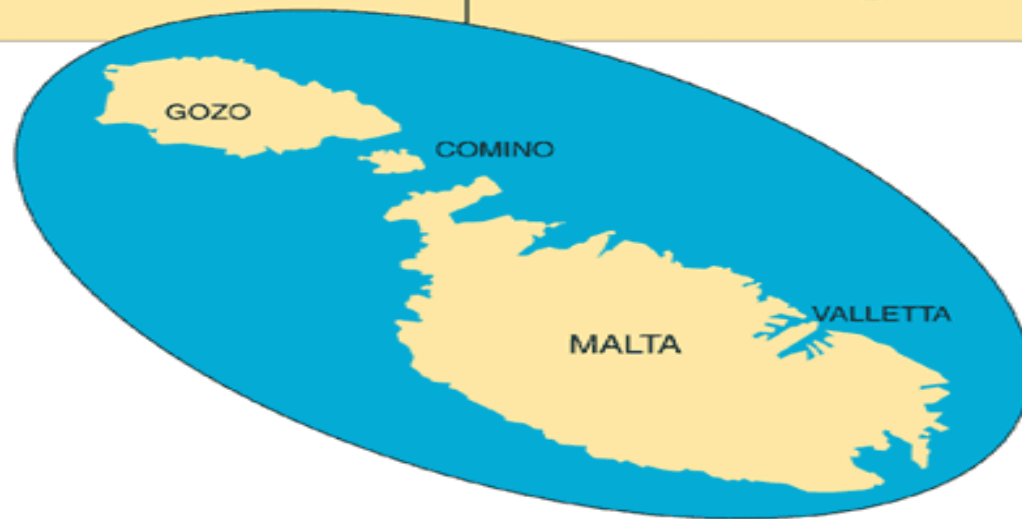


Relationship Education

Perspectives
From
A country in transition
(Malta)

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Presentation Layout

- The family value system in Malta with a special reference to teenagers and young adults in relationships
- A relational theory of love as my framework for understanding relationships
- What we know and the gaps that exist in the area of relationship education

Married Life in Malta

- No Divorce Law
- Low level of marital separation 3.7% (2005)
- High level of marital satisfaction
- A strong community weave



National Survey on Sexual Behaviour of children aged 14 to 16 Bugeja 2008

- 13% had engaged in sexual intercourse
- Less than 20% of these used a condom
- Births outside marriage have escalated from 13% in 2001 to 25% in 2007
- 29% were by teenage mothers

Up to 98% own a computer

NSO 2003

- Parents are unable to supervise their children on the computer
- 66.6% do not know about internet-filtering software!
- 25.6% of youngsters browsed websites or chat rooms with violent or pornographic content
- 21% fixed meetings with persons they came to know on the internet

The Paceville phenomenon



University Students

- Have become increasingly secular (Tabone 2003)
- 71% approve of premarital sex
- 39.6% have engaged in sexual intercourse
- 99.8% see nothing wrong with premarital cohabitation; only 42% see it as a proviso to marriage

The experience of young married couples Azzopardi 2007

- Disappointment was high in the 1st 3 months
- The case of Maria and Joseph
- Work life balance is a major issue
- But easier where husband gave his share in the housework or wife willingly gave a bigger share in homemaking and husband would invest in career
- Those who struggled wished for more connectedness

The needs of first time parents

Borg Xuereb 2008

- A journey for which they are unprepared
- 96% attend parent craft courses
- Decline in marital satisfaction in husbands and wives
- Wives decline in emotional well being
- 54% of mothers resumed work by 6months postnatal

A relational theory of love

- Human beings find it very painful to survive without love
- “When one partner is vulnerable and reaches for a reassuring connection with the other, and the other either provides it or fails to do so that defines the quality of a love relationship”
Johnson 2007 p9
- We need to validate the need for safe emotional engagement and empathic attunement in relationship education

What relationship education?

- To be effective relationship education needs to be part of a **well thought out family policy for example**
- we need a Sexual Health strategy
- we need more family friendly measures that extend to the private sector
- men need to be empowered at the work place to share family responsibilities

value research that would inform
our thinking that would help us
respond

- eg explore why young adults are afraid of commitment and marriage
- what are the issues at stake?
- when we find ourselves between two cultures there is always the risk that traditionalists take a judgmental view towards the new generation and vice versa

Educational courses need to respond to the needs of the population concerned

- Bugeja (2008) carried out 15 focus groups amongst 14 to 16 year olds in order to explore their needs in relationships in learning and growing sexually

Teenagers complained that RE was limited at home and at school

- They wished to learn more on
 - how to start a relationship
 - how to maintain a relationship
 - how to end a relationship
- were afraid of the risks involved in engaging in intimate relationships

Parents too need support

- They are unaware of the dangers that their children are exposed to
- Parents are at a loss on how to maintain an authoritative stance
- Are our schools doing enough?

Pre marital courses offered by Cana are a must!

- These should in fact be adopted by the State in the case of civil marriage
- But what do those who do not practice their religion but still marry in church gain from these courses?
- Why was Maria so disappointed 3 months into her marriage?

Parent Craft courses (Borg Xuereb 2008)

- 96.5% attend !
- Courses do not expose participants to real life situations warts and all
- Over 300 suggestions were put forward
- included the idea that preparation for parenthood should start in secondary school and continue in the life span till grandparenthood.

- wished for more professional support
- appreciated social support and wished to listen to experiences from other parents