

## Family Literacy: The Maltese Context

### 1) Context of the country (illiteracy rates, school system, any information which is relevant for understanding your project)

Education Act (Chapter 327) It is the right of every citizen of the Republic of Malta to receive education and instruction without any distinction of age, sex, belief or economic means.

- According to the 1995 National Census, 11% of the population over 11 was illiterate. The Census relies on self-reporting of literacy or illiteracy. 52% of the population aged over 16 did not complete secondary level education. This group is divided as follows:

15% ages 16-34

44% ages 35-54

18% ages 55-64

23% ages over 64

- According to the 2001 Labour Force Survey of the National Statistics Office (NSO), Malta has the highest percentage of early school leavers not in further education and training: 54.9% (compared with Eurostat). For females the rate is 51.6% and for males it is 58 %

- According to the 2001 Labour Force Survey of the NSO, Malta has the highest at-risk-of-poverty rate for unemployed persons aged 16 and over: 50.4% (compared with Eurostat). For females the rate is 31.5% and for males it is 56.7 %

- According to the 2001 NSO Labour Force Survey, 4.6% of persons aged 15 and over participate in education or training

- The first national standardised survey was the National Literacy Survey (NLS), first carried out with the whole cohort of Maltese 7 year-olds – about 5,000 – in 1999 and subsequently carried out with the same cohort in 2002. The NLS tested the children for phonological awareness, literacy concepts, reading and spelling. Literacy achievement is evaluated by annual pen-and-paper exams, the most important ones being at ages 8, 10 and 16 (the latter have an oracy component). Malta did not participate in AILS. We do not as yet have an objective measure of the adult literacy situation.

### 2) Aims of the project/concept of family literacy in your project

- \* Early family literacy intervention helps preschool children prepare for academic and social success in school.
- \* Parents will be able to share questions, concerns and strategies with their peers and site activity teachers.
- \* Role models and structured situations are provided for positive parent-child interactions.
- \* Parents are guided to increase their motivation, skills and knowledge and be in a better position to prepare for further training or even employment.

### 3) Target population/cultural and social content and languages

Hilti Clubs cater for mixed ability groups while at the same time using a range of differentiated teaching and learning approaches to reach children who most require literacy support. The language tackled during a typical Hilti Club is chosen by the hosting school after identifying the target age group and/or the children for the programme. All things being equal, schools catering for disadvantaged and marginalized communities are given priority of service.

### 4) Programme design, content and progression routes (incl. place of project provision, start, duration and perspective of project)

Each programme is designed to run for one scholastic term, and the scholastic year is divided into three terms. At the beginning of each scholastic term, the Programme Co-ordinator or her delegate will lead Parent-to-Parent meetings in each site where Hilti Programme will be running. The nature of these meetings is to brief the parents on the benefits of these programmes to their children and to encourage them to participate. During these meetings it is made clear that children will only be admitted if a significant adult participates in the programme. Parents are helped to realise that benefits can only be reaped if both parent and child attend.

Class teachers are given an outline of the programme before the actual recruitment starts, thus creating a shared understanding and thereby increasing the likelihood of attaining the targets. They are also asked to identify particular families that would benefit most by participating in the programme. Parent leaders emerge from the Hilti Club. These receive further training and are of vital importance as an 'advertisement' for other programmes held in the same locality. Other parents are empowered and motivated to proceed in their own of lifelong learning journey.

### 5) Teacher training; teacher background and qualification

The FES has a policy of providing training to its staff prior to and during service provision, including Hilti Staff.

The aims of this training programme are:

- capacity-building of staff to provide and review FES programmes effectively;
- capacity-building of staff to adapt programmes according to the needs of participants;

- capacity-building of staff to have a holistic perspective of FES provision, and the role of the programme they are to give service in within this perspective;
- the integration of a family-inclusive perspective in all FES programmes;
- making available to schools a cohort of teachers with training and experience in differentiated teaching and learning, home-school links, family literacy, educational team leadership, formative assessment strategies and basic skills strategies, who would assist their day schools in capacity building in these areas.

This training programme has:

- two levels, Level One for Tutors and Level Two for Co-ordinators
- for Levels 1 and 2 a common core of 4 units spread over four thematic modules
- for Level 1: a further two compulsory units within the same modules that are designed according to the specific requirements of the different service programmes, including Hilti.
- for Level 2: a further compulsory unit

Each unit:

- is theoretically grounded
- has a continuous and/or summative assessment component
- has a strong 'professional' rather than an 'academic' orientation
- is based on a master-apprentice model of learning, with in-built cycles of modeling, practice and reflection.

Training Programme Design for Hilti (family Literacy) tutors and Co-ordinators

Module	Unit 1 (U1)	Unit 2 (U2)
<p><b>Module 1:</b> FES and Education provision in Malta</p>	<p><b>Content:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of FES and its programmes in national educational vision (especially the NMC) and present provision</li> <li>• Synergetic quality of FES programmes</li> <li>• FES-school links</li> <li>• Group dynamics and team building to ensure effective provision</li> </ul> <p><b>Assessment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Through reflective journal and mentoring</li> </ul> <p><b>Core unit</b></p>	<p><b>Content:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team maintenance</li> <li>• Programme administration</li> <li>• Assessment and evaluation procedures</li> <li>• Adapting and Personalizing programme provision</li> </ul> <p><b>Assessment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of one personalized educ. programme</li> <li>• Through reflective journal and mentoring</li> </ul> <p><b>Compulsory unit for Co-ordinators ONLY</b></p>
<p><b>Module 2:</b> Literacy Approaches</p> <p><b>Module 3:</b> Working with Parents</p>	<p><b>Content:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Literacy: international perspectives</li> <li>• Family Literacy: the Maltese experience</li> <li>• Family Literacy in the context of a national basic skills strategy</li> <li>• English Methodology for reluctant learners</li> </ul> <p><b>Assessment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coursework</li> <li>• Through reflective journal and mentoring</li> </ul> <p><b>Core unit</b></p> <p><b>Content:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging perceptions and prejudices about parents and parental involvement in schools</li> <li>• Home-school links: inter-national perspectives</li> <li>• Home-school links: the Maltese experience</li> <li>• Working with challenging families</li> <li>• Integrating families in FES programme</li> </ul>	<p><b>N.A.</b></p> <p><b>N.A.</b></p>

	provision  <b>Assessment:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Through reflective journal and mentoring</li> </ul> <b>Core unit</b>	
<b>Module 4:</b> Practicum	<b>Content:</b> Trainees observe Klabb Hilti, Nwar, Klabb Kittieba Zghar and Id f'Id sites  <b>Assessment:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• workshops</li> <li>• Through reflective journal and mentoring</li> </ul> <b>Core unit</b>	<b>Content:</b> Trainees participate in the provision of a particular programme  <b>Assessment:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• workshops</li> <li>• Through reflective journal and mentoring</li> </ul> <b>Compulsory diversified unit for all</b>

Teacher background and qualification requirements:

- a permanent Teachers' Warrant;
- familiarity with the application of differentiated teaching methodologies;
- Preferably a B.Educ.graduate;
- experience in project management and implementation;
- a track record of stimulating children in the areas of creative thinking, writing and communication skills;
- experience in facilitating groupwork;
- a clear educational vision in line with the aims of the new National Curriculum and those of FES;
- the ability and willingness to work hard and creatively to meet demanding deadlines;
- availability after school hours.
- Experience in the implementation of Writing Process methodology or other literacy strategies for at risk students will be considered an asset.

#### 6) Focus of the programme (children, young people, adults)

After school Family Literacy Programmes: Hilti Club - for families whose children are between the ages of 5 and 8

After school Family Literacy Programmes: HW Club – for families whose children are between the ages of 9 and 11 (to ensure that low achievers acquire basic skills for performance in Secondary schools)

Morning Pre-school Programmes: for parents whose children attend kindergarten classes

Hilti in Sports: provides literacy sessions in conjunction with football nurseries to families who need literacy support and who are not attending Hilti Club, although they are eligible for such attendance.

#### 7) How is the curriculum developed?

A planning session is held once a week and all the tutors involved in the family literacy projects are expected to attend. A full catalogue of session plans; compiled by qualified teachers trained in the field of family literacy and developed in accordance with the day school syllabus, is available for reference by all tutors. However, the tutors are expected to plan and develop a scheme of work with inbuilt differentiation and personalisation. It is a common practice that teachers share resources and other material amongst them.

#### 8) Methodological approach (if any)

- To strengthen family literacy provision as a value-added initiative that enhances home-school links, parental lifelong learning and children's basic skills development
- To assist in a teaching-learning paradigm shift by demonstrating 'alternative' methodologies and strategies that actively involve the participation of parents
- To boost family literacy as a key element in early childhood education so as to become an integral part of day-school provision

- To lay elements of the groundwork for school as community learning centres.

#### 9) Monitoring and Evaluation (which instruments are used, quantitative or qualitative?)

All the individual projects are closely monitored to ensure good quality provision. A core team, made up of four Hilti Centre Coordinators, each of whom is responsible for the smooth running of a number of sites.

##### *Collection of data: the portfolio system*

Every child will have a portfolio that will indicate all work done during the learning process, including oracy, reading and writing activities.

The tutors are asked to keep a journal with entries after each session. Feedback from parents and day school teachers is a valuable tool of evaluation. Thus at the end of each scholastic year, class teachers whose pupils have attended Hilti Club during that scholastic year are invited to fill in an evaluative questionnaire. All the data is collected for statistical purposes.

#### 10) How is the project financed?

The Foundation for Educational Services (FES) is a public funded entity. The families contribute a token fee of 7 euros for a whole programme. However, families who face financial difficulties are exempted from this fee.

#### 11) Partnerships in the framework of your project

The Education Division; The University of Malta; AKS (Association for School Councils); State Primary Schools; Local Councils; parents.

#### 12) Best practice example (something that works particularly well)

Family literacy programs are designed to help adults to develop literacy skills while promoting the learning success of their children. Reading together builds confidence for low-literacy parents who might be reluctant to read to other adults, provides a positive model of literacy to children, and fosters parent-child bonding.

By supporting adult literacy, early childhood education and parenting skills, family literacy programs aim to break the cycle of intergenerational illiteracy.