no lecturer at MCAST have discriminated me. I feel this is due to my attitude or my character. I do not think if it is A and I write A because I am a foreigner they do not mark A. That is why we have the Students' Board. If something you do not understand, you can make an appeal, you take it there and if you are right they change the grade. There are others who know the same and go through it all. If I am right and they say I am wrong, I say why I am right and they say why I am wrong. They would not penalise you: that is just the board.

(J) Glad to hear this because sometimes we hear rumours.

(1) For me I do not blame any lecturer. I have been with my lecturers here like when we have female lecturers like Ms ..... all the time she used to advise me as to change my attitude for the better and that is all. I failed her unit and I was the only person who failed and she wasn't happy because she was right to fail me. I know what I did so I cannot go somewhere and start criticizing her why she failed me. No I feel those were the only units, there were other units that I could have failed and was considered she passed me. Why should I go beyond the limit to give me the pass? No I need to study; it's my duty as a student to study. If I fail to fulfil my duties I cannot expect my lecturer to give me a pass. It was easy for everyone to say it's her duty to give us the pass. It is better you stay home and they call you to give you the certificate – you understand?

(J) Yes, yes ok. What are the barriers that you had to face or are still facing here at the College? What are the obstacles that you came across? I know that one is the financial although now maybe it is not or it was a bigger problem before. What else - are there any problems that you are facing here at College?

(1) No my biggest problem was the financial.

(J) So you describe it like that of all other students including Maltese ones? Up to a certain point it is, no?

(1) Yes of course, but the main challenges I am facing or I faced during the previous year was the financial difficulty.

(J) Ehhe and it reflected itself in the results.

(1) It reflected itself in everything because if you do not have the money and you want to go by bus, you would miss a couple of lessons because I cannot get any transfer, transportation to school and if you cannot come for lessons to learn, how do you expect to pass. It is not easy to pass.

(J) So the financial issue leads to other problems.

(1) For me I do not see what problems, the most, the major problem I have today is to have the secure documents that secure my stay in Malta. That is the only problem that one can have, and if you have it, I have it for now. But I do not see much to improve.

(J) What are the barriers that you had to face or are still facing here at the college? What are the difficulties that you are facing?

(1) Difficulties in my studies.

(J) Of studies?

(1) Yes of studies. I try to achieve my targets but it is also linked with the financial scene as one can see because due to the fact that I live here and failed, they throw me back another year again. I need to stay another year more and start again. And that is a drop back, all my friends you have to see where they are at level 6, the degree. And next year I am going to start 1<sup>st</sup> year and they will be in their second year of the degree.

(J) Yes I can understand, it is difficult to accept, but we have to look ahead as when time passes these things would be meaningless.

(1) Yes I know. We have a proverb in Africa that if you add more meat to the soup you add more taste to the soup because the more you add more meat, the more taste you add to the soup. So if I repeat in this area and I study, there are some areas that didn't understand better but due to me repeating, it helps me to understand more better, even help me to open ways for me to understand better the top up degree.

(J) Good, good, very good. The last two questions: What did you find helpful to integrate yourself in the college learning community? What did you find helpful?

(1) MCAST is helpful to me in general.

(J) But to be specific, who are the staff members that you find helpful?

(1) All of them praise your heart. In 2018 I will become heading over to, even when the registrar comes in – because he knows me well, so I will become ahead to all of them because all along the way after the registration meeting, I wrote a letter to him asking if I can study Applied Sciences. Then I asked if I can drop back to engineering. And then they offered me when everyone applied and it was almost end of first semester and I said how am I going to study back? It was a headache, I went there and they accepted me and I went back out. So all of them, they contributed, the advice, the talks and everyone, everyone helped me a lot.

(J) What do you wish to see happening here at the college for the inclusion of migrant learners? What do you wish to see happening?

(1) For me, what I want to see like MCAST still needs to open its doors for all migrants to keep them together.

(J) Yes but they are already open.

(1) Yes I know but we want to see more migrants.

(J) I agree, I agree.

(1) Like here I am the only migrant who is in level 5. I didn't see any migrants at level 5, only me at level 5. Definitely this year I am going to study top up degree, I am the only migrant here, right at the moment.

(J) And it is important that you do it because we need to make history.

(1) And that is my target.

(J) We would be very proud to have a foreign student, a migrant student who is studying for a degree. That is a very big achievement for the College.

(1) That is why I am also encouraging my brothers, the young ones not to give up and I always advise them that education is not something that you just go and achieve everything. You have to work hard and face a lot of challenges and with those challenges that will give you, that will be your experience from education, which is what they call education in broad sense. It is not something that you just kick by foot and pick it up. No, you need to sweat, you need to work hard, you need to put your arms on, work hard and achieve it. It is something that you need to work for and achieve it, and after achieving it you cannot be at home and someone call you for work. After that you need to search again for the job with the performance in your school and certificates and qualifications that would guarantee you and finally you achieve what you are looking for.

(J) I understand you perfectly. Yesterday, actually last night I was coming from Sheffield because I am still studying and I know what it means that you have to work hard, you have to work late at night or early in the morning, to struggle between the work, school, studying, so I understand you perfectly. Ok. So is there anything that you would like to see happening here at the college for the benefit of migrants?

(1) Yes for me I want to see more.

(J) Yes but what do you want to see from the College's side', what do you expect, what do you want the College to do to attract the attention of possible applicants from the migrant community?

(1) If ..... but some migrants, that is why I always explain this, it's because sometimes we hear the negative side because we always complain and always try to complain in one direction. Now if MCAST tries to make an advertisement saying that they want to see more migrants at MCAST, they will start criticizing and complaining again that there is something, you know what I am talking about because of the same attitude, you understand? But what I am after, I still want MCAST to open its doors and allow anyone who had the feeling, who has the will to come to study, who has found the reason whereby he wants to study, then he needs to be encouraged because some need encouragement like the other Somalian guy. It was funny how he speaks English, but I was happy for him, for him to be here. As a person he knows what is right because education is the key in life. All this fighting, going around, all this misbehaving, you will never see well educated persons involve themselves in such things. All those are the illiterate ones because anybody who knows his rights, they do not fight. Why should I fight? If you fight you do not understand what you will be doing. If you understand you do not do it, I do not have time for that. I know my left and right, I know what I am looking for. I know what I am focusing on, like what I am talking to you now look what I have done at MCAST. I am looking for investment, investing for me to build a hospital and invest in my country. It is a big focus you understand, though I came here by boat, I will leave here, you will not see me, maybe one day I will meet you all. Let me meet Mr Bartolo because he was very interested when I was at MCAST and I come to your office and you say 'Oh ....., you came back again, how you survived and I say I am enjoying it in my country.'

(J) Do not go by boat but.

(1) I can go with my private jet, something I am aiming at in fifteen years.

(J) I do not know if I will be here in fifteen years. Thank you.

### Third round of interviews - The Future

#### Hans P. 4

(J) We are going to start with the first question 4. The first question 4 is 'What are your plans for the future?' I mean plans are important because they give us direction where we would like to go. What are your plans? What would you like to do in the future?

(4) In the future I want to be a doctor so this moment I was preparing how to get a skill to get a job and after to start what I want to be, so at the moment I want to start at the Applied Sciences to continue for nursing until I get what I want. So that is the plan of my future, what I want to be a long time I have been thinking about that but this moment is the perfect time to go and do about that.

(J) Ok. And how would you rate the chance of reaching your future aims? Do you think that it is something reachable or it is going to be impossible, or it is going to be very hard but possible? How would you rate the chances of reaching your aims?

(4) It is very hard but may be possible.

(J) Ok.

(4) So I stay longer time, it can, in fact it can, during this year I want to continue with my education, maybe I can meet some circumstances like the time change everything changes. I do not know what will happen in the future but I want to continue until I reach my goals.

(J) Ok. And what did you find discouraging from past experiences, what did you find difficult and discouraging in pursuing, in continuing with your future plans both at college and outside? What was that discouraged you, what?

(4) For me at this moment I ..... can you.

(J) Ok, what were the difficulties that you faced to reach your aims?

(4) Yes small things because up to now I am here and my goal is to get some, a chance to make a living and also about economy that has become a problem.

(J) OK. So the financial issue was a problem for you and that was something that discouraged you from continuing with your studies and plans.

(4) Because at the moment I have a wife and she is helping me since last year and I got to finish school so I am happy she is with me. And I will continue with my education and will never leave until I reach my goal. Everything, every circumstance during the time I continue my education, I will try to make it solve. Everything that I can solve I will do so. And in the last year I solved many things and I will not give up because I am here to win and I mean it.

(J) And what are the things that you had to solve up to now?

(4) This moment there is no problem, everything is good for me. Regarding the financial my wife is working so she can cover about me and we can live together, we can do everything. At this moment I am confident, I can do everything and this time I want to be continuous about that and then when I learn something after I can get work at night, I can go in morning to school, because during the last year I was getting some circumstances during the time of learning, I was going night work, some part times and mornings going to school. I completed about that because of some time, house you are living and some people they tell you, 'If you do not pay €500 you cannot live here. 'Some like give it to you for €300 so that you do not know. You are not prepared over, I do not chance it when they ask you, you get only sometimes, you have to find a solution for it. And at that time maybe you are doing some assignments and also that time I see something like that. Anyway I was trying to do it in my best way. This moment I protect everything if it is happening just like before, I learn some security, I can go to work in part time so like that circumstances is happening to me this year. That one now I protect it, I prepare a certificate of security and I take a card of security and after .....

(J) You take what?

(4) Security card licence. I prepared this one if I am during my education, if I see some problems about economy, I am ready to go in part time at night and continue education in the morning but I do not want to leave it anymore.

(J) Ok. And at MCAST what were the difficulties that you faced? You said at the beginning that you would like to become a medical doctor. What were the challenges, difficulties that you faced here?

(4) The first time I see, the first time I am learning, I was not understanding how assignments, how I need to do so and that became a big problem for me.

(J) So was it because of the language?

(4) No not the language. It was about the assignments. When we go to do the assignment, it is precisely what we do, the examination.

(J) Ok.

(4) I was not understanding because in my country you will do one time all the assignments and at MCAST you do it every chapter, when you finish the chapter you will do the assignment and that mark gives you the letter and then for me sometimes I was leaving it from assignment. I think for me I make it at home, but I was not given the letter, then again I understood. Some students tell me the letter is like English letter. The first assignment I was leaving it because that was the first time and then now I do it everything I understood.

(J) So basically if I am understanding well it is the system adopted at MCAST, you weren't aware of how you should continue with the system and that was a difficulty for you.

(4) Not difficult for me, but I was not understanding what needs to be done. When I understand it will become easy for me because of like this one how I am doing the work.

(J) So you mentioned that one is the financial issue and two is to understand exactly what you needed to do, what was expected of you. Then when they explained clearly and you understood, it was ok. Is there anything else that you found difficult?

(4) There are no other difficulties.

(J) And both at MCAST and outside MCAST.

(4) Yes outside MCAST I tell you because outside there is no problem about me. I go to my home, do my assignment and I do only what is expected of me. But at MCAST I do not only learn under that circumstance, sometimes I see it because I didn't see it before that moment and later I understand. But there is no problem about me.

(J) Ok. And before you were at MCAST, have you encountered any difficulties outside, not in MCAST, here in Malta?

(4) Yes because at the first time, I was not informed and had no skills to go for a job.

(J) You do not know any skill?

(4) Now I learnt English and I learnt electrical installation. So now I can go for a job if I need. Now I also prepared a security if I want I can go for a job. But at that moment I had known nothing and I had no certificates. I started from scratch everything but this moment I have learnt some skills that I can do.

(J) Ok. What did you find encouraging in pursuing with your future plans both at MCAST and outside? What supported you, what helped you to continue and not give up with your studies and education? What did you find helpful both at MCAST and outside MCAST?

(4) Only at first, the first problem in Malta is the housing that is all. But there is no other problem.

(J) The housing where you live.

(4) Before I was living in Gzira, then B'Kara but now at this moment I live in Hamrun. So it is important the place you are living, you can get the bus because we do not have other means of transportation. Sometimes you can get, sometimes the lessons get started at 8.00 o'clock even if you leave early and the bus is missed or one time is passed, you will be a bit late. So that is why I rented the place, to come here it's only 20 minutes.

(J) So that is another problem, the transport and means of transport.

(4) If you live in far places it is important the place you rent, the position you are living and the place you rent. It is better to be near, close to the place of education.

(J) Here at MCAST what did you find encouraging? Did you find encouragement here at MCAST? Someone helped you to continue with your studies?

(4) Yes I found help, what is his name the Director of Electrical and Electronics?

(J) Is it the present one Mr Stephen Sammut?

(4) No Mr DeBattista, he encouraged me to continue my education.

(J) So you found some encouragement from the lecturers as well.

(4) Even the one of Health and Safety and also Marjohn Demanuele helped me a lot to continue with my education and do not give up.

(J) Ok. In your opinion, what would be the ideal world for you as a migrant learner? If you have the magic wand, if you can ask for anything what would you find the ideal thing for you as a migrant learner to learn here at MCAST?

(4) Because they migrated, the majority of people they do not have anything and some people I saw when they ask me, they tell me 'We cannot go to school because of the financial.' If you ask why he will tell you I work at night and one day I work at morning as a cleaner or other work so he says I have no chance. If I work all morning I can go part time in the college, if I work all the nights maybe till 8 o'clock something, I am working in nights, I can go in mornings in full time. But the people everyone will tell you I have no stipend, no means because the benefits are not enough, I cannot pay the rent of the house and all the expenses of the basic life so I cannot go to school, so that is why I prefer to do the job.

(J) So what do you see as a solution for this problem?

(4) For this problem, the people to go to school to get good benefits. So I would like to see migrant people like that but there are other people not wanting to learn school but to go to work. A lot of people would like to go to school but their circumstances would not allow them. So the people who go to learn in school, now the benefit that they will be taking is €300. The others who do not go to school to learn and go to work, they can also get a good a chance to learn a skill. I think that the authorities can maybe make taxes to help these people. They can make it for the money; they can make some taxes to help.

(J) So basically the ideal world for a migrant learner would be to benefit from financial help.

(4) Yes because everybody, everybody you say why you are not going to school, they tell you some, I was in secondary school, some they say I left University two years but they do not have certificates to make, to go for a job so they start as a cleaner or other work. Some they say I work at night and some in day I cannot do approximately a day or night because of shift. Sometimes they start at two o'clock until ten o'clock, something like that. Some people they cannot really do anything about school and they go to work. But the teenagers, some they are old and some they are young, the young student is always what they prefer. A lot of people they ask me where I go and how am I going to have a better life and I tell them to go through that process and you will do it – the people to make a success and to help each other.

(J) Ok. This week I heard that a cleaner at hospital was working and a surgeon heard him saying something and when he spoke to him, he discovered that he was a neuro surgeon who operates in the brain, the cleaner but he has no documentation and the surgeon noticed that because of the language that he used, the words that he used, like he said how come he knows this a cleaner.

(4) The cleaner, he knows the terms.

(J) And then they stopped him from doing cleaning duties and he is helping, he is not a surgeon but assisting in the operating theatre. What would you like to see happening within the Maltese community to help migrant learners?

(4) I would like the help about houses and the benefits, may be a balance for the basic life to make it until, during that time to continue with education. But when he finishes in school he goes into jobs. If he makes it, he pays some from what he is doing but at first he needs to make it until he reaches his goals. I would like to see that happening.

(J) OK. And then the last question - what would you like to see happening further at college to help you in reaching your future aims? At college here, what would you like to see happening so that your life would be easier, not only yours but that of all migrant learners?

(4) This moment to make a completion, to make the people searching because a lot of people they are, I saw some of the people they learnt from African Universities, they know education so to make a calibration and to ask the people some questions on their knowledge. Some they are economists, some they have degree from Africa, some have management degree, some have, I saw one guy he is in Malta, I saw him two weeks ago, and he has this qualification in installation, electrical and he is working as a cleaner.

(J) But how can the authorities recognise the skills and the qualifications when they do not have documentation, they do not have papers, certificates?

(4) If you do not have documents, you have adequate education about that certificate. What you want you can do it for an assignment because you can see everybody what he wants and what he is doing.

(J) So what you are saying is that if someone claims that he studied in that particular area, they give him like a test to check whether it is true or not.

(4) Yes to make an assignment-if he says I can do that one, I learnt that one, ok do it for the assignment.

(J) Is there anything else from the college's side that can make your life easier?

(4) At the college I am having good time with my lecturers and students so there are no problems and during that time I was learning. 2016-2017 I was happy and I am completing my course and I have nothing else but to say thank you to all of you.

(J) Ok that is it, thank you very much.

## Stefan P. 1

(J) The first question is 'What are your plans for the future?'

(1) My plans are already in place and I am still working hard to achieve them. At the moment I want to be an entrepreneur after the school so now I have, I have already lobbied for the land in my country - about ten acres. In the future my point is to look for investment; I would like to open a private hospital in my area because in all African system the health issues are a big problem. So I do that. I am going to support my people.

(J) So you want to build a hospital.

(1) A hospital to support the people at the same time to make a business. I am not going to open it for free because they would have access to health care, to go for treatment and get help, and they pay for it, they are not going for free. So that is my big plan.

(J) You heard (4) saying he wants to be a doctor?

(1) Yes in the future I will contact him when everything would be in place.

(J) How would you rate the chance of reaching your future aims?

(1) What shall I aim for, I can see I am already there because HND is already done, I got all my passes. I am going to study degree this year, the top up degree this year. I hope in the next two years I will achieve my degree. And by then, I know by then I find someone to help me to develop that particular land even if I am working, I am not trying to save money and try to make an improvement on the land. Then I put my proposal to the bank to apply for a loan to study business because it is a business and the bank they are going to benefit, the whole citizens are going to benefit and I am also going to benefit. So they are not going to give me the money for free and the money will be paid back to the bank. Plans are placed ahead of me and I am working hard. I cannot even sleep because I am working very hard to achieve my targets.

(J) What did you find discouraging in pursuing with your future plans? At college first.

(1) At present, initially I went to University because I am an 'A' level student and I wanted to go to University but since I am a foreign student and also a migrant, let me put it that way, I went to meet Mr Attard, he was in charge of the Foundation Studies. He told me that I need to pay €6500 or something like that to study for just the Foundation, one year which is very costly. He advised me to check if at MCAST it is possible because MCAST is free. Then MCAST can help me later if I achieve what I need to apply for University. So he advised me from that day to move to MCAST here but the first time I came it was closed. It was the same time when I came here around June, May or June and you told me to come here in July or August to apply for the course. So I came here straight away and picked the form, I applied, then they told me to come for the entrance exam. I came for the entrance exam and I passed for the Foundation because I didn't understand the system. I thought that here is the same as University and thought that maybe the Maltese Educational system is different from the one of my country. But when I started the Foundation 2012-2013 I said, 'What is this education? It is like of small children at the first

classes of school. How am I going through all this? It is a waste of time.’ So after that I went to check the system and it is the same as that of my country. So there was no need for me to waste. So straight away I applied for Applied Sciences and there then I started feeling and experiencing the MCAST system because before everything was straightforward. The African system is based on the ‘A’ levels system. Everything is based on exams, you go prepare and write. So when I came here everything they give you, you need to go home and what made the system difficult for me was the BTEC system. Because the BTEC system was crazy, absolutely crazy, you can pass everything - I remember in Applied Sciences only one pass I missed and I failed the whole unit, just a pass, just not even up to ten marks. And I failed the whole unit which I studied for one year, just missed a pass because the BTEC system is a crazy system. If it was a normal system I think I would have been doing my degree or even completed my degree long time ago. I am still not in the system studying for the degree again but what I do, it just happened like that. I need to take it like that. So I would say it was the BTEC system that tried to frighten me because then they let me change course and here I am at long last. I can see I have settled and I do not have so many difficulties which is affecting my future and since I have friends who are pursuing with the course there is no way I am going to give up since I am a student, I am not looking at what is happening. My aim is to achieve my target because by the age of 40 or 43 I might get my PhD so that is my target now. So the future is very smooth.

(J) You are in the process.

(1) Yes I am in the process and nothing is going to stop me.

(J) So what were the challenges/difficulties that you had to face?

(1) In my studies?

(J) Yes and outside your studies and outside MCAST?

(1) What challenges for me, I always, I do not care what challenges.

(J) What about information?

(1) Yes if you need information you need to get it.

(J) But you need to know where to look for it.

(1) Yes you need to look for it. For me I am not social that is my problem. I am not blaming anybody for the fact that I am not social. I do not go out; I do not go anywhere. If I am not working for the whole day I do not go anywhere. If I am not working I will be in my room for the whole day. I do not go anywhere that is my problem. I will be running from school to work and to home, these three places are the only places where you can find me.

(J) But why are you seeing it as a problem?

(1) Because if you do not interact with people how are you going to get information? If you interact with people they will tell you.

(J) What is keeping you from going out and interacting with people?

(1) Nothing. Because I come from a poor family so I use to stay back from the initiative to do something, that will hurt me and I will not have somebody to back me. So it has become part of me, so it is not easy for me to go out of that frame.

(J) Yes but this is a challenge that you have to face, that in spite of your background that you come from a poor family, you are achieving a lot in life.

(1) Yes.

(J) Much more than the people who are rich and they do not manage to do one course, let alone all that..... You should acknowledge that.

(1) Of course, of course, but now I find it very difficult, not that I am not free. Even this guy (4), they know me and I know all of them here but I never talk to them. It is not if you talk to me I do not reply because I am very friendly, I immediately talk to you and I will become friend to you. Anytime I see you, I talk to you we do whatever, but to have the intention to come to you no. I never go to people's house. That is my problem.

(J) What encouraged you to continue with your studies here at MCAST? What did you find encouraging?

(1) But not here at MCAST. What encourages me to study here? When I look back at home, that is what I started with, with what they are pursuing and I am here. So let me here start doing things for the rest of my life. In the future I will go back home and see these guys, they will all be at the top with big ties, big offices. Then what is the meaning of me that becomes useless. I mean like the way we started in the same class together. Due to my background level, whatever happened some of them now are nurses, some of them are doctors, some engineers whatever it may be. So I am also trying to pursue my call tomorrow. They may not see me to be by them, they will see me coming up, coming home with a foreign certificate which would supersede what they have. So that is my target, it might happen, I am not keen on what I see at MCAST, no my mind is not here in Malta because I know what I am doing, my mind is outside here.

(J) So you are living for the moment to go back.

(1) Yes I am living for that moment that is my focus. My focus is to get my degree next year and if I will get an opportunity, I will top up my degree to get the warrant. Then I will move back home to settle there.

(J) To get the warrant of what?

(1) Of Engineering because here at MCAST they do not give one.

(J) And you would need engineering to build a hospital.

(1) Yes of course.

(J) Ok in your opinion what would be the ideal world for you as migrant learner?

(1) I already said in my land there are a lot of challenges you face and even if not in my comfort for such if I put it at direct for us, you are not from such a country and you are there, because

there are so many things you will not get it like the citizens. So once you are there, you will face a lot of challenges that try to be a key point to try to distract you or something like that. But for me I have in life when I intend to do something, I do not see what is distracting me, I put my focus on what that plan is and try to achieve it. Whatever is the distraction, I do not care because to achieve it would be my target.

(J) Ok, if you had to choose what would you choose in an ideal world?

(1) Exams are important so no how can you go to school and achieve a certificate without exams? Nobody wants it, nobody. Do you see someone having a certificate without exams? You need to fight for it that is why it is mine, which is why they give the certificate to the individual. They do not present the same certificate to everybody. You all get the certificate in the name of the school but due to your performance. So you need to work hard.

(J) So what is the ideal world for you?

(1) The ideal world is to work hard to achieve your target, your aim because school is a challenge. You are in challenge with your friends because you want to get an upper qualification. Then that makes you study more and in a special way.

(J) Do you think everyone would want to go higher, go upper?

(1) Of course, those who are serious like me who want to achieve.

(J) But all of them would strive, struggle to continue, or they give up some of them and some of them remain there?

(1) I cannot because I remember those who started with the Foundation, all Maltese, they all drop out. I think only four remained and only me as foreigner just completed the higher level HND. One foreign lady is also going for HND this year I think but the rest all of them dropped out. But there is a challenge, there are some Maltese guys who are very serious and they are very, very serious. They know what they are doing and those who do not know what they are doing, they take it for granted. And you cannot do that, they just come for the certificate but put in the next level. So I do not see what my friends are doing now, working for money or what. Let me just .... Recently I worked for this job, this one I got it €20,000 just recently I went for the job and I was waiting for the certificate for improving on my salary but that is not my target. My target is to achieve because you cannot use your eye to see what would the bottle, you have to close one. So if you try to love money at the moment and to study is difficult, you cannot – either you drop one or the other, you need to choose.

(J) What did you find encouraging in pursuing with your future plans at college? You told me that you are focused. At college who / what encouraged you?

(1) I find encouragement due to my friends but they are moving, they never stop and I cannot stop. We need to compete together, we need to achieve and keep together and that is my target.

(J) Regarding the system and staff, did you find something encouraging?

(1) Yes of course it is encouraging. It is a good institution, the lecturers are good and I cannot say anything wrong about them. When they see you they talk to you and take you to what you

want. But at least they do their best to support how they can do to support the students as every lecturer does. They do their best and when they see you, they ask what they can do to help you. They are always ready to help and guide you to the right way to achieve your success and that is it, what else?

(J) Outside MCAST did you find any encouragement and support?

(1) Here in Malta I do not have any support however that does not discourage me to stop from what I am doing because I am convinced of what I am doing. After all I have already achieved and what I am today, I am a migrant and I have an office here in Malta. I am working in the office and not working as a cleaner. Who knows tomorrow if I finish with the degree, who knows what will happen and what about if I go for Masters and I go for my PhD in Malta or elsewhere. You may not know my level or standard so I cannot discourage myself because I am a migrant. If I am a migrant my talent is not a migrant. I am a migrant fine, I came here illegally, but I have adapted in a way to integrate. I want to integrate myself fully into the society.

(J) Do you feel that you are integrated?

(1) Yes of course I feel integrated, if you find education you will be lucky. Without education it is difficult, it is hard to understand because you always take it to be the hardest thing. Every educator finds it easy to live in every community but if one lacks education sometimes in fact they start complaining. Every complainant doesn't achieve his target because to focus and work hard to achieve, stops and complains, who will then do the work, so you need to do it yourself. I am a foreigner; I cannot expect the Maltese to start treating me how they want to treat their people. I am a foreigner so I need to come and again I need to understand each other. If I wonder that it is very difficult and I need to understand them first.

(J) And do you feel you have the space at the same time to live the way you want?

(1) That is why I am telling you this. At the moment my parents are not here, my family is not here. I cannot get what I want, what I am doing today is what and how I want to live tomorrow. So I am working to achieve hard what I want to live tomorrow. Even if I do not achieve it, my children will not live the way I lived. They will live their best way. That is my target.

(J) In your opinion what would be the ideal world for you as a migrant learner? An ideal world.

(1) I think I answered this question before. For me I do not see the ideal world because you need to, for everything you need to work hard for yourself. Though things are different here at the moment, but that doesn't make you put yourself down, beat up yourself and start crying. No if you have problems and start crying, you will cry and cry and the next morning the problems are not solved. You need to stop and get up, getting up to find a way of solving the problems. When you start, how you start to make an improvement you see a lot of people try to support you. But if you start crying nobody will come and start to support you. You need to start looking for the support. You need to start and find a solution.

(J) So basically what you are telling me is that you need to take action, you take lead of your life.

(1) My life, I do not say or look for the ideal world. If what you will give me today will not let me benefit, get what I am looking for in this life. I am not in it because I know how to plan my life and I know how I want to live my life, the ideal world in the future. But here in Malta I do not know how it would be the ideal world for me, unless I achieve what I am looking for. Then I will see the ideal world for me. But for now I cannot rest on the ideal world, to transfer the ideal world into inspiration for me to live my life in an ideal one. I only look for support from them but it does not make my world ideal. It depends, the world will be ideal when I want it to be ideal, it depends on me to make it ideal and not anybody else.

(J) What would you like to see happening within the Maltese community to help you in reaching your future aims? Even not at the moment but maybe in the past like two years ago. When you arrived what would you have liked to see happening in the Maltese community to not necessarily you but people like you who end up on our shores and they would like to make a future?

(1) No that is what I told you, nobody will make you feel the way you want to feel until you want to feel the way you want to feel. You need to get up and start to make an improvement for people to let you feel the way you want to feel. When I came I had reject, I didn't have any documents, I had nothing and after a year they told me if you go to school you need to pay because you do not have documents. I went to Fr Philip in Valletta and he told me if you want to go to school you need to pay because you do not have documents. I said no problem, I ignored both of them, I went to University and Mr Attard gave me that advice, I came here, I went to administration to apply and they told me to go to the Minister of Education. I went to the Minister of Education to apply for an exemption. I went there and asked me if I was working. I said yes and then they told me to give them the FS3. I gave it to them and the next month they sent a reply, they sent it to me free from, exemption from tuition fee but only pays what Maltese students pay. Do you think if I sat down and looked for somebody from all these catholic organisations and others, if who helps me would give me this kind of offer? How do you think it will improve my life if I myself did not get up and sit on the seat looking at them to tell me what to do? You need to get up if you want to feel better in every society, you need to fight out, nobody knows your mind and what you, if just looking for this thing, you are not safe there, you may not know how serious it is to the individual. You will get it as a joke as it comes to you but as I am living it, I know how I feel. You understand so I need to keep from you observing time for you to be aware that I am experiencing such realities. Establishing what I want but not being a complainant, I do not complain for nothing, I do what I can to achieve what I want.

(J) Basically what you are saying is resilience, be focused on what you want to do and strive for that irrespective of what happens.

(1) If I listened to JRS or Fr Philip, I would have completed HND this year? I would not, I would have still be cleaning, doing my cleaning, but now this certificate have raised me up with the Maltese who have HND. If you count the Maltese HND society, I am part of them, and if I am part of them I really have done my part. So what concerns me now is the issue of the certificate. Is MCAST going to write on the certificate that I am an illegal immigrant? They will give me an MCAST certificate. So what is the difference, I am going to receive an MCAST certificate for everywhere I go on this earth, what I fought for, what I studied for, what I have worked for you have given me and it is my knowledge. Nothing is done for that, looking for people, looking for people to tell me 'no no I do not do that in my life, I do not do that, I come

from a very very poor family' and so I have come up to this level. If I tell nobody would believe, nobody nobody.

(J) But it is possible.

(1) I started education with the attitude that nobody taking care of me, nobody. I grew up, I started education in 1996 and as you can see I grew up before starting going to school. I was at the age of 10, 11 or 13 years when I started school. I wasn't myself at secondary school; I struggled and studied without support of any one; so for me it is normal. Because of that experience, I do not see anything difficult.

(J) You are not used to someone holding your hand.

(1) No no I have been used to it from day one with my own effort to this day so I do not see why I should sit down and complain.

(J) Ok what would you like to see happening within the Maltese community to help you in reaching your future aims? I mean all the help would be appreciated. Ok you will achieve your aims but any help that is available I am sure you would appreciate it.

(1) Yes of course.

(J) So what kind of help you think you would .....

(1) For me if for instance .....

(J) And for other migrant learners not necessarily you.

(1) Yes I know but for me what is most necessary for me, if possible, accommodation is number one for me, accommodation and that is it, I am ok 100% even for the people in the course and to study for their period. I am ok, I do not need because I work, I get money and I do not like to depend on people because if you depend on someone, you do not have to think. If you live your life, if you live independent who controls you because you do not take care of me so you cannot control me but if someone buys food for you today, tomorrow you buy me, he is coming again, I do not like that way so I am always independent. I was independent right from my childhood up to this day, not at this point outside at the expense of other people; no I do not do that. But for me I would like if the community can do something better to support other migrants' to influence other migrants, to try to bring them on board, to try to teach them and make them understand the full integration into the society. For me I will be more appreciative, for me I understand what I am doing, but what about my friend who doesn't know and because of him they can use the hatred they have on him because of his illiterate behaviour or his incapability of doing certain things to transfer from them onto me which I may not like but if there would be a strategy to try to, to try to bring those people, there will be advertisement: Migrant Maltese feeling like going to school, the government will support you doing things like that. Like that it could be better because the young ones like the guy who spoke before me (P. 4), he is a Somalian, he cannot even speak English well, but he has the conscious, he wants to achieve his targets. There are some out there, they are very clever, but they say I do not have support, how can I study and do this? But there is nothing easy on this earth. I use to tell them, to achieve something you need to work hard, you need to sweat. You cannot sit down and someone brings the food to you, no because

this is title. If I study the title is in my name, not in your name. Everyone does things differently, see differently even we compete together; once study is done we don't sit together anymore. We are no more friends, you do what you want and I do what I want because it is a title.

(J) What would you like to see happening further at college to help you in reaching your future aims? I mean at the moment you are treated like Maltese students.

(1) Yes of course.

(J) But to make life easier for migrant learners here at college, what would you like to see happening?

(1) I think those who have full documents they should receive a stipend from the government. Again they provide accommodation but for me I do not have documents so my problem is different from those.

(J) Why you do not have documents?

(1) I told you I have a reject.

(J) No from your country.

(1) No on the desert they took everything, you understand. So those who have them, they are better. So for me my aim is to finish my course, the next two years the degree and find a way to go back and start my entrepreneurship business and find a way if I can do my Masters in my country. Then I continue with my Masters and if my business is established then I can study outside for the PhD. That is my target, that is my dream.

(J) Wish you luck with your targets. Wish you every success.

(1) Thank you.

(J) And thank you for finding the time to come here. Thank you, thank you very much.

## David P. 2

(J) Today's session is the last session and it is about our future. The first question is, 'What are your plans for the future?'

(2) My plans are to achieve my goals because presently I am studying and if possible I want to push myself into finish my school. Then I will start work or maybe I continue till doctorate, my school.

(J) In which area do you intend to study?

(2) I am doing Health Sciences so I am going to be nursing or else maybe I am thinking of nursing or medicine, medical, something else, I forgot now. Anyway there is one Medicine.

(J) A course you mean at University?

(2) Yes, yes, but the problem is I am focusing to be, to do nursing first.

(J) From this year we are offering a nursing degree course here, so your future plans are to continue your studies in the field of health and nursing.

(2) Yes and when I finish maybe I will try to study like chemical engineering because I am willing to investigate on my own some medicine.

(J) Interesting.

(2) In fact my father is a pharmacist and he has experience in natural medicine from the land so if I take this knowledge, I can do something.

(J) Good, good. How would you rate the chance of reaching your future aims?

(2) To be honest I do not know exactly because the situation is like you know, it is making us busy, difficult because we push everything on our own. When we come to our situation, how we live, how we rent and with the money we are planning to put save for example for things of the programme we are going to start at school. It is very difficult for example saving the money and, I am not saying this only to myself because I have more experience with a lot of students, foreign students. We are finding it difficult so I mean it is very difficult to achieve but most of the people who never give up, I mean they will achieve the goal that they want. But the situation is not easy.

(J) So if you had to rate the chance of reaching your aims, where would you see yourself, more on the achieving side or more on the failing side?

(2) The achieving side.

(J) The achieving side, ok.

(2) Always because if I do something I want to credit and I want to learn something else and I always ..... my father use to tell me, 'You are always achieving boy.'

(J) An achiever.

(2) Yes an achiever because I always try new things to learn, so yes I always end saying to my mind 'When am I the people who helped me, when I am going to give back something of what they did for me?' I have to do something for them as well. Do I do enough, something for them? You know I always receive but I need to give my happiness to the people who helped me.

(J) Ok. What did you find discouraging in pursuing your future plans, both at college and outside? What were the difficulties, the challenges, the problems that you had to face in pursuing, in continuing with your plans?

(2) Just for example when we come to the school, there is nothing you do not do on your own for example in the class or teamwork, going to placement, the people, it is not really the people, those who are working, you are working with them, they are not expecting you exactly the way how it should be because of our skin or because we are foreigners. That makes you feel a bit down because when you come to work in a team it is a bit enough to put you down. Also the language! If we are one group speaking for example like my experience this year - I learnt a lot of things when we come to just like work in a group, class work or in practical sessions - most people they communicated by using the Maltese language. Always they do not put in their mind the foreign students, they do not easy there are foreigners with us, they do not think about it. They do not care about you to be honest.

(J) But do you think they do it, or let me rephrase – Why do you think they act in such a way?

(2) I do not know. It is not because of them; it is because they do not integrate with the other people for most of the time. Well I understand some people are racist, they do not like to mix. But most of the people act in such a way not because they are racist, but because they do not have relationships with foreigners or other students. Even the EU stated that some are finding it difficult because they only know Maltese students, maybe neighbour students just like Maltese students. But when it comes to, because when you work in a team you have to discuss everything, you have to understand, you have to tell, you have to share your knowledge, learning and teaching in the group. And this is a great weakness in the Maltese society; I do not know to be exactly to say this racism or not. From what I understood it is not saying 100% it is racism, no. Some people, some students you find them very kind, they are trying as much as possible to help you as well. So this is because they never integrated with foreign people for a long time. That is the problem.

(J) This is interesting; I agree with you that probably they do it not because they are racist but maybe because it is easier.

(2) We take it maybe you know because we cannot judge and put the position of racist because on the other side you find people who understand you.

(J) But they find it easy for example to express themselves in Maltese. So it would be very daunting on them to speak English all the time because of a foreigner who speaks English. And they would refuse to work with that person, the foreign student maybe for this reason and not because they are racist. Could be ehh, not necessarily, but it could be.

(2) Because just ..... I wanted to say something out of our interview.

(J) Ok.

(2) Just one time I was in Germany and I found it difficult to just go to the hotel where to sleep because I do not speak German and I met one girl, she was an adult like 24 years, and I asked her – ‘I have been here like for a week and not even 1% talk to me in English from Germany and why the people are so serious? And she replied that not because the people are racist, some people are very positive people but they are shy and they are very comfortable to express themselves by their own language. When they come to English they are afraid, shy of making mistakes. That is what she told me, I mean that is what I understood so we say it maybe that.

(J) What did you find difficult in pursuing with your future plans at college, what were the main challenges? You already mentioned one, you said like when working in a group. Anything else that you found, anything else that you found difficult at college?

(2) At College maybe there is also like some persons, including the lecturers as well, ..... Some lecturers they are very good, they are trying as much as possible, they are helping the students, but there are some they do not really care about the students, they just run up. If the colleagues speak Maltese always and we raise our hand and ask, ‘Miss, can you translate that please?’ Because they are always running with the Maltese, they do this and I am in the class to learn something, they need to understand me as well.

(J) What about your Maltese?

(2) Maltese yes because I can integrate with people, I am fine, but when I come to something serious, I have to know, I have to learn it by heart. But in that situation I prefer English, you know.

(J) Because you can express yourself better in English than in Maltese.

(2) Yes, yes but in Maltese as well. For example when I am working in summer I was seeing people who do not speak English. I speak with them in Maltese but that is something you can do by action. People so understand us, but when you come to something serious you have to learn it. If the teacher she explains about exams by using the Maltese, if I miss something that is crucial and makes me that I have to ask her to explain again in English. That is why she has to explain in English from the beginning. In few years I will be fluent in Maltese as well.

(J) So besides some of the lecturers and the issue of language, some of the students refuse to do group work with foreign students.

(2) Also with the College we find it difficult the language as well because our position in the College is very different because our language is a great weakness. The level we are and the lecturers, they are going a bit different so these also kind of find it difficult the students, it is not only me. Some students like me they do find it difficult with the language as well because when the teacher comes to explain, for example she wants to explain something in a hurry, if you do not understand the language you know, you do not follow them that easy. Also we are not geared in English we need at College, there are no proper English lessons at College.

(J) So you would have appreciated proper lessons in English.

(2) To have more English lessons yes.

(J) And when in the lower classes, in the Foundation or across?

(2) I mean for example last year they made a mistake because we just had the lesson one hour a week and the lecturer to be honest maybe the lecturer she was sick, she was absent, she has children and she had to look after them, she always took it easy. We reported about that how many times, twenty times because I was saying – this is something that is making us weak, it is a weakness, we were not getting a proper lesson you know and we were in library for the lesson of English. But it should be in the Foundation and provide very strong lessons in English so that everyone would improve on his/her English.

(J) By the LSU staff of the Learning Support Unit?

(2) Yes that is a supporting unit, for example students who start at the Foundation College particularly levels 1 and 2, if they give them properly English lessons, they do not have proper English and when they come diploma level 3 and advanced diploma level 4 they will find it very helpful and in a good position. This is also a great weakness at college; I mean I am done from Foundation. I am saying this because something has to change for the people who come after me. Even the Maltese, I am very surprised, they do not speak English, they do not understand English.

(J) So this is something not only of foreign students, it is of Maltese as well.

(2) Yes sure, they have to do something not because of foreigners; they have to do something for the Maltese as well. Because if they do understand, they will get more, they learn more English language until the level is reached. This should be something that the college should work upon.

(J) And what about outside MCAST, what are the challenges that you had to face outside MCAST?

(2) Outside MCAST we just find it with the society, with the people for example going somewhere, finding job, go somewhere like an employment office or anything where you get information. This kind of treating you, they are not, I am not saying 100% here to put the position of persons. No they do 50% at least this kind of situation so it is not easy to find a job, it is not easy to integrate with anyone so maybe if you find some people are educated you find them anywhere, you do understand, they will be probably understanding. But the people in general it is not easy to integrate with them. This makes you maybe how and till when you are staying. For example if your neighbour does not understand you, you will always have a question on your mind who are they these people. I am not commenting, I felt it but one neighbour last year he had been there like four years, two neighbours they do not even when they saw us in front of the door, we say hello good morning, good afternoon, they do not even reply for the greeting, you know.

(J) What do you think it would be the reason?

(2) The reason kind of maybe racism nothing else because the person who had been living there for years, they should know everything, if he is bad or good you know. For example if I am bad to you maybe I am good to someone else, sorry to say that.

(J) No it is ok.

(2) I am not always a bad person, I am not always a good person because we are humans, we do mistakes, we do some bad things and some good things but you know we cannot change anything. Maybe to change it will take time hopefully and pray so.

(J) Ok. What did you find encouraging in pursuing with your future plans at college? What and who encouraged you at college?

(2) At college mostly the Head of College, and secondly the foreign students. I mean they have to fight for themselves, they have to speak out.

(J) Today we had a meeting with Spark 15.

(2) Yes I know but something happened and I just asked them to be excused, I couldn't do it.

(J) Who encouraged you at MCAST? You said the Head, is it the Principal Mr Cachia?

(2) Yes, anyone and also members of staff have to be for example .... But at MCAST to be honest I am not seeing that very central because the person who is in charge, looking after students, if you report something, you will not get immediate results and this is because kind of losing control. I should get for example, if I tell you, report to my boss, for example a problem with my work.

(J) You do not see immediate action and reply.

(2) No there is no, until you get tired and report ten times you know? You do not even get good results from them.

(J) Do you have such experience personally?

(2) Yes I did.

(J) What kind of .....

(2) I just had one lesson I found it difficult and I reported four times and I didn't get any replies. I guess I will be quiet and I left then. I stopped it to report again because there is no kind of .....

(J) And nothing happened?

(2) Nothing happened. This is something that needs to be changed. When you do something, you are not ....., you want to gain something so this should change.

(J) And how do you feel about this? Ok let me rephrase. Do you think that it is being done like that because you reported or even if other Maltese would have reported it would have been the same? Did you understand my question?

(2) Yes I do. The problem is that I didn't have had that experience with for example of finding it difficult in explaining and writing notes because they are helping each other. The students ask by Maltese if they do not understand something, or ask someone. But to ask some Maltese students, you know, they do not probably understand me. They are not because they are not good friends, good colleagues to working together with Maltese. If you, maybe the Maltese students report, maybe they will get, not immediately, they will get a good result.

(J) So basically what you are saying is a form of discrimination that for Maltese action is taken, but foreigners or us migrant learners, we are not given the proper attention.

(2) Yes yes.

(J) Did I understand well?

(2) Yes that is what I meant.

(J) And what about outside MCAST? Outside MCAST, the place where you live, the locality and Malta in general?

(2) In general as I said before, something, you do find the people who do not understand or they do not want to understand you. But most people they do understand and I mean where we go, there is something important, place or office or school or university or hospital and this is it, they are still treating you, they are still giving help but because, you know, they do it because of law you know.

(J) Ehh ok.

(2) So the law forces them to do. I saw it. Some people they do not want to help you exactly but they are doing it because of the government. Even they work for the government, they do not have control, they do whatever they like.

(J) So their behaviour is controlled because of the law.

(2) That is only what they are doing. Not because exactly they understand that you are a human being. If they can they will throw you out; they help you because of the law. I am not saying this in general because some people, you find people who would understand you.

(J) Mind you here in Malta racism is illegal so no one can act in a racist way.

(2) But that is why they do not want to show their action in the position of racism. If you report them maybe they do something on the person, you know that is why they hide themselves hard when they do something in under how they can.

(J) Ok. What did you find encouraging in pursuing with your future plans at college? Who encouraged you and how? At college, what, and who encouraged you? Did you find any encouragement at college, if yes by whom? Encouragement is help / support.

(2) To be honest in the beginning I did not find any encouragement, any support, in fact I started school and five months later I gave up and stopped because I found it difficult at MCAST and with the social problems, I didn't have work. I got some money from social and I didn't have any money income. When I started school, the social benefits, they use to give me €300 a month, they stopped it once I started and I didn't have any other money income. I used to have some money saved from before and I was just spending with the rent, with the food, with the stuff and with the transport. When that money finished, I had to give up my schooling.

(J) So what you are saying, if I understood you correctly is that the financial aspect is something that discourages migrant learners.

(2) Yes ehhe.

(J) The financial situation, but now we are going to focus on what encouraged you here at MCAST.

(2) I got some experience and it is varied, a bit my language, my experience, my personality and you know I always see something good, I keep it to understand you. They want to see you in good position, they push you up and I saw a lot of help in this regard. I saw a lot at MCAST and outside people telling me that I have to push myself up, work hard you know.

(J) And do you appreciate that?

(2) Yes of course, I am very appreciative kind of in the advice of the people.

(J) And outside college did you find any support and help?

(2) Yes outside I found good one, I think you know Fr Savio.

(J) Ehhe.

(2) He is a bit supportive re where I live. I also help during the weekend with the residents who live with him and yes he does support me. Yes there are social workers for the residents who live there. Sometimes I speak to them about my problems and they try to solve what they can and when they cannot I try to find someone else.

(J) Ok. So even at the place where you live you find this encouragement. In your opinion what would be the ideal world for you as a migrant learner? What would be the ideal, the best world? If you had to choose to make the life of migrant learners more smooth, more easy, more .....

(2) The choice to study and also I wish to see people who come up to me and also out to advance, people to come to school and to learn, to integrate with the Maltese because some people they are uneducated, they just see, if you ask someone, they do not give you answer properly, they say Maltese persons. This is because the migrant people also, there are some uneducated people because if you live next, at the side of one person and you go to the other person, that person may be more positive. A lot of migrants say that the Maltese are not good persons. They say that because out of four, one, two, three people they find it, maybe the fourth person would be a good person, positive person, I mean kind people, I want to give advice, to tell them to integrate with the Maltese society so .....

(J) How can we get more migrants here at college?

(2) Maybe through giving more advice and .....

(J) Where?

(2) At the open centres, Marsa, B'Kara and Hal Far.

(J) B'Kara there is an open centre as well?

(2) Yes it is where we met with the President, at her palace.

(J) Ahh yes, 'Dar Merhba Bik' for the families.

(2) Families, but they call it something else that area.

(J) Balzan.

(2) Yes Balzan, and there you do find some people and also maybe you can ask like Minister of Education. There is one person Fr Philip, his office is in Valletta, and I saw a lot of people going there and ask for English and Maltese lessons. But they do not give them proper lessons, like for one month or two months' lessons.

(J) Short courses.

(2) Short courses, maybe one hour or two hours a week. This kind of thing helps you to learn something but they do not have the chance because they find it difficult with the situation and find it difficult with the information. This kind of, they need, we have to work hard, we have to try before them because no one, nobody understand their situation. However maybe when you tell and tell again and again maybe they will accept you.

(J) Ok. So the ideal world for a migrant, in your opinion would be that they will be accepted.

(2) Yes for example I am sitting, if I achieve my goal and stand it, see where I stand. Yesterday I was like you, and today I am up here because I didn't give up, I worked hard. If you work hard you will achieve, you have to work hard to achieve, I mean to give this kind of advice, to encourage them to come to school.

(J) What would you like to see happening within the Maltese community to help you in reaching your future aims? What would you like to see happening?

(2) If it is possible, making group or organise like the Maltese Society, Migrant, Refugee Society, people can come together making like conference, meeting.

(J) Today we discussed an activity for MCAST maybe in November and we are going to call it 'Diversity Day', an activity full of events to show that at MCAST we have fifty or sixty different Nationalities. And someone said maybe we prepare some food, different kinds of food of different countries. Others said we will print the flags of different countries and leave them in the Youth Hub to show the different Nationalities that we have at College. So that can be something that we can work on.

(2) Yes that is why we have to have the Maltese people on our side, I mean the people to understand because last couple of weeks ago once they organised, it was called 'Mooney'. They invited me to go and I wonder if the people understood me. They were young like me and it was an example on how to have fun. And we have to do some activities that interest people, it is not only in MCAST but outside MCAST as well.

(J) I totally agree. And what else would you like to see happening in the Maltese community to help you reaching your future aims?

(2) We cannot, we need a lot of things but we cannot get what we want immediately. We have to push, we have to work hard and we have to integrate with the Maltese. But the integration it will

take time, it needs time, it needs patience you know. A lot of people they push out, they do not want to understand you. If you ask one question they just throw you an answer and change.

(J) But going back to what we discussed, do you think that that attitude is because you are a foreigner, or because you have dark skin, or it could be that even Maltese sometimes are treated that way?

(2) It is kind of because maybe because most probably, if you are an active person and you are not lazy but you work hard, you will get more support and understanding from people. But in this kind of situation you need to work hard, you have to push yourself as much as possible to integrate with the society.

(J) So the solution according to what you are saying is resilience, very resilient and never give up but keep on trying.

(2) Most people they believe in colours as well sorry. From what I understand in the Maltese society, I mean I visited Europe like four countries; they do not really care what you look like. They just understand your personality, where you go, accept you in many parts in Europe, they understand you if you say something in the meeting or school because they just understand the personality, you are human. But in Malta they believe in the skin, most people they believe in the skin colour. I mean from my experience this year, I have one student in class from the EU, and we are three foreigners from different countries. If you want to ask some students from my class mates, they are giving me some face to me. From face what I can understand is that they do not want to help me. But the EU guy they call him to join them and help him, you know. If they see him sitting alone, they call him to come and sit with them, but if I sit next to them, they do not want. No one talks to me so this kind of attitude is because of the skin.

(J) So it is some form of discrimination but do you make a difference between discrimination and racism? Do you make a difference between them discrimination and racism?

(2) It is kind of the same, you know because, if some person push you, what you are, is making on you discrimination.

(J) But I think that racism is something, an attitude that keeps on repeating itself, it is not a one off. Discriminate , you can discriminate once like someone comes and tells you, 'Go out, I do not want to talk to you,' but then the following day he says, 'Come in and have a seat.'

(2) No but this is kind of racism because we spent whole year and I still hold the place where I came in October and June. Last June it is like I am new like when I came in.

(J) Not to excuse this behaviour because I do not agree with it but believe me that there are Maltese who are going through this as well. Like being ignored, no one talks to them, and these are Maltese.

(2) Yes, yes, hopefully it will change, and I do not know because this is something I am experiencing. We are about 26 students in class, just to start in a week I do not know if one of my classmates is 21 or 23, she always speaks to me because come on we are one, we have to understand each other.

(J) You spend a lot of time together.

(2) And I only saw that girl from 23 students.

(J) OK. What would you like to see happening further at college to help you in reaching your future aims? What would you like to see in concrete terms happening at college to make the lives of migrant learners coming to college easier in the future?

(2) First the college has to educate, I mean they have to control the school, they have to tell them, they have to give them advice, we are one, and we have to accept different faces. And we have to help each other. If the students report something they have to give immediate answer. Because that is why, I reported the things that were happening regularly, I also reported them regularly but if I would not get an answer, I will give up. The teacher for example is not giving me the proper lesson and I will report him, I am not improving the lesson which he is giving me ehh. And I want to stop the school, this kind of people, the foreigners, the students push back. This should be changed and worked out.

(J) Is there anything else that you would like to see happening at college? You mentioned activities as well.

(2) Activities should be in MCAST and out of MCAST as well, somewhere like central and I want to see it more to integrate with them the Maltese and they should believe us. These kind of activities, they give you more clarity to understand the foreign people as well, how they are, the reaction of final students. If I come to you and I just stay sitting down boring, some people say but if I can be an active person and I was showing up in good activities, showing good smiling, you do understand. This kind of happening when we do some kind of activity and not only MCAST, outside MCAST we have included Maltese students with us in fact we celebrated last Friday with Spark 15 Maltese Sudanese community, some Sudanese, some Maltese community and society. They came to us about 13 people, some lecturers they came from University. It was really great celebrating and we had a lot of fun. We understand each other. We have to do more kind of activities.

(J) Ok. I think that is it. Is there anything else that you would like to see happening at college?

(2) In general I want to see more foreigners, I mean more. Where we are, I am not very comfortable with the general situation in the college. I want to see more and more students and that they will feel comfortable and integrate with the Maltese society. I do not know but I will be happy if I will be here next year or not but I want to see, hopefully for the future, the people who come after me, the Maltese society have to integrate with them, refugees, migrant students.

(J) Thank you very much. That was very interesting.

### Nagi P. 3

(J) During the last session we discussed the present. Now this is the concluding session and we are going to discuss the future and the first question is, 'What are your plans for the future?'

(3) Quite complicated question but so far I am planning to further my education, get a solid knowledge that can help me in my future to obtain a good job and at the same time I can be able to help others as well with my earnings.

(J) And when you say solid education, what do you mean?

(3) Yes furthering my education to a degree level and now I had a link with the University of Malta and I am doing a session which would allow me to go to University in 2018.

(J) So after the level 4 what do you intend to do, go to University?

(3) Yes.

(J) Ok. And what do you see yourself doing when you further your studies?

(3) I will do the same like when I had started at MCAST, firstly the course I will follow would be Electrical and Electronics because I love this area since my childhood and it is a four year course to obtain a bachelor in Electronics. Then after that I will apply for a job here in Malta or where can be possible to work.

(J) So you consider even other countries, not necessarily Malta.

(3) No not necessarily Malta even I prefer other countries as well.

(J) Such as .....

(3) Priority is if I can go to Sudan and work there. If there is no chance I prefer to go to any other stable country. No specific one.

(J) Ok. How would you rate the chance of reaching your future aims?

(3) Out of how much?

(J) Out of ten for example, how would you rate?

(3) I cannot say, maybe 7.5.

(J) Ehhe 7.5 which is quite positive. Good. And what did you find discouraging in pursuing, in continuing with your future plans at college, I mean at MCAST and outside MCAST? What discouraged you at college for example?

(3) Financial, the financial.

(J) Financial support.

(3) That is the main thing. But there are others, the meeting of family, then homesick and stuff like that. But the main is the financial.

(J) And at MCAST is there anything in particular that discouraged you?

(3) So far I cannot see something that discouraged me at MCAST because all was positive so far.

(J) Like you have never suffered from any form of differentiated treatment?

(3) I can say honestly that at MCAST never experienced any differentiated treatment. Actually as I said in my previous interviews sometimes the lecturers are in my favour. I had remembered that at Foundation they gave me an extra course in order to solidify my English language. They are quite helpful, many lecturers who are there are quite helpful. Some lecturers I guess moved from Foundation with them but they are still, I have contact with them. Sometimes they invite me to their house; sometimes we share an evening out and things like that.

(J) So you are supported, that is good very positive.

(3) Yes.

(J) And outside MCAST, the population in general, do you find any discouraging attitude towards you that would not encourage you to continue your studies?

(3) Just here in Malta to be honest, the people here they judge before they get to know you and that is what sometimes discourages you. They do not know you well yes from what they have in their background, they just call you black. Even to go to school and obtain your degree as I mentioned before and then there is some discouragement. Some people say this guy, he is just like the others. But I do not listen to them since I know myself well.

(J) When you say others why is there a bad reputation against others?

(3) Always here there is a bad reputation about migrants, especially migrants. When they hear the word migrant, they always bring the bad things, ignorance, poverty and others such goes on. And it is always the bad reputation that is there. It is very difficult to break that bad reputation, first of all you have to be there until you prove them wrong and it will take time.

(J) What did you find encouraging in pursuing with your future plans? You have already mentioned some at college like lecturers. Is there anything else that you found encouraging at MCAST?

(3) What encouraged me at MCAST besides the lecturers and the environment is the syllabus there because at MCAST you can finish one year and you will obtain the certification of that year not like other courses where you have to finish five years or four years and then you will get the degree/certificate. So here one/two years and you will get it. Sometimes you will go through difficult situations but since you know the year is just about to finish, then you will push on until you make it.

(J) That would encourage you?

(3) Yes.

(J) So you find the system adopted by MCAST is very encouraging.

(3) Yes very encouraging because if it wasn't based by year or two with graduation, then you will see three years is too much and you will drop from the school.

(J) So, if I am understanding well, rather than seeing it a big thing that you have to work through so many small pieces, you like the fact that you can build them up and at the end you will obtain the big thing – building one on top of the other. Ok and what about outside college? What encouraged you?

(3) My friends, some of them they really encourage me and support me financially. Some of them they do not have a chance to study and they are working. Sometimes they give me some pocket money when I run out of money. And as mentioned in the second interview, there is a woman, she is my foster mother right now, and she always encourages me, always giving me the positive stuff and always keeping me in her plan.

(J) And when you say friends, are they all from Sudan or what?

(3) My friends are from different areas but most of them they are from Sudan.

(J) And do you have Maltese friends?

(3) I have Maltese friends and I have European friends, friends from all over the world. Since I am an easy going man I just make friends.

(J) And you do not distinguish, the fact that they are friends, they all help out, they are all supportive?

(3) They are all supportive and the most important thing is that they are supportive without expecting something in return.

(J) Ok.

(3) Sometimes you will find one who lends you money but then he would expect something. But my friends are always doing it not to expect anything out of it, just helping.

(J) That is good, good to hear that. Ok, in your opinion what would be the ideal world for you as a migrant learner? The ideal world?

(3) Can you explain to me because I didn't understand?

(J) In your opinion what would it be the ideal world? The ideal world would be a world without problems where everything is perfect as a migrant learner. So if you had to choose what would you list as top priority so that migrant learners would not find life difficult?

(3) The system, the system of, if we are in particular focusing on Malta, the system of Malta sometimes it is discouraging for the young migrant to continue with his/her education. Previously I had my friend who just dropped out of the school because he suffers from paying his fees. He applied for an exemption but his request has been rejected since he doesn't have any kind of

documentation and his protection here is temporary protection. And the fee for him, it was going to be too much, €6,500, he couldn't afford and he left the country, because of that he left the country. Now he is living in France.

(J) So what would be the ideal, what was needed for this guy to remain here?

(3) What was needed was just to have equal opportunities like all other students.

(J) Ok, what would you like to see happening within the Maltese community to help you in reaching your future aims?

(3) Just to stop judging but it is very difficult to let people think according to your wish. But if I have a wish I would say that they must stop judging someone without knowing him because they say, do not judge a book by its cover.

(J) And when you are saying judging, judging on what?

(3) Judging on bad reputations.

(J) So if I am understanding well some of the Maltese, because not all of them I think, some of the Maltese, when they see a coloured person they judge and say they are all the same, those they are .... I do not know.

(3) First thing when one sees a migrant or coloured person, the first thing they say is that he is ignorant, he is fool, he is ...., he doesn't understand even life and then all migrants are in that situation. And I am not saying that all Maltese are doing this judgement but the majority of them on the street you saw them. But a large number of people - and I met a lot in my life - they are really nice people as well.

(J) Ok. What would you like to see happening further at college to help you in reaching your future aims?

(3) For the college, I think this is related to the Education Department to sort out the issue of stipends. Now I think, if it is not all, most of the migrants they do not have a stipend. They are all living on Social Security allowance, and that which is mainly provided to you to obtain your accommodation and your life.

(J) But is it more than the stipend or less?

(3) It is more than the stipend.

(J) So it is better to have that rather than the stipend.

(3) But it is according to the course you are following, because in year four the stipend amount would increase while the social security would remain the same. Recently I am doing apprenticeship and I do not have a stipend because if you have a stipend, apprenticeship allows you to have more money than other students doing apprenticeship full time work and you do not get full payment, you will get an allowance.

(J) Ok. Is there anything else that you would like to see happening here at college besides the issue of stipends?

(3) For the college, if they organise the people who are in charge, if they organise some activities or they hold events, invite all students and tell them about the migrants how they are suffering and the way they are living here in Malta, so to give them a good example, a true picture of what they are going through. It will help because most of the students and even people in the streets they do not know what migrants are going through. Most of them they think those people like to stay at home; they do not like work, when actually they are very hard workers. They work ten hours a day, sometimes even more than ten hours and they do not get paid well, they are getting less pay than others and they are doing very well. But when it comes to pay they are getting less. But I think I will add again for the government, if they start providing support for the students especially for the students who are taking or willing to further their education, it will be great because the country at the end will benefit from them.

(J) Ok. I do not know if there is anything else you would like to add about this interview and about your experience here in Malta and at college?

(3) If you accept like personal questions or stuff like that, I have a question in the third interview, but it is more on your side rather than that of the study.

(J) Then we leave it as personal. Ok, thank you very much.

## Lara P. 6

(J) So today we are going to focus on the future. This is our last session and the first question is 'What are your plans for the future?'

(6) For now it is like I hope, I am keeping praying and every time I pray I say, 'Please God accept our request so that we can go to America and start a new life and new future, yes to start a new life.'

(J) So you are thinking, your plans are to start a new life in America.

(6) Yes I hope so. If they accept we will go before the course starts, if they accept us, if not will continue.

(J) Continue with your studies and then go when they accept you. And if I may ask 'Why America', is there a particular reason?

(6) Because through UNHCR there is only America who takes refugees from Malta. Before there was Germany but now they stopped so America is still taking. For now we are the last group in Malta that is going to America because you know Donald Trump started saying we will close, we will not accept any more you know. Up to Donald Trump this is our last chance. In case of the other participant maybe it will close, not for her, maybe she will, maybe she will not you know.

(J) Ok, how would you rate the chance of reaching your future aims like from one to ten? How would you rate, give a mark to your future plans that you will succeed in them?

(6) If I am sure that I am going?

(J) If you are sure it will be ten and if less sure, less than ten; if not going, not reaching your aims zero or one.

(6) Zero if I stay because my future is not here.

(J) Your future is not here.

(6) No not here, it is for these people, the Maltese people are not for us. For me my papers are temporary ehh.

(J) Temporary yes. Ok so how would you rate your success to reach your aims, what number?

(6) It depends like if they accept me I put myself seven. If they do not accept me I would say a four.

(J) All right. What did you find discouraging in continuing with your future plans here in Malta? What did you find discouraging, not encouraging to continue with your plans here in Malta?

(6) Like does not make me continue with my life here?

(J) Yes ehhe.

(6) Everything, everything is closed here for us, like you dream about something .....

(J) About what? Can you give an example?

(6) For example basic things, we are speaking of basic things. For example now if we ok start from basic basketball, they make a big thing you know because of our scarf, everything is closed here. If the basic things are closed for us, then what about the big things? So our life is not here.

(J) So what about at MCAST, did you find support at MCAST or is it closed as well at MCAST?

(6) We found, we found at MCAST from teachers but we still feel we are aliens you know. Even if you for example, I have been in MCAST for two years, I still do not know my classmates, I do not know them. They feel I am an alien for them and I still feel I am not welcomed to join them you know, so there is a barrier between us.

(J) What did you find encouraging at MCAST? Did you find something that encouraged you to continue with your studies and your plans?

(6) Something that made me continue?

(J) Yes ehhe.

(6) My friends, I find support from them although not from everyone.

(J) So some of your friends are supportive. What about your lecturers?

(6) No just my friends. For example I have a teacher of biology, ok not of biology, of maths. The teacher of maths if I tell her to explain to us again she gets nervous and fed up you know but if there is, she has those who are her favourite students the story would be different. You can see this because they are Maltese, they can talk to her but if we three, me and my friends - we are three in class from Africa, ok - so we tell her for example 'we did not understand it', she gets fed up, explains again with a loud voice you know. So this country you know the people they are fed up of us, but we do not show them that we are reading that feeling.

(J) In your opinion what would be the ideal world for you as a migrant learner? You are a migrant learner. What are your, in your opinion what is the perfect world, college, country for you as a learner? What makes the country perfect for you?

(6) Equality, if there is equality there is everything.

(J) And you do not see equality here in Malta?

(6) No. If you see it and it is true – oh my God it is true equality, how people help us yes.

(J) And what would you like to see happening within the Maltese community to help you reach your future aims? What kind of change would you like to see happening in the Maltese community to help people like you reach their aims?

(6) To see a welcome everywhere for those people who are coming by the boat. These people are still coming and they do not see that they are welcomed. We see like, we for example we go and support them, not the Maltese. So the foreigners support the foreigners, not the people, the Maltese support the foreigners. We need support from someone but I couldn't find. So you become like, you have to like support yourself to support someone you know.

(J) Besides support, what else would you like to see happening within the Maltese community for people like you? What else would you like to see happening?

(6) Everything, like everything. What they have, we need to have, like the basic they have I want to have you know.

(J) So to be treated equally.

(6) Yes yes equally.

(J) Ok.

(6) You know my mum; we as a family were sitting in a park without my father and my elder brother. In all we were my younger brother, my sister, me and my mum. We were sitting in a park in Floriana. We were talking and taking some snacks and my brother and my sister were playing with other people, some children. So these people, Maltese you know in Floriana, these are people who do not like the Africans, you can see this from their eyes. So you know the problem you get is, a group of teenagers came with the bike, they were like eleven or fifteen years old. So my mum was like not showing that she is taking care of what they were doing and they started like getting mad because we were acting like we were not seeing them you know. So they started throwing some stones on my mum. They started from my mum so me and my sister we started ..... even we were here and the boys were here. Imagine the Maltese are here and no one was doing anything to help us or stop them. They were looking, fixed and not like ask what are you doing you know. Not like help, not like help. We are talking about stones you know, stones. So they were throwing and I became like, I was saying like I am dreaming or what. We started fighting, they took off my sister's scarf and we didn't care because we saw our mum like throwing stones at her. My mum didn't get hurt but if like someone hit my mum, the security of the garden came and my sister called the police. Imagine they didn't speak to us in a nice way. The security told us to go to the police station in Valletta. So we went there, my brother explained to them what happened to us. They were like ok – what we need to do now? Imagine even the police said 'forget what was said and move on'. Even the police didn't treat us in a good way. Imagine so this is like how things happened and we will never forget. So here you feel like you are not welcomed in this country even if you have some Maltese friends, after what happened you do not feel like you are welcomed and this was in 2016, we are not talking about the year 2000 you know.

(J) So it happened very recent. And what about your experiences at MCAST?

(6) No in MCAST no they are ok.

(J) They are ok.

(6) But we still see it, we still see that.

(J) Ok. And the last question, 'What would you like to see happening at the college to help people like you in reaching their aims. What would you like to see happening, changes?'

(6) More activity about like showing them our culture because they see us, we are aliens for them. For example we had a meeting with someone, forgot her name. She gave us a lesson about migrants at MCAST in Malta.

(J) A lady?

(6) Yes, with curly hair, her husband is from Ghana.

(J) Right Marcelle.

(6) Yes Marcelle, she gave us a lesson about refugees and foreign nationals in this country. If you see the reactions of the people how they were speaking, you will see like you will never understand. They still have closed minds. Some of them agreed, some of them said no you see them in the bus, no no no they take our place and jobs, anything you know. Even if you can talk to her she will tell you.

(J) Ok I think that is it, I do not know if there is something else you would like to add.

(6) No.

(J) Ok. Thank you very much and wish you all the best of luck.

(6) Thank you. I answered everything?

(J) Yes yes you answered everything.

**Emanuela P. 5**

(J) Thank you. This is going to be our last session and the first question is, 'What are your plans for the future?'

(5) To finish until level four then go to university.

(J) And study what at university?

(5) Pharmacy.

(J) And do you intend to stay here or go to another country?

(5) I do not know. At this stage I do not know.

(J) How would you rate your future aims like from 1 to 10, 10 being the definite whilst one the chances are close to zero. How would you rate the chances of reaching your aims as things are at the moment?

(5) I would say 10 but it depends.

(J) You are determined that you want to achieve and reach your aims. Very good - and what did you find discouraging in pursuing with your future plans at College. Something happened at college that discouraged you from continuing with your plans?

(5) Nothing.

(J) So nothing discouraged you. What about outside college, in the Maltese society, in the Maltese community, is there anything that discouraged you from continuing with your plans to study here in Malta?

(5) No nothing.

(J) Ok. And what did you find encouraging, what helped you? What encouraged you to continue with your studies at MCAST? What did you find helpful? I mean there are some things that you sometimes want but you will find obstacles along the way.

(5) Here it is like easy to enter school, easy to enter college, really easy.

(J) Ok, so you found it very helpful to come to MCAST, it is easy like there are no restrictions. And outside MCAST, anything helped you? I do not know maybe something that helped you to continue with your studies from outside MCAST, not within MCAST? Maybe how did you get to know about MCAST?

(5) From my previous school the guidance teacher when I was in form 5. The MCAST career advisers during a visit here they showed us MCAST and everything. I knew about MCAST because my brother studied here, so I already knew.

(J) So you knew what you wanted to do. Good. So what you found helpful was that other people you knew, friends, they were here before- that helped. Ok. And in your opinion, what

would be the ideal world for you as a migrant learner? If you had to choose, what would be the ideal world, the perfect world for you as a migrant learner? I do not know maybe say: To facilitate my learning I would benefit if I would have this or that or if the college provides I do not know what, something that would help you.

(5) Nothing. You mean like if I get this it would help me you mean .....

(J) Ehhe.

(5) Nothing. That is, all I need I already have it.

(J) And maybe not for you but in general for migrant learners, do you think that there is something that can be of help to migrants?

(5) I am not thinking of anything right now.

(J) I know for example that some of the migrant learners, not you but some of the migrant learners, they have difficulties with language to communicate, but in your case it is not because you speak good English so you do not have that problem but for migrant learners it would be helpful for example to have English language lessons.

(5) Yes you mean here at MCAST or outside?

(J) Either here or before they come here. Besides language lessons is there anything else that you think would be helpful for migrants?

(5) I am not thinking at the moment.

(J) You are not thinking at the moment. What are the problems that migrants face? I do not want to suggest any.

(5) A lot but I do not have anything in mind.

(J) A lot of problems!

(5) Maybe housing.

(J) Good and what else? So we established language, housing what else?

(5) For some – work.

(J) Work ehhe.

(5) And maybe the right information.

(J) Yes when you came here you had information about Malta, the capital city, the language, the history of the country, customs etc.?

(5) Maybe it is not so important, you can deal with it, it is just ok.

(J) So it is not crucial, but what about services?

(5) Like what?

(J) Like medical services. Were you aware of hospitals, offices of migrants?

(5) Yes we went.

(J) Ok. What would you like to see happening within the Maltese community to help you in reaching your future aims? What would you like to see happening so that migrant learners, not only you as ..... , but as migrant learners? What would you like to see happening to be helpful for you (plural) as migrant learners?

(5) From Maltese?

(J) Yes from Maltese.

(5) Maybe to support us more.

(J) Good, in what way support?

(5) Like show me were, not show me but ..... it is difficult to explain.

(J) Like assisting?

(5) Yes yes, not staying with me but, like showing when if you like that person asks me what do I want and show me.

(J) Giving information, good information.

(5) Yes yes.

(J) Ok. Is there anything else that you would like to see happening within the Maltese community? Do you think migrant learners are all accepted by the Maltese?

(5) No.

(J) So what do you want to see happening in the Maltese community?

(5) To accept us and be treated equally.

(J) And at college, what would you like to see happening here at MCAST to make the life of migrant learners easier?

(5) Firstly our teachers to speak less Maltese in class. Every five minutes we need to ask 'Can you change, can you change?' Like they would change for five minutes and go back to Maltese again you know.

(J) So to communicate in English.

(5) And there are some who explain as I told you last time more in Maltese and when I ask can you change, they explain shortly in English. Like I would want an explanation like that of the Maltese, a bit longer, a bit like in detail if you know what I mean.

(J) Do you consider learning Maltese?

(5) Me learning Maltese? I am learning Maltese, I have lessons in Maltese, it is similar to Arabic. For me I can understand some words but for someone else who does not know Arabic and Maltese, it is complicated - too hard.

(J) Because the basic of the Maltese language is Semitic, it's Arabic, but then the way we write is completely different, its European, Romantic not Semitic.

(5) I do not understand the way you write; it is very difficult, too hard. I had Maltese in the other school and here at MCAST but I am still not understanding-nothing especially the gh, I do not know what they are called.

(J) The 'ghajn' its called and when together they are soundless. Ok. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

(5) No.

(J) Ok. In the coming days I will transcribe our short interview and we do like we did with the others; first the introductory session, then our past, our present and today we did our future. Ok. Thank you very much.

(5) You are welcome. Thank you.

## Lecturers' Focus Group

(J) First of all I would like to thank you for accepting to be part of the research project. Thank you for signing the consent form and for accepting to do this session of lecturers to discuss and answer some questions. The first question that we have is – Over the past two years, what was your experience of the teaching of foreign learners? I would like to ask you please when you start sharing your experiences, it is important to identify yourself by a letter or name of your choice. Ok?

(Jay) Last year I had a student in my class who was a foreigner and in the first few weeks he was in a class where I teach them Maltese. He was facing a lot of problems. The situation that was created was that this student since he was a foreigner he had a language barrier and couldn't communicate with the rest of the class not even in English because his English wasn't that good.

(J) So the main problem that you have noticed from your experience was the language barrier.

(Jay) It's the language barrier and also the cultural differences.

(J) How did the cultural difference manifest itself in class with the other students?

(Jay) We as Maltese are a bit loud and the student was very quiet and reserved. Also if I am not mistaken, I am not sure if he was from Eritrea .....

(J) Eritrea?

(Jay) Yes Eritrea. He was very reserved and very quiet whilst the others, they were a bit bubbly and loud and they knew each other well whilst he was the outsider. But then as the year went along and I kept on following him, he was bonding a bit more with the rest of the class and he managed a bit better.

(J) Ok thank you Jay. Anyone else?

(D) This year, actually over the past two years I had a number of foreign students, but this year in particular I had a class which had six, if I am not mistaken, six or seven students all grouped in the same class. They were grouped in that way to be able to maybe group them so that they would know each other in terms of maybe culture etc. and also because of the language barrier because teachers teaching that class would have the same issue only with that class. My experience was that especially for the first half of the year there was a bit of hostility from the rest of the group towards them and probably due to the different culture as Jay has said. One thing I noticed, and this is repeatedly through all the different foreign students is there, how do you say it, enthusiasm to learn. I find their enthusiasm to learn, which is more than that of our local students, not in all of them but a general tendency is that they want to learn a bit more.

(J) It's a very interesting observation.

(D) In fact I also had a couple of extra lectures with singular foreign students, you notice that they say thank you almost every time and you feel it that they really appreciate. Most of the time our local students take that thing for granted that they have everything they need etc. etc.

(J) Ok thank you D.

(Doris) As D said they are usually quite understanding and they always say thank you. They appreciate a lot. What I have seen - I teach ISR (Individual and Social Responsibility) - is that most of them experience, feel the financial barrier, not just the language because we talk about, discuss subjects that are social, and for example we discuss outings and other similar things, they usually find themselves in situations where they cannot always contribute because they didn't do these kind of things because of the financial barriers. On the other hand usually also at the beginning of the year, some of the students aren't very keen of becoming their friends or socializing with them. As the year goes by, that usually changes although there are some cases where they end up that group and our group.

(J) About the financial issue, was it something that you observed in class or it was something that they opened up and shared/discussed in class?

(Doris) Most of the time it's through observation but sometimes they disclose.

(J) So they lack basic needs.

(Doris) Yes, yes such as photocopies, pens, even the usual things, stationery etc. And we also notice the way they talk for example whilst the others are discussing what they did last weekend, most of them will be going out while they are usually working, doing something to be able for them to pay up the rent. I actually had one student who didn't manage to pay the rent and spent three days living outside in the streets. The financial issue is quite common.

(J) Ok thank you. Anyone else?

(A) In the past two years I had quite a good number of foreign students but only one of them was migrant learner. In most cases I have seen respect like what the others had said but in my classes there wasn't that much of an issue with relationships. On the contrary, relationships between Maltese students and foreign students were very good relationships. But having said that, there were financial issues so the thing is they were foreign students, there was the language barrier but all students made an effort to integrate.

(J) Ehh ok thank you.

(R) I would like to mention something which I observed over the past two years. So I have had a student two years ago who, as D mentioned, was rather polite in class and he was very motivated to learn. He was always with a smile on his face, very positive, but was unable to speak Maltese and I noticed that he used to get segregated in class, to sit on one side of the classroom and they would let him sit on his own. Even if he comes to join in sometimes, they would just get up and leave him. He used to get picked upon, they used to pass comments. I noticed this and I immediately addressed it. I tried to pass on a here and there among the students and told them that it wasn't really nice to pick on him because he is different. The issue was because he was dark skinned (black) and they mentioned it black, black, black. He always remained positive, he never victimised himself and I noticed that this sort of, the fact that he diminished their bullying kind of behaviour made him stronger and by time he became popular in class. They started to accept him and they still tease him but I noticed that ..... They were

mechanical students; it's the way they communicate in a rough way. So he accepted it and they accepted him and they lived happily ever after.

(J) Good, good.

(R) That was one student and in another Institute I had a student and the student lived in Malta for a longer period. He was able to speak Maltese, in fact I thought that he was Maltese but by time I found out that he was not. Well he was able to speak Maltese and this diminished the language barrier. He was able to express himself freely and he is a very bubbly person and this made him popular in class, so popular that at times I would even call it dominance rather than popularity. And sometimes he would even pass bullying comments and I noticed that he made friends in class with another two students; his two best friends are also migrants. He has good relations with Maltese students but sort of prefers to spend time with migrants. That is how it happened in this case. They used to go out on a friendly basis outside College. That is what I observed at least.

(J) Ok thank you.

(I) This year I taught Maltese for foreigners. I had three students: two were foreigners and one was Maltese. He was in a class for foreigners because he had actually some problems. He speaks English only and in order to try to learn some basic Maltese, he was placed in a Maltese for foreigners' class. He benefitted from that a lot. The main issue was work, in fact one of the students was absent for most of the lessons because she needed to leave college and go to work. She works as a waitress in the evenings and afternoons almost every day whereas Saturdays and Sundays almost all day. The other student was into construction. The course he was following was at Agribusiness and it has nothing to do with the work that they were doing.

(J) So they are trying to answer the financial issue but it was affecting their studies and attendance here at College.

(I) And the lesson was between 3.30 and 5.00 in the afternoon, so it didn't help either.

(R) Can I complement to what she just said?

(J) Yes.

(R) That is something which I also noticed in one of my classes where there were two migrant learners. I noticed that they are rather independent, most of them they seek employment. I have had an issue with one of them who always attended late for his 8 o'clock lesson because he would be sleepy after his night shift. Many times he used to miss the lesson but he still wanted to achieve and he used to always contact me after the lesson you know to get feedback and even the other student I mentioned earlier, the one I spoke about who is dominant, towards the end of this academic year he found a job and his progress at school suddenly dropped because he started to give importance to the job, more importance to the job. The reason behind it was because he wanted to support his mother in paying the rent because I asked him about it.

(A) I had two such cases this year but they were Maltese and they almost stopped attending towards the end of the year to work, to pay rent because of social issues. So .....

(J) So here we are saying that the issue is not exclusively for migrant students but even Maltese.

(A) Migrant students are facing social issues but even some Maltese students.

(J) But is it more dominant among migrants?

(I) (A) Yes, yes.

(J) Ok. Thank you for that. Now the second question. In your opinion what are the challenges, we have already touched a bit on challenges, of having migrant learners at college and in classes? So what are the challenges that are imposed on us, if any? So the fact that you will be teaching migrant students, are there any particular challenges in class? We have mentioned language barrier which is a challenge no?

(R) Obviously apart from the language barrier which reduces the chance of getting to know each other in class, in some cases there are issues of racism where students would not accept migrants, especially black people, I have to mention it.

(J) But what are the challenges for us as lecturers?

(R) And that sometimes creates a nuisance in class because you have to address the issue. Students get disruptive and even pass comments, they behave disruptively in class and obviously what I mentioned earlier which is also a problem because when you try to speak in English, even if you speak in both languages, the Maltese people still comment. They start saying, 'Ehh you are speaking in English, we are in Malta why not speak in Maltese?' They would still comment on it.

(J) Ehhe.

(Doris) Especially yes, if they are black and sometimes I find it very common for them e.g. religious practices hinder them from continuing with the others. For example if there is Christmas coming up, it brings with it catholic activities. Usually the Maltese students would be waiting for it, but the others do not understand. On the other hand if for example they are practising the Ramadan, the others (Maltese) do not understand them that they cannot eat and that is it, they usually pass comments because just simply they just cannot understand that they have a different religion and especially so if they are from certain places.

(J) Ok thank you, Doris.

(I) Even though I had two foreigners in class, one from Bulgaria and one from Syria, they had different religions, one was Muslim and one was Orthodox. The Muslim one was very fidgety at the beginning of the year and when I tried to address the problem, he told me that it was time for him to pray and he couldn't wait longer than half an hour. I wasn't aware that they have a span of time to pray. Then I told him that it is not a problem, 'you can just go now, we will have a short break and you can go now'. Because of that he used to attend all the lessons because I gave him a break. He used to tell me at the lesson 'Can I have a break during the lesson because I need to pray?' And we addressed the problem; actually it wasn't a problem at the beginning of the year. He use to attend all the lessons and it was very interesting because we spoke about it, we spoke about culture, what they believe and the differences between the religions. It was very interesting.

(J) Ok thank you. Anyone else would like to share the challenges faced in class as a lecturer?

(Jay) Also how you present the notes: for example I saw it because they were different, sometimes our Maltese students, they like a structure while in this particular case and because of the language but even in the way he expresses himself, he wasn't that structured so to understand.

(J) And you think this is something cultural or more of a personality thing?

(Jay) I think it is both. I am not sure but I think it is both. And even how I used to explain, he was more independent so he wanted to work on his own at his time while the Maltese students wanted more instruction. So I do not know whether it was because of the teaching methods or of the modes of assimilating, I am not sure but I think he used to be more independent so even the way he wanted to do his work in class, he prefers to do it first and then he shows it to me later and discuss the matter and I will device a different set of notes. For example for the Maltese students I will prepare handouts while for him I will prepare another set of material because obviously his Maltese is more basic.

(J) It is important to make it clear that you were teaching Maltese.

(Jay) Yes, exactly.

(J) As in other subjects I assume he was treated the same as the others. Ok, thank you.

(D) I just wanted to add the fact that for example most of the migrants or foreign students, but mainly migrants, they write at the back of the page rather than at the front of the page. And I also found the same, I noted the same thing, that the way they present their work is a bit haphazard maybe. It also applies for some of the Maltese but particularly for these type of students. They present their work and in fact for the one of the one to one sessions I spent some time which is maybe an hour or two trying to explain to them how to present their work. Again, I repeat, this is something I also do with the local students but in such cases I need to start from the very basic. So I do not think it is something of personality, it is more of a culture.

(J) Ok. It would be interesting to see exactly what you described as haphazardly for us would it be organised for them or not because it could an imposition of our culture on them. But on the other hand, the fact that they are here following this specific programme, I mean, I perfectly understand your actions to help them organise their work in a structured way because that is expected from the college.

(D) Yes but to add a bit more, when I explained this to the student, he said 'ahh ok that is good, I will do it that way'.

(J) So there wasn't any resistance?

(D) No, but then again I noticed that all these migrant students don't have much of a resistance, they are more submissive maybe.

(J) And open to learn?

(D) Yes open to learn, this is at the forefront of everything.

(J) Ok thank you D. Yes A.

(A) When you asked about the challenges we face in class, I do not feel I face any specific challenges because of migrant learners and foreigners but I think we create some challenges so it is almost the other way round. So I think a challenge for the college would be to train us teachers to become aware of this difference but at the same time to be aware that this is just another student and you can work with the student maybe in a different way, but that you can still work with migrant learners.

(J) It is a very interesting observation. I hope that we will touch on it later on when we have a question on what the college can do to help migrant learners.

(A) Another thing I have to say is that I had some Muslim students and they are, towards the end they were thanking me because they had some TCAs (time constraint assignments) during Ramadan and they knew beforehand that they weren't going to do well because they would be fasting. So once again for us probably it wouldn't be a big deal to shift assignments for other earlier days but for them we will be creating an extra challenge for them.

(Jay) And to add on what A was saying we have to take into consideration the assignment that we create, the level of English we use because when I speak to some of them, the assignments sometimes they are written in very hard, difficult English and foreign students sometimes do not understand what is the question. So we have to make sure. Even for our local students sometimes it is a challenge, but for them if they are not very fluent in English and the level of understanding is low, this might also present a challenge when they are understanding and presenting their assignments.

(J) Thank you Jay. The next question - What are in your opinion the advantages if any of having migrant learners at college and in your classes? So before we focused on the challenges, the difficulties, now are there any advantages of having foreigners, migrants in class? What are they?

(I) A lot of advantages I think. Once we start the lessons at the beginning of the year and introduce ourselves, they share their experiences of how they came to Malta. It's already a very good explanation, an eye-opener for the other students, for local students actually, that they have everything, those who have everything from the local students. They will also become aware of what sacrifices migrant students are doing in order to learn, not seeing their families, they cannot go back to their country. Why, what they have experienced, some even say that they actually are very comfortable here. It is another world for them.

(J) Thank you.

(R) I think that one of the problems that we have with racism is the fear of us losing our jobs to other people and that is transmitted to our students in class sometimes. From the way they speak it's a replica, the exact replica of videos they have watched on social media and adults speaking in such a manner. And I think the exposure of migrant students in class is a great advantage because these students, as I mentioned earlier at a mechanical class, even though they speak, they replicate this kind of speech. Once they get to know the migrant student, they realise that he is a normal human being, someone maybe who is at a disadvantage compared to them. They start to accept him and this vicious circle starts to get broken because the problem from past generations is that

we are not really exposed to such a large number of migrants in class, so we wouldn't have actually an idea of what it is like. So I think it is a good opportunity to have migrants in class.

(J) So for you R it is an advantage to have migrants in class in general.

(R) It is. In general yes.

(I) Don't you think that characters do introduce and create problems in class? Let me tell you what I want to say. When we were young in class we had no students with disabilities, we had no coloured persons in class, we were all normal in class, and we never saw these people, no disabilities, no anything. And yet I still accept everyone. For me anyone who is in front of me does not make any difference, be it a prisoner, I taught everyone, students with disability and students from any other country. So is that character the television we are watching?

(J) So your question is – Is it the result of something else or is it personality of the individual?

(R) Can I pass a comment here, maybe I can answer her?

(J) Yes ok.

(R) What she just said is reminding me of values which change over time. For example centuries ago being a patriot used to be a great value, a great honour to a person, but if you are a patriot nowadays, you are basically a racist. So things are changing, it is the way you are raised in your family. I remember my own father speaking against migrants and I used to think the same thing. And when I started to meet and mix with migrants, I realised that there is no problem with them actually, sometimes they are more educated.

(Doris) What I would like to say also, they usually are very respectful. We mentioned in the beginning and now I am remembering, I for example had students that shake my hand at the very first lesson. They introduce themselves and sometimes they find it very difficult to not ask questions but to go against sort of what you say. They have sort of this big respect towards their teachers, towards authority. For example we have some Maltese students who going against authority is the way to go whilst for these type of students usually it is a big no no. You cannot go against authority whatever it is, whatever they say. I usually find that quite common as well. And also it is an advantage because sometimes it passes on a message to the other Maltese students. At first they start to mock them because you know it is not the thing to do, you can't shake their hands like, what are you doing? But then by time they understand that it is not really a big deal.

(J) Ok. Sort of they can learn from their behaviour.

(Doris) Yes, sometimes yes.

(J) Ok. Anyone else would like to add something?

(Jay) There is something I would like to add. Before it was said that we can learn from their culture and even for us since we are a very small island, we need to be exposed. Sometimes we are not exposed to all the cultures or we do not want to. There is this perspective that we are great sometimes, our culture is good.

(J) It is our insularity, being an island we are insular.

(Jay) Yes that is it. And if we are exposed to different cultures, we realise that we are not the best and that ours is not the only way to do things ok. It is better even for the Maltese students to go abroad, they have to and they will be foreigners if they want to work and live abroad.

(J) Ehhe, ehhe.

(Jay) And if they will be already exposed to different cultures and their mind-set is wide open, I think they will find it an advantage.

(A) I think that my concerns in classroom, in Mathematics it is even different the method they use. So throughout secondary school lower students would have learnt certain way of doing long division for example and then these students bring in other ways of doing it. To the college, to students and even to us lecturers, I think that the fact that we meet migrants not just on TV but the fact that we meet them face to face, it helps on a personal level because we will become aware of the situations they have to face to come here but at the same time it is not the end of the world for them. They have hope that they are starting a new life here and we have the responsibility to help them start afresh not keep on telling their story and stop there. Their classmates and we as educators have the responsibility to help them go on with life because ultimately it wasn't their fault that they ended up in this situation. And I was thinking about what I said earlier regarding whether it is a question of personality, I think it all boils down to the value you give to a human being, any human being. Because every person deserves - it depends on whether you believe this - every person deserves respect, deserves to be loved and deserves to have hope for a good way of life.

(J) Ok. Next question - Do you think that students in general can benefit from having migrant learners at college in their own classes? (The Maltese students' view sort of.)

(D) They can but only if they want to because it depends on their level of acceptance, their level of ..... basically if they are racist and they want to build a wall between themselves and the foreign students, then it would not work. But if they are willing to accept, I think they will be able to learn from them. They can learn from the fact that they are so responsible in their life, from the fact that they have to work till the early hours of the morning and then they come here whilst most of them, the Maltese are cosy in bed by ten o'clock or even earlier. So yes, I think they can be of benefit to them but it also depends on the local students.

(J) Any other views on this question? Sort of in what way Maltese students can benefit from having foreigners in their classes?

(R) Most of it was tackled in the earlier question as well.

(J) The questions are built one on another so there can be some overlap.

(A) I am thinking, I do not know if the wording is right, but they will be widening their world view. Kind of not to this Maltese bubble but there is more to ..... There are more realities and there is nothing you can teach I mean you can teach history, current affairs but once you speak to someone who goes through all that that is how you can understand well.

(Doris) Like what I have said earlier as well. We are living in a society where it is very common to go and study or work abroad so we are no longer living; working and studying in the same island, whatever country. So yes, by widening their perspectives to other cultures, other human beings and other ways of doing things, they are going to find it easier in their life if they want to go abroad to do something else.

(J) Ok.

(R) And sometimes they also walk the extra mile, practice and learn English to communicate with migrants as well. So that is also a bonus.

(J) Ehhe, ehhe.

(D) Another thing I am remembering is the fact that maybe, two things actually. First of all this takes time, it doesn't happen overnight that they are accepted and that these students will widen their scope etc. And another thing that we might and I hope that this will be an advantage to our local students, is that they are not looked down on because mostly they are looked down on mostly as students and as human beings. So maybe that advantage would happen basically.

(J) Ok. In your view what do you think migrant learners are facing at college and outside? What are they facing?

(Doris) I think outside college they need to find work because there is still the social stigma against coloured people.

(J) So in your opinion they are discriminated?

(Doris) Yes and by adults more than by young students because young students, teenagers, they are usually more open to understand what is happening.

(J) In fact that worries me a lot when I hear that young students, they discriminate and they pass on racist comments because.....

(Doris) ..... because they learn it from home or from their friends.

(J) Yes it could be disseminated from home. But we, I mean I tend to believe that the youngsters are more tolerant and practise more acceptance.

(Doris) In fact usually when you ask them questions like - why do you think that, why do you think they are taking your jobs, why do you think ..... they usually do not have an answer because they just repeat what they heard and said.

(R) Can I pass a comment here please?

(J) Yes R you can.

(R) This is actually true in many cases. I had many cases in class where I had witnessed racism but by the end of the year it would have died out and they would be friends etc. And they lived happily ever after. In other cases - something outside school, I have spoken to locals, Maltese adults – they would pass very racist comments even in front of migrants, generally black people. When I try to sort of open a conversation and ask why, they wouldn't want to hear any reasoning.

(Doris) In fact they always mention cases they have heard in the news or some cases that happened to their friends, but they don't actually understand that this is not because they are coloured people; colour does not make you do things. There are also Maltese people doing these things, if we had to argue about it. But sometimes these people have a vision, sort of this opinion and they do not want to argue about it.

<b>1st Session Participants' Focus Group 16/12/16</b>				
<b>Participants</b>	<b>Country of Origin, Reasons for Fleeing</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Arrival in Malta</b>	<b>Locality where they are staying in Malta</b>
<b>1</b>	Zimbabwe: Political chaos, no political democracy in African countries. No political stability.	34	Apr 2011	Gzira
<b>2</b>	Ethiopia: It is shameful how the government keeps people. Everything is decided by the government. More depression. Nothing changes. Everything is static.	24	2014	Sliema
<b>3</b>	Sudan: Countries like USA declared a genocide of what happened in Darfour area. Government blocked the media to go there. His village was burnt, and they were living in a refugee camp. Before the war families were surrounded by mercy and love.	22	Jul 2014	Swatar
<b>4</b>	Somalia: It is in civil war. It is not safe.	22	2013	B'Kara
<b>5</b>	Eritrea: No future prospects. Dubai: Left the country due to job (father) issues. Norway: Authorities stated that their fingerprints are in Malta and thus they were deported to Malta.	18	2014	Marsascala
<b>6</b>	Eritrea: Political situation, no democracy. Saudi Arabia: Residency permit expired and was not extended. They were deported.	19	Aug 2011	Zabbar

## 1st Session Participants' Focus Group 16/12/16

	<b>Journey</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Hobbies</b>	<b>Family</b>
<b>1</b>	From Zimbabwe tried to go to South Africa but border was closed. Then ended in Libya after crossing the desert. During the fall of Gaddafi crossed to Malta.	Started Foundation Mechanical Engineering, moved to Applied Sciences, found Chemistry tough and moved back to Mechanical Engineering Higher National Diploma Level 5.	Playing volleyball, watching football, running athletics.	Father killed after a political rally. Mother lives in Ghana and brother in Nigeria. In contact.
<b>2</b>	Ethiopia to Sudan, desert, Libya Malta. 'A lot of things happened to me through my journey'.	Foundation in Applied Sciences Level 2.	Playing football, running marathons.	Both parents, two brothers, eldest passed away and three sisters. He is the third. They all live in Ethiopia. In constant contact.
<b>3</b>	Sudan, desert, Libya, Malta.	Started Foundation Level 2 Electrical Engineering. Now he progressed to Level 4 Electrical and Electronics Engineering.	Playing football, basketball and sometimes swimming.	Father married twice. Has a brother and another half-brother, youngest of the boys. Two younger sisters. In total they are thirteen. They all live in Sudan. In contact.
<b>4</b>	Ethiopia, Sudan, desert, Libya, Malta.	Started Building and Construction Institute Carpentry section. Changed to Electrical Installation. He is following the Level 3 programme.	Playing football, running marathons (ten kilometre)	Father escaped to Kenya. Not sure if mother is in Ethiopia. Eldest brother escaped because they were trying to kill him. No contact.
<b>5</b>	Both parents are from Eritrea but were living in Dubai where the participant was born. Because of the father's work they moved to Norway. They were deported from Norway because they were told that their fingerprints are in Malta and eventually they moved to Malta.	Foundation Applied Sciences Level 2.	Drawing, painting, playing football, spending time on mobile.	They left their father. No longer in contact with him. Mother, participant and two younger brothers living together here in Malta.
<b>6</b>	Both parents are from Eritrea but living in Saudi when participant was born. Deported from Saudi, bought visa to Malta and moved to Malta.	Foundation Applied Sciences Level 2.	Playing basketball	Both parents, four girls and two boys. Participant is the third oldest. Living all together here in Malta.

## 1st Session Participants' Focus Group 16/12/16

	Challenges	Feelings	Job
1	Failed 3 units of Level 5 and is repeating. Lack of support. Financial problems: to pay rent, food, transport, services, etc. Did not understand the Maltese educational system.	Grateful to the Maltese. Determined to get qualified.	Worked as a cleaner. At present he is a graphic design assistant, a design technician.
2	Had planes for the future but left everything and started a new life in a new country from scratch. 'My challenge is to work hard for a better life. Language sometimes can be difficult. No happiness, life had made me terrible'.	Sorry for not helping the family with their daily needs. Angry for the unfairness that is taking place in his country. Killing the children of poor people.	Part time carer.
3	Language difficulties. Has an asylum seeker status thus he cannot visit his family, cannot go to his country. Student at college sometimes put all migrants in one box and hold a bad reputation about them. To wait for happy moments. Not having the loved ones to share the ups and downs.	Sorry for abandoning his family and his birth country. Happiness mixed with sadness. Sorry. 'Something of me is still there'.	
4	To be in a better position, financially, socially. No accreditation of two years' nursing course. No documents, no access to his previous certificates. The relationship with his wife. Will they solve the issue of residency permit? 'I have no peace at the moment'.	Happy with his wife but uncertain about their future. Confused.	Part time cleaner, evening and night shifts.
5	Living with racist attitudes and comments. Accepting the fact that their fingerprints are here when in reality they were never here before. To further integrate with the Maltese community.	Disappointed that her family ended here in Malta. Angry at some of the Maltese about how they look at them differently.	
6	Living in a country where discrimination and racism are the top problems. Wishes to move to another country such as England or the USA.	Determined to keep on the hijab. Very angry at the way they were treated at the detention centre.	

## First round of Individual Interviews - Their Past

	<b>Motives to leave birth country</b>	<b>Character/Personality</b>	<b>Present Motivation/s</b>
<b>1</b>	The lack of political stability in the country. The loss of his father. 'I didn't neither go back to Ghana (education) nor stay there, I just found my way out.' No democracy, freedom. Ended up on his own. Politicians are greedy. They lie to the people. They send their children to European schools to come back and rule the nation.	Reserved. Not very interactive with people. Always tries to be independent, not to depend on others. Composed. Sometimes feels inferior. Ownership of failure. Never felt any discrimination. Very mature. Very focused. Determined. Very grateful.	Education, get qualified. Move on in life and never look back.
<b>2</b>	Problems with the present government. Everything static, over 30 years in rule and nothing changes. Bad economy. Political situations. Killing the children of poor people who need protection, the new generation. The apathy and the sense of giving up.	Likes to help people. Very caring. Makes friends easily. Independent. Works hard for a better life. Courageous. Sensitive. 'Terrible experiences can break you but at the same time can make you stronger.' 'I need to improve from yesterday.' 'I need to change'.	Education. Get qualified. Help people in need and to be good to people. Work hard for a better life. 'I left everything and started a new life in a new country.'
<b>3</b>	'My village was burnt all and we moved to another place and in that place we were staying in a refugee camp. Conflicts, war, corruption linked with the police. Change my life to the best and my ego.' The lack of security. The perception of being away from the country is a success. Be in a better condition or provide financial help to the family.	Resilient. Sensitive. Sincere. Hard working. Appreciative. He believes that such problems changed is life. 'I use to be a very intelligent, mature student.' Homesick.	'Look in front of you and you will achieve what you are willing and aiming for.' Education. Grab the opportunities.
<b>4</b>	Civil war. A tragedy was happening in his country. The attack on the family. They captured him but he managed to escape. Dictatorship, no security, no trust.	Responsible. Protective to others. Resilient. Good at heart. Determined to improve his situation: financial and educational. Highly motivated to be totally independent - financially. Upset at the state of his family. Losing contact. Altruistic.	Education. Protection by a safe country. To study and work to be independent.
<b>5</b>	The job of the father made them leave Dubai and go to Norway. The claim that their fingerprints were in Malta made them leave Norway and come to Malta.	Quiet and shy. Gets nervous quickly. Most of the time angry. Unhappy. Very determined to keep using the hijab.	To leave Malta and go to another country. Preferably Norway. Education.
<b>6</b>	The political situation in Eritrea. War between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Deported from Saudi. Refused the residency permit in Saudi.	Angry at the Maltese in general. Feelings not accepted by some of the Maltese. Appreciative for the educational aspect. Most of the time very angry, replies quickly and answers back to whoever passes any discriminatory comments.	To leave Malta and go to another country. Education.

## First round of Individual Interviews - Their Past

	<b>Memories</b>	<b>Childhood</b>	<b>Support</b>
<b>1</b>	Runaway 'I don't even want to remember because it is very very sad.' Inter school games. Classmates, sports, loss of father.	Normal childhood in an African community. One cannot compare that with European communities. Positive, provision of basic Education. Not a rich family but provided him with money and basic education.	Outside MCAST no support. Has to work to pay rent, buy food etc. Lectures supportive. Values the support given by the Minister of Education of exempting him from paying for his Education.
<b>2</b>	Playschool followed by school. Quran lessons in the evening. Running marathon, playing football. Started a business at the age of 15 years with the school. It was a small shop but started growing with more money and after 3 years it became a big business. His father taught him a lot of things and gave him good advice.	Peacefulness. Helping parents and even people passing in the streets. Everybody liked him. A sense of community. Collegiality. Parents involved in a charity organisation.	Some basic support is provided by the members living in his residential community. He earns very basic salary but no fees are charged for his living.
<b>3</b>	Started working in the fields at the age of seven. Football. Peacefulness in that memory of the farm. Although childhood wasn't problem free, it was good. Home provided security.	Childhood ok. Peacefulness in that memory of the farm. Although childhood was not problem free, it was good.	Support of family and friends is missed a lot. Has to work hard on his own to achieve results. During detention a woman guided him on how to access education through MCAST.
<b>4</b>	Football, running marathon. The overprotectiveness of father because of civil war. Helping father in the fields.	In his early childhood, he was not aware of war. Peaceful. Missed sports classes and leisure.	Provided support by his wife with regards to food and house duties. Lacks support when it comes to legal advice and to access certain services. Lack of clear and direct information. The lack of Social Capital.
<b>5</b>	Positive experience in Norway. The house in Dubai. Cousins, uncles and aunties in Dubai, walking and talking. Friends. Beach. A sense of shame that she had to go from one country to another. 'I wouldn't say anything about my past.'	Normal with relatives and friends in Dubai.	Supported by her mother and younger brothers, friends and lecturers. Lacks the support from Maltese people in general.
<b>6</b>	Time spent with grandparents in Eritrea. Friends. Family members. Till 13 years she was protected by the parents. Not aware of the problems they were facing.	Very good, very nice. No problems.	Supported by her family, parents, brothers, sisters and lecturers, but not by the Maltese in general.

## First round of Individual Interviews - Their Past

	<b>Hatred</b>	<b>Reflections on their past</b>	<b>Experience</b>
<b>1</b>	He does not dislike, hate people. Communication is the way to resolve issues.	Life is not easy. One has to be courageous, determined and fearless and try to fight forward. One should never give up.	'It is horrible in the sea. I nearly perished and I question myself why I treat myself up to this level. Everything is so dangerous. Attacked by robbers. Took all our documents, money, everything, even the shoes, they cut the bottom.' Detained for 3 months.
<b>2</b>	He hates no one. People not liked are those who do not show any compassion with people in need.	To make life great, work hard for a better life and be sensitive to the needs of others. If you have education you will get money. Sorry for not staying with parents and see what they need.	'I left everything and started a new life. I spent 30 hrs at sea and 15 days in the desert without anything, just water and small things like cake and biscuits. Really dangerous, not what humans do.'
<b>3</b>	Hatred is not his cup of tea. Although In Libya he was treated so very badly, he made good friends with Libyans here in Malta.	A story to forget. He expressed the wish that maybe one day he writes a book about his experience. 'If I had to relive my past, I will never leave my country even though with those, so much problems. Something of me is still there.'	'When crossing the desert, smugglers treated us so badly. Modern kidnapping.' Happiness mixed with sadness. Exposed to cruelty.
<b>4</b>	He does not hate anyone. He prefers not to create problems and not to be a criminal. Prefers to move away from people who create problems.	Always look and work for peace. Education can help in achieving a better life. Pain is the feeling generated by his past. Coping strategies, resilience.	Very risky, very difficult. Crossing the desert for 40 days. Great danger. Saw an aeroplane bombarding the army. Kidnapping. 'They take the food, the money, documents. People dying in the desert.' Killed his uncle. Arrested him because he had no documents.
<b>5</b>	She hates no one.	Never leave your birth country. The place that you were born in is very close to your heart. The importance of stability. Equality is not practised in Malta. Maltese prefer white people.	
<b>6</b>	She hates the guy who sold the Maltese visa to her father to come here to Malta.	She wishes to live in another country, forget the present and remember only her past when living in Saudi. 'If I had the chance and I was eighteen, I can for example know my father's problem and try to solve it with them or something so we do not go with them.' Integration and acceptance issues.	The negative experience of the detention. 'It is not where humans live, even animals cannot stay there.'

## Second round of Interviews - The Present

### The Crossing/Arriving in Malta

- 1** 'Happy, excited due to what we faced. Nearly perished. I was saved. No idea about Malta. Never heard of it. Landed on land. Off loaded us into the big ship, arrived in Malta the next day. I cannot die again, when you die you lose everything, when alive a lot of things to achieve. I am really appreciative.'
- 2** 'In Libya it is very dangerous, you do not have any choice that is why either die or cross. You would feel that you are already dead. Seeing the land you feel you still have a life. We came by ship of police 63 kilometres away from Malta.'
- 3** 'When crossing I needed a secure place where to land. I said there is hope and at least now I will be rescued. A sense of security. Arriving here was a sign of hope. I didn't know anything about Malta and where exactly it is. I came here not by my willing. I learnt about this part of the European Union later by the time I was here. I found myself here and to survive i had to. They started the procedure of fingerprints.'
- 4** 'The Maltese helped me and saved me. I saw people that they were not disturbing me, punishing me and/or harming me. They welcomed us and I say thank you to all of them. They provided food, clothes and everything. After the crossing I was very tired, in fact I slept for eighteen hours.'
- 5** 'Came by plane. I was surprised by the country.'
- 6** 'I came by plane. I was like ok, maybe I will see something. But then when the police was with us to take us to Hal Far, I was like, yes I was silent. I wasn't expecting that of course.'

## Second round of Interviews - The Present

<b>Interview/Detention</b>	
<b>1</b>	<p>'They give you the police number for immediate identification according to the boat. Detention centre very bad conditions. I signed to go back but they refused to send me back. Always with security 20-30 metres for more than a year. I didn't commit any crime. Told them that I am a student and came to further my studies. If you are sick, they put on handcuffs to take you to hospital. We were treated like animals. They gave me a reject and said that I can stay for one year with freedom to go out, work or study. Reason for the rejection, mother from Ghana, father from Zimbabwe. Said that I can go to Ghana.'</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>'They put us on the bus which took us to the detention. I was very confused for 3 days. My English was very bad and I couldn't even communicate with anyone and we got a translator. After 3 days JRS came and gave us information. The detention wasn't easy but now we accept it because we can do nothing. Because they kept about 3,300 people sleeping top and under (bunkbeds) you know in beds one top and one under for about ten months. Some people spent one year six months and it is not easy. The people accept it, they cannot do anything you know. I was just close to give up because I expected to see something better. Putting us like in prison, when food comes they open the door give food, close the door and I do not go out. We cannot say food was not good but always the same, maybe they change it after one week. They put pregnant women, children, wife and husband all in the same way. Sometimes around 300 people would be watching one TV. Always fighting for the TV. For 2 months they were without TV because they broke it. Then after 2 months they fixed it. It is really a difficult life but we accepted it, we managed it and we moved on. Thank God it is over. I could settle down you know feeling you have to do an interview. So I still had to find out about the country.'</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>'Totally shocked when they took us to the detention centre where we were searched like we were going in a normal prison. Detention treatment - Even if you have some stuff like pocket money, the police takes it. Experience of the detention - Very bad, the first time I was detained. What did I do wrong to be treated that way? I didn't know the mistake I did, just because I was sick or because of help or go out from war country to another safe place, it requires me to go through this process or it is a normal process that the country does it for everyone. Am I a criminal, I committed something wrong and a lot of this stuff. What was the cause? I was 17 years old. This is Europe, there is the reinforcement of law. No police, no staff goes in, only NGOs come and visit and stay for 50 minutes or one hour. A big hall, very crowded, over 200 people. Space between one bunk bed and another is just half a metre. No privacy at all. No personal belongings just two or three sets of clothes. No lockers to put any belongings. Spent only one week, eight days. Was informed to move to another centre for teenagers. When 18 move to an open centre, a detention centre but it is open. Safety checks, security on the door. Go in and out with a card. Freedom to walk out. Open centre-18 persons in a room, fridge to share and a locker.</p>
<b>4</b>	<p>'They gave us some awareness on how we live in the detention and on how we live in this country. They explained about the JRS agency and their representatives visited us. No one disturbed us in the detention - no problems. During the interview they tried to get out information as much as possible about our birth country and our past. I got a subsidiary. They were telling me that I was not giving them a lot of information on the country and the tribe. Before I had the subsidiary status, I had a lot of problems. I was eighteen months in detention. After giving them the requested information, they gave me all my documents. At the detention it was multicultural from Africa, Asia, different countries. A lot of languages and a lot of different behaviours. I was not happy there, I lost a lot of time in there. At the detention I attended some lessons, read some books and used to sleep until 11:00. Eat, shower, brush my teeth, clean my area and go to the living area. Always telling me to translate. I helped in what they wanted with the security. Translating their stories. At 4:00 o'clock they used to organise football, shower, watch television, play monopoly.'</p>

5 'Detention, horrible. Never can thought that someone can live in a container. I know that containers are for some things but not for people to live in. I stayed there maybe three months but there it was horrible. You live there with your family but you do not feel like home. It is not a house you know. Not safe, that is for sure. Food was the same everyday - chicken. To buy something you ask someone to buy for you. You are not locked inside. If they need you at the office, they come and knock very hard, it's like you did something wrong. Then they say, 'Come and translate now.'

6 'When we went to Norway, we went to a camp and like houses you know. They treat people in a very good way. Same routine but we found different people, different country. When we saw the containers, the office, the people who were working at the office, nothing was good. We sleep and my father stays awake. Nothing was safe in there. If I go to the toilet someone like dad comes with me. I feel sorry because there are still people living there. I feel sorry for them. it is like you are locked. Even the officer there was not treating people in a good way. With the families they were ok but for the single no. They use to come, 'Listen, listen we need someone to translate, someone who knows English. Come and translate now.' We as a family felt that the open centre experience was weird. We spent four months there. When telling my friends they used to feel sorry – 'Why are you feeling sorry? That is the reality, that is what I was living you know you cannot change it, so do not feel sorry.' No one is showing them what people coming from their country are experiencing, they were suffering you know and now they do not lead a good life like them you know. At school they weren't aware of the situation, they were asking, 'Where is this place? You can go out?' Yes but the place is very far away from the centre.'

## Second round of Interviews - The Present

	Housing	Jobs
<b>1</b>	<p>‘Shared an apartment with another three migrants. We were paying one hundred euro each per month.’</p>	<p>‘I started doing some casual work for three months. Then I got a job of a cleaner at Hilton. The first time I went to Marsa square I was ashamed, I will never go there again because they literally abuse you. At Hilton I was happy. They helped me. You need to search again for the job with the performance in your school and certificates and qualifications.’</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>‘After detention I was at Marsa Open Centre. I got certain freedom. I can go out, find some things, ask for some information, do what I wanted you know. In Marsa a bit better in one room 3 by 3 metres sleep 20 people. It was like the detention but with more freedom. Then I rented a place for €150. After some time I rented a room somewhere else for €200 a month. After four months I got out from where I used to live because I didn't pay for one month. All the money I had saved finished. I packed my clothes in a bag and asked him if he can keep it for me until I find a place where to live and he kept it for me. I slept out one night near MCAST in the garden of mosque. I met a friend on the bus stop. He was staying with his family in one room. I slept in his garden and come to school asking for help. JRS said that there is "Dar Hosanna Pia" run by Fr Savio and they asked him to help me. He accepted me, he is a good person and I still live there.’</p>	
<b>3</b>	<p>‘Now I have lack of accommodation because the place I rented now the owner wants it back because he wants to increase the fee.’</p>	
<b>4</b>		<p>‘I applied for some jobs but people sometimes give you a cleaning job but then they tell me you know, ‘you do not understand,’ and I didn't have any skills at that time.’</p>
<b>5</b>	<p>‘It was really hard to find a house, that is why we stayed so long at the open centre so long.’</p>	
<b>6</b>	<p>‘In the container in the rain you do not feel comfortable, tick tick tick. You cannot sleep; you have to close your ears and try to sleep.’</p>	

## Second round of Interviews - The Present

<b>Help/Support</b>	
<b>1</b>	<p>'JRS helped me to prepare my CV. Went all over distributing my CV (over 100). A lot called but for the same job, cleaning. I got free tuition from the Ministry of Education based on the working permit. JRS gave me information about four schools. Hilton gave me the opportunity to work in the evenings after school. Shift.'</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>'I needed more information after the detention. I started going round asking anyone to get information which way I need to apply for the school and which way I can find a job. JRS and UNHCR helped by giving information. I had to get close to the Maltese community. I have been asking for information people who have been long years in Malta. I used to ask JRS, AWAS, UNHCR 'What are my rights?' I asked a social worker at the Marsa centre for a language course. They helped me for two months. I only got one hour a week for two months. JRS gave me a cheque to follow a language course. I found a solution to the problem. I spoke with the MCAST Student Liaison Manager and the senior counsellors but couldn't do anything immediately, everything takes time.'</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>'A social worker/care worker at the open centre used to be there at her office very often. She had a direct link with the Education system. She told me about MCAST and about the place I needed to go. She got the MCAST book (Prospectus) and from there I searched for Electrical Electronics. She was very helpful, she always gave me advice on how to survive here in Malta, the life and the difficulties. I have the Social Security allowance only. I deal with my life, rent, food, stuff, transport and all of it. Lack of support. You go for support for students but you leave empty handed. When we arrived they didn't give us so much detail about the country. It would have been helpful if we were given information about the island.'</p>
<b>4</b>	<p>'JRS helped us a lot. They gave us a booklet some in English and others in our own language with information. UNHCR visited us and gave us some information on Maltese culture. I asked somebody from the bus stop and he showed me where the school for skills and higher education is. The man I met told me about the school. I met a guidance officer at college. My friend he used to tell me a lot of things.'</p>
<b>5</b>	<p>'No Maltese friends, maybe only one but the others they just say hi. The religion teacher gave me information on MCAST and post-secondary courses.'</p>
<b>6</b>	<p>At school during form 5 they guided us on the choice of post- secondary courses. We had a problem with the stipend and now after two/three months it's sorted. No I do not feel like the Maltese, I wish I am engaged in the Maltese community but I am not.'</p>

## Second round of Interviews - The Present

### Education

- 1** 'Have 'A' Levels but have no certificates, cannot prove it. No information about the system at MCAST. Started at level 2 and found it very easy. I requested a copy of my certificates from my country. Applied level 5. Studying in a foreign country is not easy. There are differences between you and the resident student because you are not surrounded by your own people. Education is the key in life. This fighting, misbehaving you will never see well educated persons invoked. Anybody who knows his rights, they do not fight. I am also encouraging my brothers, the young ones not to give up and I always advise them that education is not something that you just go and achieve. Everything work hard and face a lot of challenges that will be your experience from education. Need to sweat, work hard, need to put your arms on, work hard and achieve it.'
- 2** 'My plan since I was young in my country was to finish my school and get more educated. How I can get good education, maybe I can attend full time. I spent a year without anything. I said I better get some good qualification, in fact what helped me was that during my free time I used to listen to English conversation. Maybe because I am not that educated and qualified otherwise I do not have any problems.'
- 3** 'They didn't give us a course in Maltese language. You have to do it all on your own voluntary English courses are not provided by the government. If I try and try, sometimes you will give up, not because you want to give up, but because some things really stop you. I am afraid I will end up like that, trying to finish it but i do not know about next year.'
- 4** 'Although I was learning nursing in my country but I do not have any certificates. I would like to be a doctor. The first year I was still not happy and I did not go because it was difficult. I wanted to first see the place, go for a walk around the place and second to prepare what I wanted to be and what I need to pay from my money, my home, my wife and to save all of myself. This year I applied for electrical installation. If I survive this year I say next year it will be a success but you have to keep going. I was away from school for a problem about my other half, about my family and my love.'
- 5** 'When I was at the open centre I went to school but I never told them where I live. I didn't have a lot of friends over there because I was the only one with dark skin over there. There was one girl, she used to come and sit next to me, however if she used to come and sit next to me during the first break, during the second break she used to sit with someone else. I used to be always alone. I stayed for about three weeks and then I left. At the other school it was nice because there were a lot of dark skin girls.'
- 6** 'I was in a secondary school. I used to tell them that I was ok and that I was trying hard. My sister had a problem with the teacher, he used to make fun of her handwriting but then after reporting, they kicked him out.'

## Second round of Interviews - The Present

	Determination	Financial Problems
<b>1</b>	<p>'Now I am afraid of nothing. I do not care what is going to happen; whatever they (at his country) do, let them do it My issue here is to study and get the certification, that is it. Definitely this year I am going to study top up degree. Repeating the failed unit helps me to understand better even for the top up degree. Reactions count. I focus more on what I am doing rather than on what you say. I do not take any notice of what they will be saying, they will stop it. When something is happening you need to stand up and say the truth. It is my duty as a student to study. I am looking for investment, investing for me to build a hospital and invest in my country.'</p>	<p>'The main problem. No money for bus, missing lessons. The biggest was the financial and reflected in the results.'</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>'Although I encountered so many difficulties, I didn't give up even at that time. I need something for a better future, that is why I continued and I managed, yes I managed. I improved and I am better than I was yesterday and before, today is a bit better. I always take note of what I need to do to improve myself and to improve my mind. You need to struggle more than Maltese and push that point.'</p>	<p>'I applied for an English language course but they asked for money and to be honest I didn't have any money at that time, it was just one month after detention. I used to get €300 a month from Social Security. All the money I had saved finished and I ended homeless.'</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>'I was always willing to study. I think I improved, I went through those rough days, but they made me strong. Now I am willing to finish my studies. Succeeding is my issue but what I am going through is....I cannot describe it. Migrants are suffering and some of them are very strong and they do not tell that they are suffering but they are all suffering. Financially, mentally they need a lot, even psychological lessons.'</p>	<p>'Basically it boils down to the financial. I have a big issue with the stipends office. They told me I am not entitled unless I have been living for five years in Malta.'</p>
<b>4</b>		
<b>5</b>		
<b>6</b>		

## Second round of Interviews - The Present

	<b>Spirituality</b>	<b>Differentiated Treatment</b>
<b>1</b>	<p>'God is for everyone. So it is not because I am black you do not want to stay with me, we all want to go to heaven. God created the black. Everyone is called to be saved. You cannot blame me because I am black.'</p>	<p>'You cannot expect to be treated the same as the inhabitants. That one is normal to me. Even at the workplace as a foreigner they expect you to do everything and if something is wrong they try to blame it on the foreigners. Foreigners at Hilton were all treated the same. No lecturer at MCAST have discriminated against me. I failed a unit and the lecturer wasn't happy because it was my fault and she was right to fail me.'</p>
<b>2</b>		<p>'I used to say 'this is not a country that helps migrants,' because at that time I was going through so much. Some people like European students they are lucky because they are not dark skin. It is a bit different between Maltese and foreign students but one will get the certificate. If you are from Africa your skin would be different, in Malta they face you differently.'</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>'When you go first you find certain problems and when you go to the second stage you find another set of problems. But thank God I managed to go through all those problems. Being you here I think is a key of integration into any society. Understand the community you are in and you have to be tolerant.'</p>	<p>'The system of the government is discriminatory always putting migrants in one box. Only here I saw the image of the bad things, the poverty, the criminals, the hunger and the desert. First things coming to mind are those things the media pumps in. Put everyone in one box. Generalised views on migrants. You will be treated like all others until you prove that you are different but you have to suffer a lot to prove who you are.'</p>
<b>4</b>		<p>'I am trying but I have some circumstances about myself. I am weak if I am by myself - sometimes it is hard. I was feeling sick mostly during lessons. I felt like I was living without a scope.'</p>
<b>5</b>		<p>'At MCAST they are treated like all other students but outside MCAST, offices they will tell you that you have to go to another place but like for the rest, for someone who is next to me, they will do it for him. Not only civil services offices, even shops and restaurants, you do not feel they really want to help you. Sometimes they think you are going to steal something. It is weird. Did you notice what she did to me? If you speak Maltese they ask, why you speak Maltese? And if you do not speak Maltese they will be asking you why you don't speak Maltese.'</p>
<b>6</b>		<p>'At MCAST we are treated like all other students. Regarding the treatment outside college: we are only humans and we do not eat people.'</p>

## Second round of Interviews - The Present

<b>The College</b>	
<b>1</b>	<p>'Very grateful to all staff at MCAST. So all of them contributed, the advice, the talks and everyone, everyone helped me a lot. The college should open its doors for all migrants to keep them together. To allow anyone who has the will to come to study, who has found the reason whereby he wants to study, then he needs to be encouraged because some need encouragement.'</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>'Certain lecturers are disrespectful, I am sorry to say that. Some lecturers do not care about you when asked a question, they look up and avoid doing something. I found it a bit difficult with the language at MCAST. Maltese students can understand the language so they are in an advantage. I always ask 'Who is the problem, the lecturer or me?' But sometimes it is the lecturer who is causing the problem. No clear policies/systems in place at National level. I ask one question and people give you different answers. When it comes to group work, if in a group there will be struggling a lot. It is difficult to find work with the group so it is very difficult at MCAST. This needs to be seen by some of the lecturers because they must see who is working with who and to tell them to speak English. The language is very important to understand.'</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>'At MCAST I do not feel any kind of discrimination. My lecturers they do so much to help me. I remember in the first year, they gave me extra lessons in English and stuff like that. I will be very happy if I see a system which gives every migrant a chance to succeed and to achieve the social inclusion.'</p>
<b>4</b>	<p>'Some circumstances that is all about me, it is not MCAST and it is not about my school.'</p>
<b>5</b>	
<b>6</b>	<p>'We can say we are accepted here at MCAST. They accept us but we are not like very friends with the Maltese. During break foreigners stay together, Maltese stay together, only the lessons bring us together. So in breaks you will see groups of foreigners and other groups of Maltese. More activities like to promote integration, sports activities and leisure activities.'</p>

## Third round of Interviews - Their Future.

	<b>Aims</b>
<b>1</b>	<p>'I want to be an entrepreneur. I would like to open a private hospital. In all African system the health issues are a big problem. Support my people and at the same time make a business. That is my big plan. I hope in the next two years I will achieve my degree. I am already there because HND is already done. I am trying to save money and try to make an improvement on the land. Then I put a proposal to the bank to apply for a loan. Plans are placed ahead of me and I am working hard. I cannot even sleep because I am working very hard to achieve my targets. I have friends who are pursuing with the course there is no way I am going to give up since I am a student. My aim is to achieve my target because by the age of 40 or 43 I might get my PhD so that is my target now. So the future is very smooth. In the future I will go back home and see my friends, some now are nurses, engineers, doctors. They will see me coming up, coming home with a foreign certification which would supersede what they have. I am not keen on what I see at MCAST, no my mind is not here in Malta because I know what I am doing, my mind is outside here. My target is to achieve. So if you try to love money at the moment and to study is difficult, you cannot - ether you drop one or the other, you need to choose. I am working to achieve hard what I want to live tomorrow. I know how to plan my life and I know how I want to live my life. I will top up my degree to get the warrant. Then I will move back home to settle there. Friends, we need to compete together, we need to achieve and keep together and that is my target.'</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>'I am thinking of nursing or medicine, medical or something else. I want to push myself into finishing my school. Interested in chemical engineering and willing to investigate on my own some medicine.'</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>'Further my education, get a solid knowledge that can help me in my future to obtain a good job and at the same time I can be able to help others as well with my earnings. Further my education to a degree level. Obtain a bachelor in electronics. Then after that I will apply for a job here in Malta or where can be possible to work. First preference is home country and work there. If not possible I prefer to go to any other stable country.'</p>
<b>4</b>	<p>'A medical doctor. Focused. Repeating what I had already learnt in my country. Continue for nursing until I get what I want. I want to continue until I reach my goals. It is very hard but maybe possible. I will never leave education until I reach my goal.'</p>
<b>5</b>	<p>'My aim is to finish level 4 and then go to University to follow Pharmacy degree course.'</p>
<b>6</b>	<p>'Every time I pray I say 'Please God accept our request so that we can go to America and start a new life and a new future.' Applied through a scheme of resettlement of migrants. Through UNHCR only America takes refugees from Malta.'</p>

## Third round of Interviews - Their Future

### Attitudes

- 1** 'Persistence and resiliency. You need to get up and start to make an improvement for people to let you feel the way you want to feel. If you need information you need to get it. Establishing what I want but not being a complainant, I do not complain for nothing, I do what I can to achieve what I want. You need to get up if you want to feel better in every society, you need to fight out, and nobody knows your mind. I feel integrated, if you find education you will be lucky. Without education it is difficult. If I am a migrant my talent is not a migrant. I am a migrant fine, I came here illegally, but I have adapted in a way to integrate. I want to integrate myself fully into the society. You need to start and find a solution. The world will be ideal when I want it to be ideal, it depends on me to make it ideal and not anybody else. I was independent right from my childhood up to this day. Resilient. I think only four out of the whole class remained and only me as a foreigner just completed the higher level HND. I am a foreigner so I need to come and again we need to understand each other. I do not see the ideal world because for everything you need to work hard for yourself.'
- 2** 'Parental influence. Father pharmacist with experience in natural medicine. It all depends on how we live, how we rent and with the money we are planning to put, save for example for things of the programme we are going to start at school. It is very difficult to achieve but most of the people who never give up, I mean they will achieve the goal that they want. But the situation is not easy. Optimistic, on the achieving side. "You are always achieving boy" (father). When am I going to give back something to the people who helped me, something of what they did for me? I have to do something for them (a sense of gratitude). Generalisations are bad. We migrants do some bad things and some good things.'
- 3** Overall a positive attitude.
- 4** 'Last year I solved many things and I will not give up because I am here to win and I mean it. I prepared a security certificate to have the licence and work as security at night and continue with my education during the day.'
- 5** 'I would say ten on ten but it depends.'
- 6** 'Up to Donald Trump this is our last chance. Politics change all hopes. Zero % if I stay here because my future is not here. If they accept me I put myself seven out of ten. If they do not accept me I would say a four on ten. Everything is closed here for us.'

## Third round of Interviews - Their Future

### Difficulties in general

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>1</b> | <p>'For me I am not social, that is my problem. I am not blaming anybody. No social life, home, school, work. These three places are the only places where you can find me. I never go to people's houses. I come from a poor family so I used to stay back from the initiative to do something that will hurt me and I will not have somebody to back me. So it has become part of me, so it is not easy for me to go out of that frame. Changes are there to be tackled, faced and overcome. Whatever is the distraction, I do not care because to achieve it would be my target. Here in Malta I do not have any support however that does not discourage me. I am working in an office and not working as a cleaner. I started education with the attitude that nobody taking care of me. I struggled and studied without support.'</p>   |
| <b>2</b> | <p>'Discrimination because of skin colour, because we are foreigners. Some people are racist, they do not like to mix but actually they are not racist, they do not have relationships with foreigners or other students. Most people communicate by using the Maltese language. They do not care about the foreigners. They are ignored. The problem is lack of mixing with foreign students. Some people are very kind, they try as much as possible to help you. Lack of information. It is not easy to find a job, it is not easy to integrate with others. Negative reactions. Two neighbours when they saw us in front of the door, we say hello, good morning, good afternoon, they do not even reply for the greetings. Most Maltese they do understand and give us help but because you know, they do it because of law. Racism is illegal in Malta. So the law is forcing them. If they can they will throw you out, they help you only because of the law. The financial aspect is something that discourages migrant learners. A lot of migrants say that the Maltese are not good persons. Maybe one out of four is good. Migrants are offered lessons in English and Maltese but they do not give them proper lessons like only for one month or two. A lot of people they push you out. They do not want to understand you. The Maltese they believe in the skin colour. Racism. We spent a whole year and I still hold the place where I came in October and June.'</p> |
| <b>3</b> | <p>'The main problem is the financial aspect. Meeting family, sometimes I am very homesick and stuff like that. The Maltese people here they judge before they get to know you and is what sometimes discourage you. Discrimination - They just call you black. Generalisations - He is just like the other migrants. A bad reputation about migrants and it is very difficult to break that reputation. My friends really encourage me and support me even financially. Sometimes they give me some pocket money when I run out of money. I have Maltese and European friends from all over the world and they are supportive without expecting something in return, just helping. The Maltese educational system sometimes is discouraging for the young migrant to continue with education. Some of the Maltese when they are a coloured person they judge and say that they are all the same. The first thing they say is that they are ignorant and fool, migrants do not understand and they are all in that situation. Migrants do not get paid well, they are getting less pay than others.'</p>  |
| <b>4</b> | <p>'A chance to make a living and also about economy, that has become a problem. I was going night work, some part times and mornings going to school. If you do not pay €500 a month you cannot live here. My wife is working so she can cover about me. Lack of clear information. I was not informed and had no skills to go for a job. The language was a problem. Now I learnt English and I learnt electrical installation skill. The first problem in Malta is the housing. Another problem is transport and means of transport. Travelling from one place to another. We cannot go to school because of the financial. Shifts is a problem, can be a problem. I work at night and one day I work at morning as a cleaner or other works so he says I have no chance, if one works morning goes evening courses and if one works night go college in the mornings. Everyone will tell you  I have no stipend, no means because the benefits are not enough, I cannot pay the rent of the house and all the expenses of the basic life so I cannot go to school, so that is why I prefer to do the job.'</p>  |

**5** 'Nothing discouraged me. It is easy to enter school/college really easy. The national system is easy. What migrants need are English language lessons. Housing. Jobs. Right information on education, employment and services including language, history and culture of the country.'

**6** 'For me my papers are temporary. Lack of stability. Not accepted for basketball because of the hijab. For basketball they make a big thing you know because of our scarf. Everything is closed here. In this country you know the people they are fed up of us but we do not show them that we are reading that feeling. Lack of support. The foreigners support the foreigners not the Maltese support the foreigners. Boat people are supported by foreigners. Maltese in Floriana, these are people who do not like the Africans, you can see this from their eyes. Hatred against Africans. No reactions from the other overlooking Maltese. They started throwing some stones on my mum. No one was doing anything to help. I was saying like I am dreaming or what? We started fighting and they took off my sister's scarf. Police didn't speak to us in a nice way. Ok forget what was said and move on. We weren't treated by police in a good way. Here in Malta you feel you are not welcomed. Some of the students are close minded, they still believe we are taking their places and jobs and anything.'

## Third round of Interviews - Their Future

<b>Difficulties at College</b>	
<b>1</b>	<p>'No one gave me clear information on the education system in Malta. Referred to MCAST as it is free of charge. At MCAST I started Foundation when I had 'A' levels. At MCAST no one informed me. Thought that maybe the Maltese Education system is different from the one of my country. No clear information. The African system is based on the 'A' levels system. Everything is based on exams, you go prepare and write. It was the BTEC system that tried to frighten me because then they let me change course and here I am at long last. Lecturers are good and I cannot say anything wrong about them. They do their best to support how they can do to support the students. They are always ready to help.'</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>'Differentiated treatment. An EU guy at college, students call him to join them and help him. They call him to sit with them but no one talks to me so this kind of attitude is because of the skin. Some of the Maltese students when they come to speak English, they are afraid, shy of making mistakes. Some lecturers they are very good, they are trying their best. But there are some who do not care about the students, they just run up in Maltese. If during the lessons we ask 'Miss can you translate that please?' So one of the main problems at college is the use of Maltese in class. If the lecturer explains about exams by using the Maltese, if I miss something that is crucial and makes me that I have to ask to explain in English. Some of the Maltese students cannot communicate effectively in English. Migrants are not all geared in English, what they actually need are proper English language lessons. It should be at Foundation level so that everyone would improve on English. There is lack of commitment from some of the lectures. We reported. They have to do something not because of foreigners, they have to do something for the Maltese as well. Because if they do understand, they will get more, they learn more English language until the level is reached. The head of college, members of staff and foreign students, they have to fight for themselves and to speak out. Reports are ignored, no action. You get tired of reporting. You do not even get good results from them. I reported four times a lesson that I found difficult but nothing happened. Maybe the Maltese students report and they will get, not immediately but they will get a good result. This is discrimination maybe because of skin colour. From my experience in Malta skin colour counts. In the beginning at college I did not find any encouragement and support. I didn't have work and after five months I left. They used to give me €300 a month, they stopped it at once and I didn't have any money income. I got some encouraging experiences, a bit my English language skills, my personality etc. At MCAST I saw a lot of help and encouragement.'</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>'I can say honestly that at MCAST I never experienced any differentiated treatment. Sometimes the lecturers are in my favour. At Foundation they gave me an extra course in order to solidify my English language. They are quite helpful. The syllabus at MCAST is very encouraging. You can finish one year and you will obtain the certification of that year.'</p>
<b>4</b>	<p>'No clear guidance on how to work out the assignments. The first time I am learning here, I was not understanding how assignments, how I need to do and that became a big problem. Some lecturers help me a lot to continue with my education and encourage me not to give up.'</p>
<b>5</b>	<p>'Well informed about the college. The guidance teacher of my previous school gave us good detailed information. The MCAST career advisers during a visit, they showed us MCAST and everything. I knew about MCAST because my brother studied here as well. I also got information from friends who were here before. That helped. At MCAST I found what I needed. I am learning Maltese. I can understand some words but it is complicated and too hard. I do not understand the way you write, it is very difficult.'</p>
<b>6</b>	<p>'We found support at MCAST from teachers but we still feel we are aliens. I have been in MCAST for two years. I still do not know my classmates. They feel I am an alien for them, feel I am not welcomed. There is a barrier between us. I find support from friends but not from everyone. Discrimination. The teacher of Maths if I tell her to explain again she gets nervous but with her favourite students the story would be different. Language barrier. They are Maltese, they can talk freely. If we say, 'We did not understand it,' the teacher gets fed up, explains again but briefly and with a loud voice.'</p>

## Third round of Interviews - Their Future

### Solutions

**1**

‘Education leads to integration. ‘Now the HND certificate have raised me up with the Maltese who have an HND qualification. If you count the Maltese HND society, I am part of them.’ The most necessary help if possible is accommodation. It is the number one, the ideal support required. Influence other migrants to try to bring them on board to try to teach them and make them understand the full integration into the society. What about my friend? They can use the hatred they have on him because of his illiterate behaviour or his incapability of doing certain things. Engage other migrants into the learning process. There are some out there, they are very clever, but they say, ‘I do not have support how can I study and do this?’ But there is nothing easy on this earth. I think that those who have full documents, they should receive a stipend from government. Again, they provide accommodation but for me I do not have documents so my problem is different from theirs. In the desert, they look everything including my documents.’

**2**

‘Fr. Savio is very supportive re where I live. He does support me. More information on the choice to study. To integrate well with the Maltese. I want to give advice, to tell migrants to integrate with the Maltese society. To give more advice on the college at strategic places, like open centres, residential homes. The provision of short courses maybe one hour or two a week. Right information disseminated on services including education. Acceptance. Everyone has to work hard to achieve it. Migrants unite themselves and organise groups, Maltese society, migrant refugee society. We have to do some activities that interest people. Promote activities. If you are an active person, not lazy and work hard you will get more support and understanding from people. Resilience - Never give up but keep on trying. The college has to educate, they have to control the school. Promote the idea that we are one, we have to accept different faces. Help each other. If students report something they should be given an immediate answer. Change should take place to improve the situation following feedback and reports. More activities both at MCAST and outside. This facilitates integration. They should believe in us. Good activities generate good smiling. Aspirations. I want to see more foreigners at college. I want to see more students feel comfortable and integrate smoothly in the Maltese society. In the future the people who come after me, the Maltese integrate with them be they refugees and migrant students.’

**3**

‘What we need is just to have equal opportunities like all other students. You must stop judging someone without knowing him/her because as they say, do not judge a book by its cover. Judging on bad reputation. To sort out the issue of stipends. Most of the migrants they do not have a stipend. They live on Social Security. The college should be more organised, particularly the people who are in charge. They should organise some activities and hold events, invite all students and tell them about the migrants, how they are suffering and the way they are living here in Malta. Awareness on migrants and share migrants' experiences. Give a true picture of what they are going through. Some Maltese think that migrants like to stay at home, do not like to work when actually they are very hard workers. students who are taking or willing to further their education. It would be great because the country at the end will benefit from them. A call to support migrants who are in education.’

4

'Financial help would aid migrants to continue with their education. To be successful you need to continue with your education. A lot of people they ask me where I go and how am I going to have a better life and I tell them to go through that process and you will do it, the people to make a success and to help each other. I would like to see assistance in housing and benefits, maybe a balance for the basic life, to make it until, during that time to continue with education. Then it would be partially paid back when in employment. Suggesting the recognition of prior learning. Some of the migrants, they learnt from African universities, they know education so to make a calibration and to ask the people some questions on their knowledge. Some they are economists, some they have degree from Africa, management degree, I saw one guy, he is in Malta, I saw him two weeks ago and he has this qualification in electrical installation and he is working as a cleaner. This can be done through an assignment and an interview. At the college I am having good time with my lecturers and students so there are no problems and during that time I was learning. 2016-2017 I was happy and I am completing my course and I have nothing else but to say thank you to all of you.'



