

**PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF MALTA: ITS PRESENCE AND
POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION – A REALITY OR A MIRAGE?**

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Abstract

Personal and Social Development (PSD) is a statutory subject in Maltese schools. Whilst PSD does not exist as a subject in Maltese higher education, PSD practice is present within the academic content as well as the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Its' claimed purpose is to support the students' personal and social development. This study explores stakeholder perceptions of PSD practice in Malta, the way in which it is included within the University of Malta (UoM) undergraduate experience and its contribution to the holistic development of undergraduates. Findings indicate that a number of factors impact upon the need, and resulting provision of PSD practice in Malta. These include: smallness of the Maltese Islands; their lack of natural resources and Malta's reliance on human capabilities. While these factors may generate the need for PSD practice in Malta, other factors, like the traditional academic oriented system and the sense of fear for change, tend to hinder its provision. On the other hand, PSD practice in Malta is facilitated through policies which promote it; the compulsory PSD subject in schools and the different opportunities for PSD practice. In general, UoM students from the Science and Social Sciences faculty clusters, those attending the Degree Plus programme and those participating in extra-curricular groups, ranked highly the provision of generic competences training, the emphasis on their active role and the holistic aims. The thesis suggests that PSD practice at the UoM is not consistent across faculties, but whenever there was PSD practice, students appeared to value it and recognise its contribution to their holistic development. Such link is hindered by factors like the traditional pre-tertiary education, the influence of the European Union with the economic agenda and a neo-liberal, globalized and capitalist society that glorifies competition, performativity and market demands. In conclusion, it is recommended that there is genuine movement towards PSD practice for holistic aims.

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List of Abbreviations

PSD	Personal and Social Development
PSE	Personal and Social Education
PSCD	Personal, Social and Career Development
PD	Personal Development
PAL	Personal Awareness Lifeskills
PDP	Personal Development Programme
PDS	Programme for the Development of Skills
VET	Vocational Educational Training
UoM	University of Malta
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
ITS	Institute of Tourism Studies
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
TIMMS	Trends in Mathematics and Science Study
ST	Standpoint theory
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
S.E.	Standard Error
CR	Critical Ratio
P	P-value
UREC	University Research Ethics Committee
EL	Emotional Literacy
SCEPTRe	Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education
CMEPSP	Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress
CDC	United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
VIA	Values In Action Classification of Strengths

Preface

In the Maltese Islands, primary and secondary school students have a compulsory subject named Personal and Social Development (PSD). The subject focuses on the development of interpersonal, group and intrapersonal generic competences, thus providing a difference from the academic and exam-oriented educational system and culture (Camilleri, Caruana, Falzon, & Muscat, 2012). Interpersonal and group generic competences are competences that pertain to “one’s ability to understand and communicate with other persons” (Hall & Rueth, 1999, p. 31) whereas intrapersonal generic competences pertain “to an individual’s sense of self-worth and accomplishment” (Ibid., p. 31). Camilleri et al. (2012) claim that the PSD subject is distinct in its development, ethos, design, structure, pedagogy, methodology and implementation. The subject was and is still different from other curricular subjects because it is “psychologically based, and is not aimed at addressing the content but rather at emphasizing individual development through a change in skills and attitudes” (Giordmaina, 2000, p. 193). The mission statement of the PSD subject reflects this by stating that: “PSD aims at empowering students to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes which will enable them to live and participate fruitfully and effectively in their environment” (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005a, p. 2).

As a secondary school student, I remember clearly that the subject gave me the passport to deal with my life situations in a more effective way by applying different personal and social generic competences¹. An important aspect which I recall is the context for learning. Whilst we were in a circle setting, lessons were very person-centred and directed at the students' specific needs. I remember that I used to learn and apply such learning to my life circumstances. This inculcated a sense of desire to continue specializing in this subject. I obtained a Bachelor in Education in PSD in 2007 and I immediately started working as a PSD teacher at a state secondary school in Malta in a socially deprived area. For me, teaching was already a vocation but whilst working, I started to realize that being a PSD teacher can make a difference in the life of the students. Whilst establishing a very positive relationship with my students, I felt that through PSD they were very willing to self-disclose their thoughts and feelings. In this way, I started understanding their context and I based my lessons on their particular needs. Facilitating the PSD subject was, and it is still, a very rewarding task. At the same time, my interest in young people started to increase, making me eager to read more about such cohort. As a PSD teacher, in my first year, we used to have Monday meetings for professional development. During one of those meetings, Mr Kenneth

¹ For the purpose of the research, the term 'personal and social generic competences' is used to refer to those competences which are not learnt through one specific subject. Instead they are aimed to develop the personal and the social dimension of the individual through a series of experiences, including different subjects.

Camilleri, who was also a PSD teacher at that time, but with more teaching experience, made an announcement that those teachers who would like to help in the setting up of a Malta PSD Teachers' Association, may approach him. With a mixture of curiosity and interest, I decided to embark on this project, since I believed that I could dedicate some time for the person-centred and holistic subject that I am involved in. As a result, after establishing the Committee, we used to meet on a regular basis to work on the objectives of the Association. During the Annual General Meeting, the roles were established and I was nominated Vice-President in 2008-2009. With hard work, the Malta PSD Teachers' Association started to be well-known and different initiatives were established. In 2009, I was nominated as the President of the Malta PSD Teachers' Association. This gave me the space to initiate projects that have to do with the PSD subject including training seminars for teachers and other educators as well as meetings with stakeholders and government officials.

Given my interest in the PSD subject and my interest in young people, I decided to start a 3 year Master Degree in Youth and Community Studies in 2008 with the University of Malta (UoM). This gave me further experience in working with young people. In the same year, the Head of School noticed my positive relationship with students and my willingness to practise my helping skills. As a result, he encouraged me to apply for the post of a guidance teacher with the role of assisting students in their

career path, providing helping skills, organizing different events to assist their development and liaising with different stakeholders. From 2009, I was employed as a PSD and guidance teacher at the same state secondary school I was employed before. Two years later, I started working as a guidance teacher at a primary school, in addition to my roles mentioned previously. In 2009, in the second year of my Master Degree, I started working as a coordinator of ‘Sajf Attiv 2009’² in the area where I teach. Sajf Attiv was a project in which I had to explore the non-governmental organizations located in a particular area and to analyze the possible services that could have existed in the area. Unfortunately, I discovered that there were no youth clubs offering services to young people, hence motivating me to open a youth club with the help of the Local Council. Even though the location of the youth club changed throughout the years, due to different reasons, I still help in the leadership of the youth club which gives me further experience with young people.

In 2008, I started working as a part-time lecturer within the Department of Counselling, Faculty for Social Well-Being and the Faculty of Education at the UoM. My role is that of lecturing within the Bachelor in Education and Post-Graduate Diploma in Education, on a number of topics namely experiential learning, methodology, person-centred

² Translated in English – ‘Active Summer 2009’

education, holistic education, teaching practice file, processing and facilitation skills. I am also a tutor of students studying to become PSD teachers and a co-researcher with different lecturers about themes related to PSD. From the year 2012, I also started giving lectures on school-based youth work within the Department of Youth and Community Studies, Faculty for Social Well-Being at the UoM.

My work as a PSD and a guidance teacher at a secondary state school; my experience as a President of Malta PSD Teachers' Association; my work as a part-time lecturer in PSD and school-based youth work at the UoM; and my voluntary involvement in the College youth club for young people, all acted as major beacons. They encouraged me to do my research study about PSD practice. Since I come from this background, I was interested in exploring the perceptions of different Maltese education stakeholders about such type of education, the way it is provided to the UoM undergraduate students and its contribution to the life of late adolescents and early adults.

Chapter 1:

Personal and Social Development

(PSD) Practice

1.1 Introduction

Personal and Social Development, abbreviated as PSD, is a compulsory curricular subject at Maltese primary and secondary schools. PSD is also a way of working, a practice that aims to develop students personally and socially. Since PSD does not exist as a formal curriculum subject in Maltese higher education, in this thesis it is more usually referred to as practice. PSD practice has a particular philosophical, sociological and psychological framework, which will be explained thoroughly in this thesis. The research explores perceptions of University of Malta (UoM) stakeholders, Maltese education academics and policy makers with regards to PSD practice in Malta. The research focuses mainly on the undergraduate experience at the UoM. It explores the extent and ways in which PSD practice is applied to the undergraduate experience, and the extent to which such practice enhances the well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability of young UoM students. Even though at the UoM, there is no compulsory subject named PSD, students can still experience PSD practice.

This research examines this experience and considers the extent to which the UoM caters for the personal and social development of late adolescents and early adults, who are here referred to as ‘young

undergraduates'. This research cohort was chosen because apart from being the largest group of students at the UoM, this is a cohort that is still going through the process or moving from adolescence to adulthood. I decided to focus on a particular group, so that the results can be also linked to their development stage.

This first chapter defines PSD practice and provides an explanation of the research gap. After this section, the aims of this study are presented. Since a limited review of literature was held before data collection, and since results collected from this research are presented throughout the thesis, the use of the grounded theory methodology and the reasons behind it, are explained from the start of the thesis. The sequence of steps that were held in the study are also introduced so that the reader knows when empirical evidence started to be collected, and how and when reference was made to literature. At the end of this chapter, the organization of the thesis is presented.

1.2 Defining Personal and Social Development practice

PSD practice can be defined as an educational practice that targets the entire holistic development of the student. Since there is not a universal definition of PSD practice, but there are different authors who define education that addresses the personal and social development of students, I

present a working definition for PSD practice. This was elicited from the literature and the initial semi-structured interviews held at the start of the research.

PSD practice differs from the traditional type of education. This is because there is an emphasis on holistic content and holistic aims, which addresses the whole being and not only academic learning. It opposes the so-called ‘mechanistic’ or the technocratic ‘Cartesian-Newtonian’ worldview, which is based on reductionist assumptions of mainstream education (Miller, 2000), where education is a matter of how many qualifications one gets. The same author contends that through the ‘mechanistic’ or the technocratic ‘Cartesian-Newtonian’ worldview:

Quantification, with the rise of mechanistic thought, became the epistemologically privileged way by which to make valid knowledge claims. The humanities, the arts, intuitive knowing, personal knowing, inner knowing, were no longer considered valid ways to know. Measuring and ranking (that is, assigning numbers to things and to relations between things) became knowing (p. 402).

Quantification characterizes the traditional and banking education (Freire, 1970) whereby students are required to memorize narrated content. As Freire (2009) claims, “it turns them into ‘containers’, into ‘receptacles’ to be ‘filled’ by the teacher ... Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor... This is the ‘banking’ concept of education” (p. 52). Accordingly, the

traditional approach to education is characterized by the transmission model since knowledge is transmitted to students. This is the antithesis of PSD-focused education.

Way back in the 1920's, Smith (1926), as cited in Miller (2000), claimed that "you cannot touch one side of a child's life without influencing other sides, and therefore the school must think in terms of the complete human being" (p. 385), where learning is no longer considered as the product, instead of the process, and learning is not regarded as an outcome that is desired and measured with accuracy, instead of an evolving engagement with the experience (Miller, 2004). The idea of completeness dates back to the Greeks. The term 'holistic' derives from the Greek word 'holon' which refers to a universe that is made up of integrated wholes that cannot be easily fragmented into parts (Lee, 1988). Similarly, Jung infers that individuals have a drive toward wholeness, where all elements of the person combine to form a larger entity, which is the self (Witmer, 2013). Adler also refers to the sense of wholeness which is reached when one fulfils one's potential (Ibid.). This concept of complete holistic education was explored by the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education at the University of Surrey (SCEPTrE). SCEPTrE is engaged in work which helps to elaborate the meaning of a more complete holistic education to university students. In May 2009, SCEPTrE invited 35 undergraduate and 25 postgraduate

students to apply for the Life-Wide Learning Award, by writing a short statement about the meaning of a complete education (Fellows, 2010).

Their responses suggested that for them, complete education includes the integration of academic experiences, other experiences, personal growth, development of themselves and some form of connection with the outer world. A complete education is an educational experience that promotes:

A more balanced development of – and cultivate the relationship among – the different aspects of the individual (intellectual, physical, spiritual, emotional, social and aesthetic), as well as the relationships between the individual and other people, the individual and natural environment, the inner-self of students and external world, emotion and reason, different discipline of knowledge and different form of knowing. Holistic education is concerned with life experience, not with narrowly defined ‘basic skills’ (Mahmoudi, Jafari, & Nasrabadi, 2012, p. 178).

PSD practice includes a focus on the *savoir faire* (skills) and the *savoir être* (attitudes and values), besides the *savoir* (knowledge), all of which make up the term competence (as defined by Dr. Alfred Darmanin in the initial semi-structured interviews held at the beginning of my research to define PSD practice). As outlined in the European Framework of Key Competences, the term competence includes the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to achieve both personal fulfilment and employability (European Communities, 2007). In their definition of competence, Semeijn, Der Velden, Heijke, Der Vloten and Boshuizen (2006) include the “something extra that makes it more than just the sum of the separate

parts” (p. 385). This extra refers to the holistic character of the term competence. In addition, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2005) refers to competence as: “... more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilizing psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context” (p. 4). The term competence is a complex term since it includes skills, knowledge, attitudes and values. Sultana (2009) explains that:

The case of the EU is instructive in this regard. While there is no single, authoritative definition of the word competence, there seems to be an increasing consensus that the term should not be used in a narrowly technicist manner to refer to just skills, precisely because of the implications this has for education and training (p. 20).

As used in this thesis, the term refers to knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. The European Commission (2012) is in favour of such competences and differentiates between ‘basic competences’, comprising communication in mother tongue and foreign languages, mathematical literacy, science and technology, and ‘transversal competences’, including digital competence, learning to learn, interpersonal, civic, entrepreneurship and cultural expression. The Commission also states that all transversal competences, and to a lesser extent digital competence, do not derive from traditional academic disciplines. Such competences may have a cross-curricular status, be integrated into an existing curriculum subject, or be

introduced as a separate curricular subject. The Commission (2012) states that while the status of basic competences is established, the promotion of the transversal competences is lagging behind. It further elucidates that nowadays countries have reformed their curricula to include these transversal competences. Nevertheless, this is not done consistently.

Without wanting to reduce the importance of the basic competences, in my research I am more interested in the second set of competences, excluding digital competence. The latter is not included because the research is more about those competences that specifically address the personal and social development of the individual. In particular, I am interested in the generic, or transferable competences (Burke, Doherty, & Jones, 2005) which are required:

In all content domains and can be utilised in new professional situations (transfer). The name ‘life skills’ is sometimes used for the latter group and indicates that these competences, because of their transferability, are the basic set of capabilities for the life of today, within and outside the profession (Kouwenhoven, 2010, p. 127).

For the purpose of the research, the term ‘generic competences’ is used to refer to those competences which are not domain-specific and which are transversal (excluding digital competence) at the same time, thus aiming to develop the personal and the social dimension of the individual. The term is also used at different universities including the UoM, which is the area where I did my research.

In PSD practice, the holistic and multi-dimension (skills, knowledge, attitudes and values) aspects are tackled through different opportunities for learning. The view of education as holistic implies that it tackles an interrelated web of life dimensions, therefore it treats body, mind, spirit, and emotions that ultimately empower the person (Granello & Witmer, 2013b). This is done through life-wide learning (Jackson, 2010), whereby different students' experiences are acknowledged and opportunities for learning, like lectures or lessons, groupwork, extracurricular activities and voluntary work, are provided. As a result, life-wide learning “contains far more opportunity and potential for the development of human agency than a formal education programme alone” (Jackson, 2010, p. 14). This “contributes to the holistic development of a person and offers the potential for individuals to develop along some of their learning trajectories” (Eraut, 2010, p. 45).

For the purpose of this thesis, PSD practice is therefore defined as being holistic in its approach, as focusing upon generic competences, and as placing the active learning of the student at its heart. In the next section, the research gap is presented.

1.3 The Research Gap

Through this study, I explored perceptions about PSD practice in Malta and the extent to which such practice is included within the undergraduate experience at the UoM. I assessed whether this practice affects five specific aspects, which are: quality of life, healthy lifestyle, well-being, employment and employability of young undergraduates. The research about PSD practice at the UoM was identified as a research gap, because even though there is some research about PSD practice in Malta and about the UoM students, there is lack of research that explores the way the UoM undergraduate experience addresses the personal and social development of young undergraduates, and there is no research about the contribution of such PSD practice to the holistic development of these students.

Grounded theory methodology was chosen for the study because it is adequate to address research gaps (Milliken, 2010). Since there is lack of research about the area of study, grounded theory helped me to immediately get immersed in the research and to start interviews so as to explore PSD practice. The methodology will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Even though this methodology limits the researchers not to engage in a literature search before exploring the evidence, prior to the start of the research I came across some studies that are directly related to

PSD practice in Malta and to the UoM students, which helped me to identify the research gap described previously. The step of doing the literature review in grounded theory was always the subject for debate. The classic grounded theorist tends to argue that the literature review should not be conducted before the analysis (Glaser 1978). On the other hand, Strauss and Corbin (1998) claim that “we all bring to the inquiry a considerable background in professional and disciplinary literature” (p. 48) and Charmaz (2005, 2006) is in favour of being attentive to the empirical realities and in having flexible guidelines instead of methodological rules. For this research, I followed the advice given by Strauss and Corbin and Charmaz because, as explained before, I chose to engage with brief initial research that helped me to identify the research gap. Throughout the entire research, I still tried to approach the research with an open mind that is ready to listen to the respondents without judging.

1.4 Aims of the Research

In order to address the research gap, I started by engaging in a set of semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1), held in October 2011 to October 2012 at the start of the research. This was carried out with stakeholders involved in the training of students at further and higher educational levels, pioneer Personal and Social Development (PSD) teachers and University

lecturers, who helped me to define and explore PSD practice, to set the context for my study and to formulate the following research questions:

1. What is the perception of University of Malta stakeholders with regards to PSD practice in Malta?
2. To what extent and in what ways is PSD practice applied to the undergraduate experience as offered by the University of Malta?
3. To what extent does PSD practice, offered through the University of Malta undergraduate experience, help young undergraduates to enhance their well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability?

The research questions show that the study has three main aims. Through the first research question, I wanted to explore the perceptions of Deans, undergraduate final year young undergraduates, Maltese education academics, policy makers, the Minister for Education and Employment and the Pro-Rector of the UoM, abbreviated here as ‘UoM stakeholders’, about PSD practice in Malta. The selected research participants were chosen since they have specific experience that enables them to comment about the research area. For example, most final year UoM students followed

primary, secondary and post-secondary³ school years, so they were able to comment on the first research question. Research question 1 served as background knowledge for research questions 2 and 3. It was investigated through semi-structured interviews with the afore-mentioned stakeholders.

The second research question focused on the extent and the ways that PSD practice is included within the undergraduate experience. This was answered by UoM stakeholders through the semi-structured interviews (Appendix 2). In addition, it was also answered by final year young undergraduates through an online questionnaire. Finally, the third research question explored the contribution of PSD practice to the well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability of UoM young undergraduates. This was also answered by UoM stakeholders through semi-structured interviews (Appendix 2) and an online questionnaire which was distributed to the final year young undergraduates.

³ Further or post-secondary education refers to the formal and informal learning serving to obtain a national qualification classified up to and including level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (Laws of Malta, 1988).

1.5 The Research Process following a Grounded Theory Methodology

In order to reach the aims of the research, I followed a grounded theory methodology, which will be explained in detail in Chapter 4. In general, literature shows that there are three types of grounded theory, which are: the traditional positivist type that is adopted by Glaser, the evolved model proposed by Strauss and Corbin and the constructivist type adopted by Charmaz (Bonner, Francis, & Mills, 2006). The third type of grounded theory was used in this study because it does not assume that the data awaits “discovery in an external world or that methodological procedures will correct limited views of the studies world. Nor does it assume that impartial observers enter the research scene without an interpretive frame of reference” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 509). In reality, even though I chose to limit the literature search at the start of the research and despite consciously trying to limit my research bias, I had to carry out some initial research and I struggled not to influence the research respondents about PSD practice.

As a result, the constructivist grounded theory was chosen since it acknowledges the fact that the researchers might have some bias which affects the resultant behaviour, despite limiting their subjective position through a process of self-reflection and reflexivity (Creswell, O’Neil

Green, Shope, & Plano Clark, 2007). As Figure 1.1 indicates, I made use of semi-structured interviews and also questionnaires so as to limit the subjectivity of the research.

Throughout the entire process, I tried to make sense from the data to “see beneath the obvious to discover the new” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 46) and to “separate the pertinent from that which isn’t” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 44). As explained in the previous sections, I began my study by looking at research about PSD practice in Malta and the UoM students (Step 1- Research line in Figure 1.1). From this, I realised that PSD practice within the undergraduate experience and its contribution to the development of UoM undergraduates were never researched, thus identified as a research gap and the subject of my research area. Researching this area is very important since literature, Maltese policy-makers and the European Commission highlight the importance of holistic education. Nowadays there is an emphasis on education which is not traditional and reductionist. As a result, this inspired me to delve deeper into PSD practice and to explore its contribution at a higher educational level.

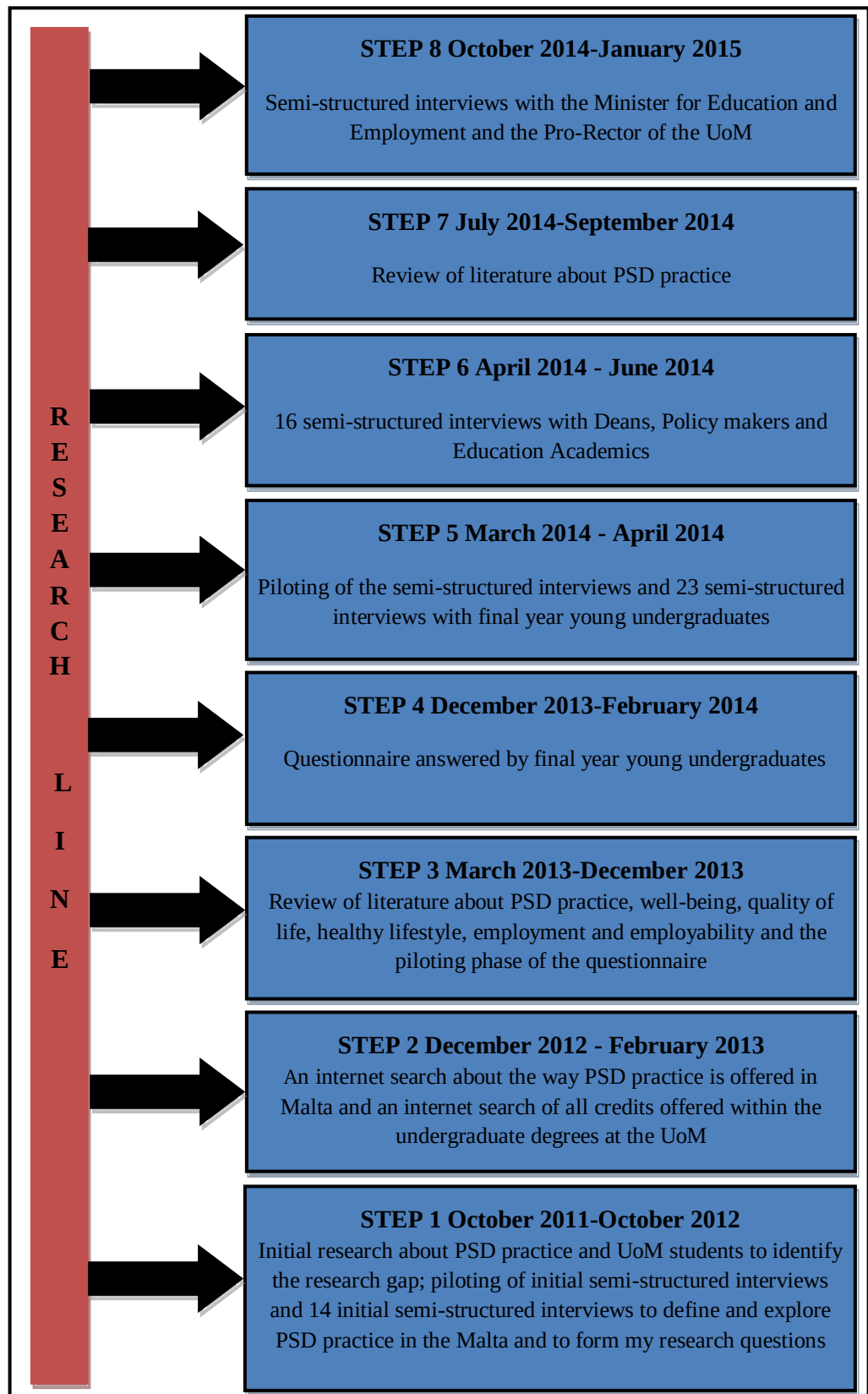


Figure 1.1. The research process following a constructivist grounded theory methodology

I started by immersing myself in the field. I piloted the initial semi-structured interviews and then interviewed fourteen key persons (Appendix 1) who are, or were, directly involved in PSD practice in Malta. These helped me to define and explore PSD practice and to formulate the research questions. Even though my focus is on the UoM, I was still interested in having a holistic perspective of what is happening related to PSD practice in Malta, in primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary⁴ institutions. Results from such initial interviews are presented in the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3. This step was considered as important because it provided the background information about PSD practice in Malta. In Step 2, I engaged in an internet search about the way PSD practice is offered within the Maltese Education System (Figure 1.1). Following this, I chose to explore PSD practice at the UoM, hence motivating me to do an internet search of all the credits offered within the undergraduate degrees at the UoM to check whether generic competences, that cater for the personal and social development of undergraduates, are aimed to be provided. In Step 3, I stopped from collecting data and referred to the literature so as to define in more detail PSD practice, to explore how it might be offered, and to define the terms of well-being, quality of life,

⁴ Higher or tertiary education in Malta refers to non-compulsory formal, non-formal and informal learning or research which serves to obtain a national qualification at and above level 6 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) or International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 5 (Education Laws of Malta, 1988).

healthy lifestyle, employment and employability, which are all aspects that were identified as potentially resulting from PSD practice.

Steps 1 and 3 were helpful in generating a list of dimensions and related items that make up and define PSD practice (explained in further detail in Chapters 2 and 3). These were used to devise the questionnaire. During the piloting of the questionnaire (Step 3- Research line in Figure 1.1), these dimensions and items were statistically confirmed through SPSS22 and AMOS tests to check their internal consistency and validity (see Chapter 4). After having an internal consistency of the items and after validating the dimensions, using SPSS 22 software, the AMOS software was used to re-confirm such dimensions and items.

At this point of my research, I explored the definition of PSD practice, PSD practice in Malta, the way it is provided within the Maltese Education System, the way the UoM claims to provide PSD practice through the undergraduate experience and the information from literature about PSD practice. Following these steps, I sought to have feedback from a large number of final year young undergraduates to explore their perceptions about the extent and the way PSD practice is provided to them and its contribution to their holistic development. For this reason, the questionnaire was deemed to be the best method to gather such data from a

large number of students (Step 4- Research line in Figure 1.1). Results from such questionnaire were analysed and provided general information about these students' perceptions. This was not enough for me because apart from wanting to have a good number of responses, I also wished to have in-depth views from these students, so that they can explain the results from the questionnaire. Consequently, this led me to Step 5 of the Research Line (Figure 1.1), which consisted of the piloting of the semi-structured interviews followed by the actual 23 semi-structured interviews with final year young undergraduates. Discussion about the choice of research participants is presented in Chapter 4 (Methodology chapter).

After collecting rich data from these students, I presented such results during semi-structured interviews (Step 6- Research Line Figure 1.1) with Deans from the UoM, policy makers and education academics (Appendix 2), so as to better understand the claims made by the students and to have an explanation of the results elicited from the internet search, questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with UoM students. At that point, I felt the need to stop to understand the resultant data, to compare and contrast views and to refer to literature about PSD practice (Step 7- Research Line Figure 1.1). Finally, I concluded the collection of data by presenting all data to the Minister for Education and Employment in Malta and the Pro-Rector of the UoM (Step 8- Research Line Figure 1.1). This was done

specifically to have more explanation of data from persons who are responsible for the education system in Malta and specifically at the UoM.

1.6 Organisation of the Thesis

The research study is data-driven and relies specifically on the views of participants to explore their perceptions in specific detail, hence the choice of a grounded theory methodology, which is the “product of inquiry” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 507) and “grounded in the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2).

Chapters 2 and 3 provide a review of literature that give the reader a better understanding of PSD practice and the criteria in assessment - well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability.

Chapter 4 is the methodology chapter, where I explain my position in the research study, personal background, philosophical background, grounded theory methodology, mixed-method research, use of different methods, piloting phases, research in general, recruitment of participants, reliability and validity issues, ethical considerations and data presentation.

Chapter 5 presents the results from the online search, the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews.

Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 focus on the analysis of data, each delving through a particular theme. The four themes that are presented in these chapters are: ‘The Maltese context for PSD practice’ (Chapter 6), ‘The traditional, academic Maltese Education System that hinders PSD practice’ (Chapter 7), ‘Opportunities for PSD practice at the University of Malta’ (Chapter 8) and ‘PSD practice at the University of Malta for holistic aims’ (Chapter 9). Discussion is organised in four different themes that generate substantive theories. The latter pertain to the phenomena being studied without making claims to generalise beyond the particular phenomena (Urquhart, 2013).

Lastly, Chapter 10 provides a review of preceding chapters, the significance of results elicited from the research, a study evaluation, an overview of the limitations, the implications of the research study and suggestions for future research.

Through this research, I hope to inform the reader about PSD practice in Malta and to indicate the way this practice is provided within the undergraduate experience at the UoM as well as its contribution to the holistic development of young undergraduates. In this way, this research aims to inform teaching and learning developments at the UoM by providing evidence of the perceived impact of PSD practice upon young people.

Chapter 2: Literature Review-

Defining PSD practice

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to define Personal and Social Development (PSD) practice in more depth, by drawing from seven theoretical orientations: the positive, humanistic, critical, progressive, constructivist, developmental and contextual philosophical, sociological and psychological. These theoretical orientations are the basis of PSD practice.

Since there are many definitions in literature related to PSD practice, I engaged in a set of initial semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1) held at the beginning of the research to help me summarise the definition of such practice. With reference to the elicited data and theoretical orientations related to PSD practice, I came up with a PSD Scale that includes four dimensions and related items which define this practice. These are presented and discussed throughout Chapters 2 and 3, so that the reader understands exactly what PSD practice entails. All dimensions and items were then statistically tested and confirmed as being an important aspect of PSD practice, in the view of my respondents (Chapter 4- Methodology). This chapter analyses three of these dimensions in detail⁵. PSD practice

⁵ The other dimension (Dimension C) is presented and analysed in the next chapter because it explains the aims of PSD practice, which is the subject of research question 3.

focuses on generic competences, which is named as Dimension A. It is one which places the active role of the student at the centre of the learning process, making up Dimension B. In addition, it comprises learning that is held through different learning methods and through the support of the educator. This is Dimension D.

2.2 The Development of Generic Competences in PSD Practice

PSD practice follows a positive psychological theoretical orientation. This refers to a focus on the development of generic competences, or character strengths⁶, necessary for everyday life (Maddux, 2009). In literature, this is sometimes referred to as soft skills. Nevertheless, I prefer the term competence to highlight its holistic aspect. Park and Peterson (2011) propose that “character strengths help people to thrive” (p. 49). Knoop (2011) claims that by 2025, people will be more aware that character strengths are conducive to happiness and well-being than intellectual strengths. Knoop asserts that it is very important that teachers

⁶ The area of character strengths is widely tackled in positive psychology, which as a concept, was first used by Maslow in 1954, who noted that the science of psychology focused more on the negative rather than the positive. In 1954, he argued “for an augmentation of what was known about psychology to tell a complete story about human nature and to help people realize their full potential” (Gallagher & Lopez, 2009, p. 3).

or lecturers make use and develop such character strengths of individual learners.

Examples of such strengths, or generic competences, are: self-esteem (Ryff, 1989; Taylor, 2011) (Table 2.1-Item 4), initiative-taking (Nakamura, 2011) (Table 2.1-Item 12), resilience (Donaldson, 2011) (Table 2.1-Item 9), stress management (Table 2.1-Item 3), teamwork (Table 2.1-Item 1), time-management (Goldfinch & Hughes, 2007) (Table 2.1-Item 10) and leadership (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) (Table 2.1-Item 2), all of which help an individual to live well (Linley, Joseph, Maltby, Harrington, & Wood, 2009). PSD practice focuses on these and also works on the importance of emotionally healthy students (Table 2.1-Item 5), the unique qualities of each student, and optimal functioning among all students (Gilman, Hall, Huebner, & Reschly, 2009).

It also aims to develop problem-solving (Table 2.1-Item 6), communication (Table 2.1-Item 7), decision-making (Table 2.1-Item 8), self-acceptance (Table 2.1-Item 11), creativity (Table 2.1-Item 13), critical thinking (Table 2.1-Item 14), ability to empathise (Table 2.1-Item 15), conflict management (Table 2.1-Item 16) and adjustment to new situations (Table 2.1-Item 17). These were derived from the initial semi-structured

interviews (Appendix 1) and from reference to the theoretical orientations related to holistic education and PSD practice.

DIMENSION A The development of generic competences in PSD practice	
Item 1	Teamwork
Item 2	Leadership
Item 3	Stress management
Item 4	Self-esteem
Item 5	Dealing with my feelings effectively
Item 6	Problem-solving
Item 7	Communication
Item 8	Decision-making
Item 9	Resilience
Item 10	Time management
Item 11	Self-acceptance
Item 12	Initiative
Item 13	Creativity
Item 14	Critical thinking
Item 15	Ability to empathise
Item 16	Conflict management
Item 17	Adjustment to new situations

Table 2.1: Dimension A and its related items describing the development of generic competences in PSD practice

When addressing generic competences instead of academic knowledge only, humanistic theorists claim that people actualise “the individual’s humanness and shaping the individual towards his essential nature and designation as a human being” (Aloni, 2007, p. 26). Self-actualisation is defined by Maslow (2011) as the “ongoing actualization of potentials, capacities, and talents, as fulfillment of mission, ... , as a fuller knowledge of, and acceptance of, the person’s own intrinsic nature, as an unceasing trend toward unity, integration or synergy within the person” (p. 29). This actualizing is a universal human motivation leading to growth, development as a whole, and autonomy of the individual (Rogers, 1963; Witmer, 2013) or as Rogers calls it “fully functioning” (Joseph & Murphy, 2013, p. 4). Developing as a whole is defined by Rogers (1989) as an increasing openness to experience and an existential lifestyle where there is “the stretching and growing of becoming more and more of one’s potentialities. It involves the courage to be. It means launching oneself fully into the stream of life” (p. 196).

Nevertheless, there are authors who challenge holistic education that targets the development of generic competences. Capasso, Cinque, Hasaelberger, Oberhuemer and Perez (2012) argue that generic competences: “have yet to be adequately taught in schools and universities” (p. 6). Rust and Froud (2011) observe that theorists criticize the holistic approaches, by affirming that learning outcomes have tended to

be generic and ill-defined. In addition, Sultana (2009) notes that literature shows that the notion of competence, suffers from fuzziness and conceptual confusion.

The confusion is even evident in relation to the spelling of the word, with indecisiveness as to whether one should use competence (plural:competences), or competency (plural:competencies). Many use these interchangeably, seeing no difference between them other than UK (former) and US (latter) spelling variants of the same word/concept (p. 19).

Atkins (1999) further remarks that the field remains confused when it comes to nomenclatures and classification of types of competences.

Another challenge is that of assessment because: “‘rigorous assessment methods cannot of course be developed without clear definitions of the ... competences in question’” (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009, p. 16). The usefulness of generic competences is controversial to a variety of theorists because the term includes many attributes which can only be assessed subjectively (Chamarro-Premuzic, Arteche, Bremner, & Furnham, 2010). In addition to confusion in nomenclatures and difficulty in assessment, Sharma and Sharma (2010) state that: “the hard truth about soft skills [which are referred in this thesis as generic competences] is that these get little respect” (p. 41).

A further challenge is that of transferability of generic competences. Canning (2007) argues that there is little convincing evidence to support the argument that generic competences can be transported across contexts. Shakir (2009) argues that competence-based education can be classified as a “short-term measure, as attending soft skills lessons for a week does not seem effective in transforming these students to active participants” (p. 316). This may be dangerous because even though it includes loose modules and projects which increase opportunities for the students’ choice, it tends to undermine the quest for deep understanding due to fragmented learning experience (Barnett, 1994). In addition to these issues of nomenclatures, assessment, lack of respect and transferability, Grist and Lexmond (2011a) argue that:

The new findings of neuroscience and development psychology show us that the care received from parents and carers and the environments surrounding infants in their early years are even more important than we once thought in shaping character (p. 53).

Researchers from neuroscience tend to be sceptical about education based on generic competences. In fact, this is the nature-nurture dichotomy. Developmental neuroscientists and epigenetic researchers conclude that generic competences are developed through nature and early years of infancy (Ibid.).

Even though there are these challenges and negative perceptions about education that targets the development of generic competences, interviewees from the initial semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1) strongly mentioned the fact that PSD practice is based on the development of generic competences. This encouraged me to include it as one of the dimensions that make up PSD practice, whilst keeping in mind the existing challenges; some of which even emerged from the second set of semi-structured interviews (Appendix 2), and will be discussed in the analysis chapter.

2.3 The Active Role of the Student in PSD Practice

A key dimension in PSD practice is the active role of the students. This is recognized in literature about holistic education, and from the initial semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1). From a humanistic perspective, this aspect is very important for determining the course of one's development (Feldman, 2010) and one's own learning (Table 2.2-Item 2). Humanistic theorists, like Rogers and Maslow, are in favour of seeking to assist people in fostering the development of their potential (Table 2.2-Item 13) through their capacities of creativity and choice (Feldman, Papalia & Wendkos, 2001). Rogers (1989) claims that this is fundamental because: "the goal the individual most wishes to achieve, the

end which he knowingly and unknowingly pursues, to become himself” (p. 108).

Interviewees (Appendix 1) sustained that PSD practice that focuses on the active role of the students considers their healthy development by facilitating generic competences which tackle the life and course challenges (Table 2.2-Items 11 and 12). Late adolescents and early adults, who are part of my research cohort, experience these challenges. “Being young, no longer a child and not yet an adult, is complicated” (Batsleer, 2008, p. 51). At this period, they would be experiencing the transitions from late adolescence to early adulthood (Egan, 1984). Developmental theorists like Erik Erikson, Robert Havighurst and Donald Super claim that progress from one developmental stage to the other depends on mastery of appropriate developmental tasks (Gazda, 1984). Successful fulfillment in sorting the developmental task leads to happiness and success with later tasks, whilst failure results in unhappiness, disapproval from society and difficulty with later tasks (Havighurst, 1972). During this process, a developmental crisis or challenge must be dealt with. Developmental crisis represents important dividing points between stages, creating excitement, turmoil and anxiety, affecting the life of an individual (Egan, 1984). Besides focusing on their life and course challenges, interviewees said that PSD practice is aimed to help students to self-disclose their feelings, thus

assisting them in their emotional and healthy development (Table 2.2-Item 3). Having education that addresses healthy development means:

Education for both traditional skills and for happiness. The high prevalence worldwide depression among young people, the small rise in life satisfaction, and the synergy between learning and positive emotion all argue that the skills for happiness should be taught in school. There is substantial evidence from well controlled studies that skills that increase resilience, positive emotion, engagement and meaning can be taught (Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, Linkins, & Seligman 2009, p. 293).

As strongly emphasized by different interviewees (Appendix 1) PSD practice that enhances the active role of the student also means that it focuses on the development of personal aspects (Table 2.2-Item 8), character qualities (Table 2.2-Item 9) and personal interests (Table 2.2-Item 6).

The active role of the student is becoming increasingly important. Rogers (1977) saw a quiet revolution in which people were taking control of their psychological and physical destinies. Accordingly, individuals are more keen to develop a do-it-yourself attitude and an exploratory, inquiry-based learning for a better quality of life (Larson, 1984), which encourages participation (Table 2.2-Item 1) and enhances capacities and talents (Table 2.2-Item 10). In this setting, students are empowered to share their

knowledge in a collaborative milieu; thus learning contexts empower them to be co-generators of knowledge (O’Connor & Lynch, 2011) (Table 2.2-Item 5). Different foundations and institutions are in favour of this. The New Economics Foundation (2008) argues that the idea of students as active contributors to learning is not new. However, it claims that society started to understand “the significance of fostering a sense of agency and autonomy for people’s well-being and in turn noted the benefits it can have for individuals’ education and learning experiences” (p. 16). Million+ (2012), a UK University think-tank, recommends such approach where the students are placed at the centre of its design, implementation and quality assurance. This has “gains significantly greater than the conventional class in personal adjustment, in self-initiated extra-curricular learning, in creativity” (Rogers, 1989, p. 292). In contrast, Sultana (1992a) cites Bell and Schniedewind (1987):

This approach [referring to the humanistic approach] is limited and ultimately self-defeating unless it strives to integrate the insights provided by critical theory. This would mean that the humanistic approach maintains its focus on the person but it enlarges its vision to perceive people as embedded in social structures where power and interests to a large extent determine hitherto unproblematic key words and processes such as ‘development’, ‘fulfilment’, ‘self-actualisation’ (p. 173).

As a result, when addressing processes of full development, fulfilment and self-actualisation, institutional power and systematic oppression must be considered. Rogers (1989) also stresses this aspect by saying that:

The first implication for education might well be that we permit the student, at any level, to be in real contact with the relevant problems of his existence, so that he perceives problems and issues which he wishes to resolve.” (p. 286-287).

Dewey distinguishes between passive education and politicized citizenry education for justice, happiness and equality (Giroux, 2009). In the latter, education tends to be problem-posing and students critically perceive the way they exist in the world through a process of reflection (Freire, 2009). “Problem-posing education affirms men as beings in the process of becoming. Education is thus constantly remade in the praxis. In order to be, it must become” (Ibid., p. 59). Praxis is an on-going interaction of reflection, dialogue and action (Dardner, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009). Interviewees (Appendix 1) sustained that besides being in line with positive and humanistic theories, PSD practice is also in line with critical theories because it is problem-posing and involves praxis. In principle, it is not aimed to present unproblematic key words and processes (Bell & Schniedewind, 1987 as cited by Sultana 1992a). In contrary, PSD practice is aimed to embrace “a dialectical view of knowledge that functions to unmask the connections between objective knowledge and the cultural norms, values and standards of the society at large” (Dardner et al., 2009, p. 11). In such a dialectical milieu, PSD practice is question-posing, necessary for critical social consciousness or what Freire terms as “conscientização” (Ibid., 2009), which allows students to “peel away those

layers that can blur or tarnish judgement” (Carroll, Cacciattolo & McKenna, 2012, p. 514). This means that students are encouraged to think critically about the concepts, processes, context and environmental systems presented to them, instead of accepting them blindly. Different interviewees (Appendix 1) sustained that educators in PSD practice consider the students’ context and help them to critically analyse the system in general (Table 2.2-Item 4). This is related to the contextual theoretical orientation. Bronfenbrenner emphasizes environmental systems (Table 2.2-Item 7) that affect the individual: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem. The microsystem is a setting where a person interacts bi-directionally with others like family, workplace and friends. Linkages between such microsystems make up the mesosystem. The exosystem is a system of linkages between different settings (examples: education system and economic system). In all systems, there is an overall cultural pattern, which is known as the macrosystem (Feldman, 2010), making up the overarching beliefs and values. Similarly, Tobón (2007, as cited in United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Bureau of Education, 2009) says that there are several approaches to generic competence development, one of which is the complexity approach based on the idea that in a human system, there is connectivity and interdependence. Drawing from critical and contextual theories, PSD practice is aimed to consider the background of the student including the

micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono systems and critically analyses them. The context is highlighted by various critical theorists and practitioners like Freire (1985). The learning environment for PSD practice recognizes the importance of the social context and culture of student.

Despite having theorists who are in favour of the active role (New Economics Foundation, 2008; Million+, 2012; Rogers, 1989), there are theorists and researchers who tend to criticize the active role of the student. Kouwenhoven (2010) argues that “it is feared that students do not acquire the coherent view on the body of knowledge in their discipline necessary for an academic profession or the scientific endeavour” (p. 130). In addition, Coe, Aloisi, Higgins and Elliot Major (2014) claim that ensuring that learners are always active, rather than listening passively, is ineffective, because percentages presented in several learning pyramids, showing the material retained when different levels of activity are employed, “have no empirical basis and are pure fiction” (p. 24).

However, the consensus in the literature, backed up by my research findings, is that active learning is a key component of holistic education and PSD practice. This dimension is therefore explored in this study.

DIMENSION B The active role of the student in PSD practice	
Item 1	Encouraged me to participate
Item 2	Made me feel central to my own learning
Item 3	Helped me to open and self-disclose my feelings
Item 4	Encouraged me to ask questions so as to reflect critically
Item 5	Elicited my knowledge and experiences
Item 6	Made reference to my interests
Item 7	Considered my background
Item 8	Focused on personal aspects, not only academically
Item 9	Focused and developed my character qualities
Item 10	Focused on my capacity and my talents
Item 11	Focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the life challenges
Item 12	Focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the course challenges
Item 13	Centred around the development my potential

Table 2.2: Dimension B and its related items describing the active role of the student in PSD practice

2.4 The Methods used in PSD Practice

There are different models that explain learning in PSD practice. For this thesis, I am referring to Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (Figure 2.1) which was frequently used by interviewees (Appendix 1) when explaining how learning takes place during PSD. Besides drawing from

humanistic, positive, contextual, critical and developmental theories, PSD practice is also in line with progressive and constructivist educational theories. At the heart of the progressive theories, there is experiential learning (New Economics Foundation, 2008), whereby there is the acquisition of skills and knowledge (Dewey, 1938), through different effective active methods of learning, hence life-wide learning (Jackson, 2010) and assessment, which is both formative and summative. “Dewey (1938) showed that complexity and change meant that education could not be reduced to a formulaic preparation for life, it needed to be life itself, messiness and chaos included” (Bruce, 2013, p. 7). Based on Dewey’s vision, progressive educators seek to respect diversity, organize learning in larger, more holistic units, develop school and society link, build on the interests of the learner and develop citizenship (Ibid.). Kolb and Kolb (2005) argue that this can be held through the Experiential Learning Cycle.

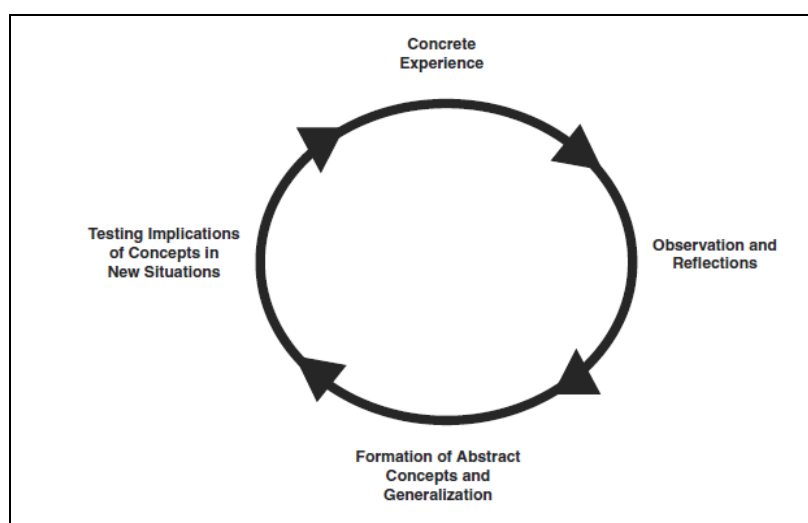


Figure 2.1: Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model
(Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 3)

The Experiential Learning Cycle (Figure 2.1) starts with the Concrete Experience, where different activities or experiences are held (Table 2.3-Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7), which develop teamwork, decision-making, conflict management, time management and leadership. This step is followed by Observation and Reflections, where critical and challenging questions enhance discussion and lead to reflection on and in action (Schön, 1987). This stage is very important. Jarvis (1995) sets out nine routes of response for the potential learning situation, categorized in three levels: non-learning, non-reflective learning and reflective learning. During PSD practice the latter, equivalent to the ‘Observation and Reflections’ stage in Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle, is enhanced. After the Observation and Reflections, there is the stage of Abstract Conceptualizations in which generalizations are elicited from the reflections made. Finally, there is an Active Experimentation step or Reality Testing with the aim of pinpointing ways how generic competences can be practised in the students’ daily life (Kolb, 1984). Through experiential learning, abstract knowledge is mixed with experience (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Bureau of Education, 2009). This is referred to by the International Bureau of Education as the technological thinking in the third millennium paradigm as opposed to the logical passive thinking in the traditional paradigm.

As argued by interviewees (Appendix 1), besides drawing from progressive theories, PSD practice follows constructivist theories. Heron (1999) argues that the curriculum must be holistic and multi-stranded and that active learning methods should involve various empowering aspects. Key constructivist approaches, central to PSD practice are: scaffolding referring to the changing level of support; cognitive apprenticeship in which the educator supports the understanding and use of skills; cooperative learning whereby students work together and learn from each other; and reciprocal teaching involving students taking turns leading a small-group discussion (Vygotsky, 1962).

Despite the centrality of progressive and constructivist approaches to PSD practice, Mayer (2004) argues that teaching techniques based on constructivism are not efficient for all learners. Kirschner, Sweller and Clark (2006) state that “it is a fundamental error to assume that the pedagogic content of the learning experience is identical to the methods and processes (i.e. the epistemology) of the discipline being studied” (p. 78). They further add that “students learn so little from a constructivist approach” (p. 79). Kirschner et al. (2006) conclude that unguided instruction is normally less effective and may have negative results when students acquire misconceptions. In their research, Brown and Campione (1994) note that when students learnt science with a constructivist and

progressive approach, they tended to feel lost and frustrated and their confusion led to misconceptions.

Kirschner et al. (2006) state that such techniques are unguided and favour structured learning activities. Kirschner et al. consider the progressive and the constructivist approaches as based on a series of assumptions that underlie instructional programs with minimal guidance. Two of these are that learners construct their own solutions leading to the most effective learning experience, and that knowledge can best be acquired through experience. Tenenbaum (1989) participated in a Rogerian classroom methodology which was non-directive, meaning that learning was free, flowing and open where:

A student would start an interesting discussion; it would be taken by a second; but a third student might take us away in another direction, bringing up a personal matter of no interest to the class; and we would all feel frustrated (Tenenbaum , 1989, p. 307).

Tenenbaum (1989) reports a student who was negative in his feelings and another one who was critical. In his experience, students argued that they wanted the instructor to provide them with a rounded out intellectual piece of work which they could memorize and then present during an exam.

Keeping in mind these challenges, interviewees⁷ argued that different experiential methods are an integral part of PSD practice, hence recognized as an important dimension. I decided to include Item 8, named ‘information from lecturer’ (Table 2.3), because in reality there were interviewees who argued that PSD practice involves all possible methods to cater for the holistic needs of all students and does not exclude information giving. Nevertheless, it does not rely solely on this method.

Different interviewees also argued that in PSD it is important that students are given the necessary information; however it is also crucial that they participate and engage in different learning methods. In fact, they said ‘information from lecturer’ is a necessary method used in PSD practice and, when used with other methods, the holistic type of learning is highlighted. In summary, Table 2.3 presents the different methods that are central to PSD practice.

⁷ Information derived from initial interviews held at the beginning of the research (Appendix 1).

DIMENSION D The methods used in PSD practice	
Item 1	Online learning
Item 2	Brainstorming
Item 3	Role-play
Item 4	Discussion
Item 5	Energizer
Item 6	Case studies
Item 7	Sharing of experiences
Item 8	Information from lecturer

Table 2.3: Dimension D and its related items describing the effectiveness of the use of different methods in PSD practice

2.5 Conclusion

Chapter 2 analysed three dimensions (A, B and D) of the PSD Scale, drawing from results of the initial semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1) and a series of theoretical orientations. Each dimension and its related items have been presented as a table. Having clear dimensions and items helped me to formulate the questions used for the questionnaire and the second set of semi-structured interviews that explore PSD practice in Malta and at the University of Malta (UoM). Since, there is no universal

definition of PSD practice, I had to make sure that I define clearly what this practice entails.

In Chapter 3, I explore another important dimension, which is about the holistic aims of PSD practice in terms of employment, employability, well-being, quality of life and healthy lifestyle. This relates to the third research question.

Chapter 3: Literature Review -
Defining the criteria in assessment -
well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle,
employment and employability

3.1 Introduction

Personal and Social Development (PSD) practice is aimed to develop an individual holistically, making up another important dimension (Dimension C) of the PSD Scale. This was stressed by the interviewees who were interviewed at the start of my research (Appendix 1). Chapter 3 focuses on these holistic aims of well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability, which were assessed through research question 3⁸.

This chapter starts by a detailed explanation of these concepts and it is followed by a review of existing statistics and empirical studies. From research about well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability, I elicited a set of items (Table 3.1-Items 1-10), to explain the holistic aims.

⁸ To what extent does PSD practice, offered through the University of Malta undergraduate experience, help young undergraduates to enhance their well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability?

DIMENSION C The holistic aims of PSD practice	
Item 1	Helped me to feel physically healthy
Item 2	Helped me to develop my intellect
Item 3	Helped me to deal with others effectively
Item 4	Contributed to my personal satisfaction in relation to my career path
Item 5	Helped me to have a meaning and a purpose in life
Item 6	Facilitated the way I recognise and manage my emotions
Item 7	Made me feel happy about my life
Item 8	Helped me to develop as an individual
Item 9	Provided the necessary competences to obtain employment
Item 10	Trained me in how to cope well in the place of work

Table 3.1: Dimension C and its related items describing the holistic aims of PSD practice

3.2 Employment and Employability - Definitions

It is recognised that for young people to have smooth transitions from schooling to employment at different periods in their life, there needs to be a collective commitment from all stakeholders. The risk factors of inefficiency in intervention are considerable individual, economic and social costs translated in loss of output, lower economic growth, higher unemployment incidence, inferior competitive advantage, lesser earnings, precarious employment, lower quality of life, lesser sense of achievement and lower social cohesion (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2013, p. 10).

In order to avoid these risk factors, in the same document the Ministry of Education and Employment (2013) in Malta identifies the importance of education for employment. Similarly, the Malta's National Reform Programme under the Europe 2020 strategy (Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, 2011) clearly states that “improving labour supply and the skills base of the labour force ... is important for boosting potential growth” (p. 14). This is essential as there seems to be a deficit in the skills base of Malta (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014b). As a result, the educational system must prepare students so that they can be easily employed, thus resulting in economic growth. This is stressed in the Maltese National Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012), in which one of the three aims describe the capability of students to sustain their chances in the world of work.

In addition, a vast array of research focuses on the development of holistic education, or as referred to in this thesis as: PSD practice, for employment and economic growth⁹. “Better adapting European education and training systems to the needs of our economy and modern society is at the centre of educational policy debate at both national and EU level” (European Commission, 2012, p. 3). This is essentially important when

⁹ European Commission, 2005; Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, 2011; Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012; Commission of the European Communities, 2007; European Commission, 2010 a, b, c; Knight & Yorke, 2002; Birdwell, Grist & Margo, 2011a,b.

considering the current global youth employment trends. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013) warned that it is difficult for youths to find employment. In 2013, the global youth unemployment rate was 12.6% which is very close to the crisis peak. Young people are increasingly involved in informal employment (Ibid.). The Organization even claims that a further problem is that of skills mismatch which is increasing the youth employment crisis. As a matter of fact, the European Commission (2010a) urges member states to ensure that young people possess the competences necessary for employment. Overall, the evidence suggests that a focus on qualifications would not appear to contribute to an individual's employment outcomes, but instead the development of generic competences is likely to be more important¹⁰. For example, Ashton, Brown and Lauder (2008) conducted research, based on interviews, held between 2004 and 2007 in seven countries: Britain, China, Germany, India, Korea, Singapore and the United States. The authors report that the more skilled the workforce, the more competitive the economy. In all seven countries, the major concern was not hard skills but finding suitable people with appropriate behavioral skills. This argument can be linked to the skills match approach because since employers in this study, and in others, are requesting generic competences from employees, then the education system might equip students with the necessary competences.

¹⁰ Ashton, Brown & Lauder, 2008; Knight & Yorke, 2002; Birdwell, Grist & Margo, 2011; Newton, Horstfield, Linda, Page & Akroyd, 2005.

The bridging between education and work is emphasized in a series of documents, one of which is the “Agenda for new skills and jobs” (European Commission, 2010a) which is one of the seven flagship initiatives for the achievement of the three mutually reinforcing priorities mentioned by President Manoel Barroso in the document Europe 2020. These are: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (European Commission, 2010b). This flagship initiative encourages member states to develop partnerships between the world of education or training and the world of work and to ensure that the necessary generic competences to engage in further learning and the labour market are acquired (Ibid.). In reality, the National Commission for Higher Education (2009a) in Malta mentions education institutions that are not addressing the needs of the industry, causing a skills gap between the organizations’ skills needs and the current capabilities of its workforce. Despite this skills gap, the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework, which follows the European Qualifications Framework, is a step forward since it acts as the mechanism that bridges education and training provisions with labour market requirements (European Commission, 2010c).

Since education for employment is regarded as important and since interviewees (Appendix 1) sustained that one of the aims of PSD practice is employment, it was included in Dimension D, which is about the holistic aims (Table 3.1-Item 9). In contrast, different researchers contest the idea

of PSD practice for employment and are more in favour of the employability agenda. Knight and Yorke (2002) mention the danger of tokenistic thinking. This is because when employment indicators become a performance indicator, there might be the danger that there would be more focus on the maximization of scores and there would be the risk of education for the sole purpose of making students better equipped to be employed. This is implying that the human is seen as a capital for economic purposes. Brown (2001) criticizes the Human Capital theory because it reduces people to skills that are fed into the economy and he notices that there is a difficulty in defining skills. Instead, Crespo-Flores (2007) adopts the Human Capabilities Approach developed by Amartya Sen who criticizes the Human Capital Approach because it contends that human beings are instruments part of the economic processes. Sen (1999) argues that: “the benefits of education, thus, exceed its role as human capital” (p. 294). For this reason, my research did not only explore whether PSD practice within the undergraduate University of Malta (UoM) experience leads to employment but it was extended to assess employability. As a result, in the next paragraphs, I contrast the meaning of the two terms: employment and employability. As part of the items in Dimension D, dealing with the holistic aims, I included both employment (Table 3.1-Item 9) and employability (Table 3.1-Item 10).

Employability is the ability of an individual to obtain and maintain employment, change roles within the same organization, obtain a new employment when required and secure the fulfilling work (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). Different interviewees sustained that this is one of the aims of PSD practice. Synthesizing the available literature, it is possible to identify a variety of competences which lead to employability. Knight and Yorke (2002) present 39 aspects of employability competences grouped under three headings: personal qualities¹¹, core skills¹² and process skills¹³. Through their research, it is revealed that the aspect of character seems to be important for employability. In such regard, Birdwell, Grist and Margo (2011) in the United Kingdom say that young people need to gain access to as many as possible of five proven labour market premiums in order to adapt to the market trends. Among these five premiums, there is the character premium focusing on generic competences, including communication, commitment and teamwork. Their research was undertaken in Shoreditch, East London and Burnley in Lancashire, and was based on qualitative interviews and focus groups with multi-stakeholders including staff in schools, students in Years 10 and 11, young people between ages 18 and 24, career advisers, charities, local authorities

¹¹ Examples - self-confidence, emotional intelligence, adaptability, willingness to learn and reflectiveness.

¹² Examples - listening, critical analysis and self-management.

¹³ Examples - applying subject understanding, coping with ambiguity and complexity, team working and negotiating.

and welfare to work providers. Findings reveal that character capabilities have become increasingly important in the labour market. Such qualities include motivation, self-regulation, resilience, emotional management, self-direction, self-understanding, communication, problem-solving, assertiveness and empathy. Similarly, Newton, Hurstfield, Linda, Page and Akroyd (2005) did a research based on in-depth qualitative interviews with individuals representing different organisations including government departments, regional agencies, and voluntary sector organisations. Their research reveals the emphasis for generic competences in applicants since, in employers' minds; they are linked with positive characteristics and attributes, making them more employable. Likewise, research based on three samples of graduates, employers and university lecturers who completed self-administered survey questionnaires in Sri Lanka reveals that University lecturers as well as employers prefer graduates to possess a number of generic competences. Those ranked as the most important by the three groups were problem solving, self-confidence and team work (Wickramasinghe, 2010).

As part of the personal qualities necessary for employability, Rust and Froud (2011) include critical self-awareness, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. The latter comprises the ability to read one's emotions and recognize its impact whilst controlling them positively. Bay and McKeage (2006) argue that emotional intelligence is related to job performance and

leadership qualities. Emotional intelligence is becoming strongly important in an economy that is moving away from knowledge-based endeavours, expecting the workers to work in teams, thus increasing the need for managers who can bring skills in leadership, teamwork, and networking. Lack of it may lead to problems in employability. In conclusion, Paulson (2001) presents the twenty-first-century workplace skills, categorized in attitudes and personal characteristics, essential skills, integrative-applied skills and premium skills (Table 3.2).

Attitudes and personal characteristics	Essential skills	Integrative-applied skills	Premium skills
Adaptability, flexibility, resiliency, ability to accept ambiguity, common sense, ability to anticipate downstream consequences, creativity, empathy positive attitude, good work ethic, ability to self-manage, reliability, dependability, responsibility, honesty and integrity.	Computer skills for simple tasks (word processing), interpersonal skills, team skills, numeracy and computation skills including basic money skills, reading, speaking, listening and writing.	Application of technology to tasks, critical thinking, customer contact skills, information use skills, presentation skills and problem recognition.	Ability to understand, basic resource management, ability to work with budgets, ethics, foreign language fluency, globalism, internationalism skills, multicultural-competence skills, negotiation skills, project management, and supervision systems thinking.

Table 3.2: A summary of the twenty-first-century workplace competences (Paulson, 2001, p. 50)

The Maltese Ministry of Education and Employment (2013) sustains that education for employability is important for “sustainable economic growth and social development. This reinforces the demand for young people to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and competences needed to adapt to a competitive and fluctuating labour market” (p. 9).

Despite literature emphasizing the importance of education for employability and literature highlighting the necessary generic competences for employability, in four sectors identified in the Maltese Government's Vision for 2015, namely financial, education, communications and IT as well as manufacturing and related services, the main transversal competence shortages were communication, team working and problem-solving (National Commission for Higher Education, 2009a)¹⁴. This sheds light on the emphasis of PSD practice for employability.

Notwithstanding its importance, the employability agenda was also criticized for a series of reasons. Harvey (2001) demonstrates that when education is aimed for employability, there is the danger that education becomes a tool for institutional achievement rather than for the focus on the individual student. Rae (2007) criticizes approaches to employability that concentrate on skills, knowledge and personal attributes only without considering the individuals' own unique identity, personality and motivation. In their critique, Gibbs (2006), Kruss (2004) as well as Rust and Froud (2011) focus on higher education. Gibbs (2006) provides a critical account for education aimed at enhancing employability because:

¹⁴ Results were elicited during the 'Skills for the Future' conference which was held in 2008, whereby 200 participants representing the industry, commerce, employers, education institutions, government sectoral agencies, students, and other social partners participated in workshops about skills mismatch.

It is not the end of education, but a competency of the skilled authentic social agent. I see no difficulty in employability skills being incorporated within a more general set of aims for higher education, but I am concerned that we might instrumentalise our education system to such an extent that employability becomes the prime purpose of higher education (p. 559-560).

In the same way, Kruss (2004) reveals that higher education institutions should not focus solely on imparting the skills required in the workplace.

As Dr Maureen Cole from the UoM, puts it:

I don't like to see things from a functional perspective. I think what makes you a better person will make you a better employee, in everything, with a partner, in everything... So I see it as becoming a fuller person, a better person challenged to reach the best of your abilities. I do encourage the holistic development (Initial semi-structured interview - Appendix 1).

Similarly, in a semi-structured interview, Dr Ruth Falzon from the UoM, also argued that:

We look at it holistically and if you look at it holistically and for a better quality of life, employability comes into it because work is a major part of your life. I don't think that we specifically tackle the issue just for them to be better employable. But we have said that we do these because these skills help them to be a more effective person, and obviously this means in the place of work (Initial semi-structured interview - Appendix 1).

These excerpts indicate that education should be aimed for holistic development rather than employment and employability only. Taylor (2005) identifies another potential danger when education is strictly related

to employment and employability. Education for employability may also be a source of imparting specific values requested by the capitalist society. Taylor (2005) considers the discourse concerning youth employability and suggests that educational structures must pay attention not to have education that becomes an instrument of compliance and docility. In addition to this, Urciuoli (2008) sustains that nowadays workers have come to be seen as personally responsible for skills acquisition, including communication, teamwork and leadership, to the point of self-commodification. The concept is related to what Micheal Foucault in 1988 called technologies of the self, in which subjectivity is fashioned to be compatible with dominant practices and beliefs. Urciuoli (2008) states that generic competences may “represent a blurring of lines between self and work by making one rethink and transform one’s self to best fit one’s job, which is highly valued in an economy increasingly oriented toward information and service” (p. 215). Both arguments here are closely related to the challenge presented earlier by Prof. Ronald Sultana (UoM), consisting of the fact that humanistic approaches in education should be accompanied by critical ones so that the individual is able to critically analyse the situations that are encountered and avoid the situation mentioned above.

In a society where there is the need for performance and achievement, which is an important feature of neo-liberal discourse and politics, driven by a New Public Management ideology (Dempster, Freakley, & Parry, 2001; Thomas, 2004) and the need for individuals who can be “positive, authentic leaders of engaged organizations, communities” (Hetzel, Hulme, Lopez, & Schreiner, 2009, p. 269), the importance of education for well-being, quality of life and healthy lifestyle must not be taken for granted. As a result of neo-liberalism, “public goods (like education) are converted into consumption goods as the ideology of the marketplace takes hold” (Borg & Mayo, 2006b, p. 2). Even though, “...market discourses of neo-liberalism have pervaded our educational landscape” (Darmanin, 2011, p. 188), education institutions must not be administered as quasi-markets (Bartlett & Le Grand, 1993) aimed at ‘producing’ efficient students who are suitable for the world of work. Given such warning and given that researchers claim that holistic aims do not comprise only employment and employability, my research also assessed whether PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience is aimed for well-being, quality of life and healthy lifestyle, which are clearly defined in the next section.

3.3 Well-being, Healthy Lifestyle and Quality of Life - Definitions and Approaches

In 2009, the report of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (CMEPSP), initiated by Nicolas Sarkozy, posits that, “the time is ripe for our measurement system to shift emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people’s well-being” (Stiglitz, Sen & Fitoussi, 2009, p. 12). In fact, as interviewees (Appendix 1) repeatedly argued, PSD practice is not aimed only for employability but also for other aims which go beyond employment and employability.

In general, well-being, health and quality of life, date back to Greek health and medicine (Witmer, 2013). The author reports that the claims of Hippocrates in the fourth century BCE were “First do no harm” and “Physician - heal thyself” (p. 12). Aristotle also taught about ways how people seek happiness and linked it to well-being. The concept is also inherent in Hebrew health and healing and the early Christian church. Practitioners use the word shalom which signifies well-being, wholeness, individual health and communal harmony (Ibid.). After the death of Jesus, the Romans and the non-Christian groups note that the Christians really cared for each other. “The care was holistic in that they showed concern

for their economic, social, and spiritual well-being, including health” (Ibid., p. 14). Another source of the term well-being derives from Native Americans who emphasized the holistic aspect of the disease (Ibid.). The author even mentions the Eastern people who perceive health as “an integral part to one’s total being with no separation between the mind and the body” (p. 15). As opposed to the traditional model of health which is reductionist, mechanistic, dualistic and disease-oriented, well-being is more holistic (Ibid.). The wellness paradigm opposes the biomedical model of healthcare and the Western philosophical tradition of Cartesian dualism (Granello & Witmer, 2013a), which emphasize the cure of the illness.

Well-being and health are closely linked. The World Health Organization (WHO) in 1947 defined health as being more the absence of disease and in 1964 it emphasized the well-being aspect with its definition as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1964 as cited in Granello & Witmer, 2013a, p. 8). Over the years, three approaches of the concepts of well-being and health were developed. The pathogenic approach, deriving from word ‘pathos’ in Greek, presents health as the absence of a disease. The salutogenic approach, deriving from the Latin word ‘salus’, and found in Greek and Roman writings, views well-being

and health as the presence of human capacities and functioning. As opposed to these two approaches, the complete well-being and health concept derives from the ancient word ‘hale’ which means whole (Keyes, 2009). Granello and Witmer (2013a) note that throughout the years, the prevention of disease through well-being and health was given lack of attention. For this research, the final approach was considered, because interviewees (Appendix 1) repeatedly said that PSD practice is aimed at developing complete well-being and healthy lifestyle, since it is centred around holistic aims, based on happiness (Table 3.1-Item 7) and healthy development (Table 3.1-Item 8).

Well-being and health comprise different domains, all of which are included in the items list describing the holistic aims of PSD practice (Table 3.1). Physical well-being and health is the ability to feel physically healthy in terms of nutrition and healthy habits (Granello & Witmer, 2013b) (Table 3.1-Item 1). Mental (Foresight, 2008) or intellectual well-being and health (Washington State University, 2012) is a dynamic state in which “the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively” (Foresight, 2008, p.10) (Table 3.1-Item 2). Social well-being and health measure the experience of individuals who interact successfully (New Economics Foundation, 2009) (Table 3.1-Item 3). The Washington State University (2012) lists other types, namely occupational,

spiritual and emotional. Occupational well-being and health is related to the achievement of personal satisfaction through the choice of the career path, educational track or vocation which support personal goals (Table 3.1-Item 4). Two other types, listed by Washington State University, are that of spiritual, denoting the ability to find meaning and purpose in life as well as to choose actions which are in line with personal beliefs (Table 3.1-Item 5), and emotional well-being and health, which is the ability to understand and manage one's emotions (Item 6 - Table 3.1). Different models list and categorize these domains, with the aim of attempting to define wellness and health in more detail.

Hettler's hexagonal model of wellness and health (Granello & Witmer, 2013b) comprises the physical (nutrition and healthy habits), emotional (management of feelings), spiritual (meaning, values) social (relationships), occupational (employment, skills, satisfaction) and intellectual (creativity, commitment to learn, critical thinking) aspects of well-being. Similarly, Myers, Sweeney and Witmer (2000) developed the lifespan model of wellness and health which includes exercise, self-care, stress management, gender and cultural identity, sense of worth, sense of control, realistic beliefs, emotional awareness and coping, problem-solving and creativity, sense of humor and nutrition, all of which are desired for optimal health and functioning. Such characteristics are expressed through

spirituality, self-regulation, work, friendship, and love, which are the five Adlerian life tasks. In this model, education is one of the external life forces which contributes to wellness and health.

Deiner and Ryan (2011) argue that it is important to measure well-being, healthy lifestyle and quality of life because the economic change has caused a shift in what Inglehart terms as materialist to post-materialist values. Nowadays, “beyond money, people now desire engagement, fulfillment, and most importantly happiness” (Ibid., p. 23), or as Anscombe in 1958 refers to it as human flourishing (Bruni, 2010) or quality of life (OECD, 2012). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development defines the latter as a “set of non-monetary attributes of individuals” (OECD, 2011, p. 5) and the WHO (1997) explains it as the “individuals’ perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns” (p. 1).

In summary, research shows that levels of well-being, healthy lifestyle and quality of life are beneficial for the effective functioning of society and that such aspects are also linked to success in achievement scores, retention, and employment (Calderon & Lopez, 2011), higher incomes,

better work performance, better social relationships, rewarding marriages, health and longevity (Deiner & Seligman, 2004).

In reality, interviewees in this research (Appendix 1) sustained that PSD practice has holistic aims, including well-being, healthy lifestyle, quality of life, employment and employability. These were listed in the items of Dimension C (The holistic aims of the PSD practice-Table 3.1). As a result, this section explained thoroughly such aims, and is followed by a presentation of the existent statistics related to these aims.

3.4 Statistics indicating the Well-being, Quality of Life, Healthy Lifestyle, Employment and Employability of young people

This research assesses the extent to which PSD practice enhances holistic aims (research question 3¹⁵). As a result, it is interesting to have an idea of local statistics and research about the state of Maltese late adolescents and early adults, in terms of well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability (holistic aims).

¹⁵ To what extent does PSD practice, offered through the University of Malta undergraduate experience, help young undergraduates to enhance their well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability?

In general, Eurofound (2013c) shows that the Maltese 18-24 cohort seem to be more satisfied with their health (mean value - 8.8) than other young people (aged 18-24) in European Union (EU) countries (mean value - 8.4). At the same time, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh (2012) presents a research, held in April 2011, which assessed self-perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of 400 young people, between the ages of 13 and 30, on different life issues. Results indicate that 73.8% of the research cohort claimed that they are physically fit and that 8.5% felt under stress. In addition, 5.8% of the young people said that they smoke a lot, 3.3% claimed that they drink a lot and 57.6% said that they eat healthy food. Indicators of healthy life years after birth show that in the EU-27 it is 60.9 years for males and 61.6 years for females whereas in Malta it is 69.1 years for males and 70.6 years for females (European Union, 2012). This suggests that Maltese people remain healthier than other people in the EU27.

Health is closely related to quality of life. Eurofound (2013a, b, d, e, f) generated different results about quality of life of young people (Table 3.3), indicating scores which are higher those of the EU countries.

	Maltese 18-24 cohort (Mean Value)	EU countries 18-24 cohort (Mean Value)
Satisfaction with education (Eurofound, 2013a)	7.77	7.33
Satisfaction with present standard of living (Eurofound, 2013b)	7.8	7.1
Satisfaction with social life (Eurofound, 2013d)	8.3	8
Happiness with life (Eurofound, 2013e)	7.8	7.7
Satisfaction with their life (Eurofound, 2013f)	7.8	7.4

Table 3.3: Statistics indicating the quality of life of Maltese young people in comparison with EU countries

These statistics provide rich, general data about the age group of the research participants, who are 17-25 years old. In reality, these results are quite positive. Since my research is about holistic aims including well-being, healthy lifestyle and quality of life, these statistics act as background knowledge for the reader, indicating the state of Maltese young people.

Besides such aspects, through my research I explored employment and employability. Research carried out by Gatt and Gatt (2006) during the period 2001-2003 consists of: a review of literature on school to work transition, an analysis of the tracer studies presenting data on the choices

of school leavers, interviews with key players in post-secondary education, focus group interviews with young people and employers and a survey with 500 students who have undergone the school to work transition. Results confirm that employers see the lack of group, interpersonal and intrapersonal generic competences, or soft skills, as some researchers refer to them, as a weakness in young people when it comes to employment and employability. These are categorized in three subheadings:

A: Personality aspects: no commitment to work, no sense of responsibility, too leisure oriented, too many commitments outside work, too many hobbies, emotionally immature, appearance not up to standard, lack of self-confidence and lack of discipline despite the delayed transition to independent living;

B. Attitude to work: no effort, consider work too hard, do not wish to do extra hours, lack of work experience, need training and incapable of showing their potential during interviews;

C: Professional development: had no conception of career development, over-ambitious and do not realise the limit of their potential.

The interviewed employers confess that different attributes essential are: positive attitude to work, general appearance, maturity and stability,

flexibility, leadership and communication skills. This is further stressed in another local research which is part of an ESF Skills+ project on the industry trends in Malta and employee current and future skills needs (Malta Qualifications Council, 2011). For this project, a structured questionnaire was administered by phone to 450 employers from nine different industry sectors between April and May 2011 and 18 one-to-one in-depth interviews with HR managers and small business owners. The research shows that Maltese workers and job seekers lack generic competences (Figure 3.1).

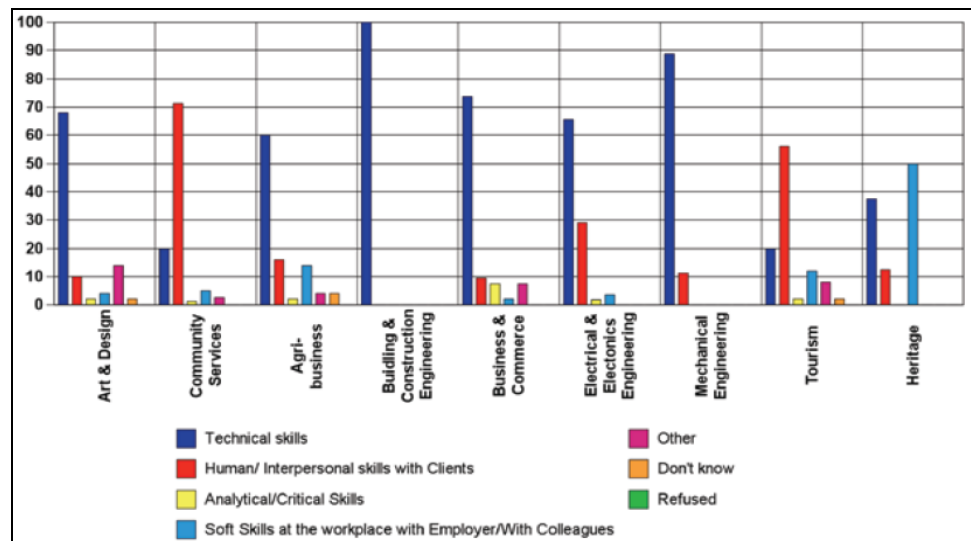


Figure 3.1: Overview of generic competences in employees from every sector (Malta Qualifications Council, 2011, p. 10)

Despite these studies which show the lack of generic competences, the National Statistics Office (2012) indicates that the percentage youth unemployment in Europe was 15.8 in 2008 and 21.4 in 2011 whereas youth unemployment in Malta was 12.2 in 2008 and 13.7 in 2011. A tertiary level attainment seems to lead to more employment. This is because figures in Malta suggest that the employment rate for persons with upper secondary and post-sec education was 88.1% in 2009 whereas the employment rate for persons with tertiary educational level was 97.8% in 2009 (NSO statistics as cited in Ministry of Education & Employment, 2013, p.19). It is acknowledged that these results give an indication of the quantity, rather than the quality of employment, as they do not show the percentage of higher education graduates who move into graduate level jobs following graduation. Nevertheless, tertiary education seems to assist students in employment prospects. In this research, I was interested to explore whether the PSD practice within the undergraduate experience is in reality leading to employment and employability.

3.5 Review of Existing Empirical Studies

Different studies, held abroad, are going to be presented to introduce perceptions about the contribution of holistic education, which in this thesis is referred to as PSD practice. Maybury (2013) examines the

influence of participation in a positive psychology course on the well-being of 23 undergraduates. Similar to what happens in PSD practice, “positive psychology students frequently consider human character strengths (e.g., bravery, compassion, wisdom) by examining ... the student’s own life experiences” (Ibid., p. 62). All students, coming from a small liberal arts college in the Northeastern United States, answered a set of questionnaires. Results show that after the course, students gained hope, self-actualization, well-being, agency, hopefulness, purpose, and mission in life. Another research held by Clark, Callister and Wallace (2003) confirms the positive contribution of education which is holistic, person-centred and based on generic competences. From three undergraduate management skills courses, delivered by three different lecturers at Universities in Western United States, 121 students were selected to form an experimental group. The lecturers in each course followed Whetten and Cameron’s 1998 text named *Developing Management Skills*, which focuses on three intrapersonal (self-awareness, managing stress, creative problem-solving) and six interpersonal competences (communication, gaining power and influence, motivating others, empowering and delegating, managing conflict, and developing effective teams). Lecturers used a pedagogy which is based on their experiences and the application of knowledge to their personal reality. These groups formed the experimental group. In the meantime, there was a control group of 113 students taking other business courses, whose content was not based on Whetten and

Cameron's 1998 text. Both groups were asked to do a pretest questionnaire to measure their emotional intelligence before the 16 week course, and a post-test questionnaire after the course, both of which were about their emotional intelligence. Results show that the experimental group improved the emotional intelligence scores during the 16-week semester, whereas the control group did not. Both studies held by Maybury (2013) and Clark et al. (2003) are indicative of the positive outcome of holistic education.

Lack of this may even result in drop outs from University. In fact, Goldfinch and Hughes (2007) postulate that "lack of ... self-management skills is one of the common reasons given by students and staff to explain withdrawal or poor performance in first year at University" (p. 261). The authors investigated a large cohort of Scottish undergraduates who started University in 2001/2 and studied programmes ranging from accounting to languages. They were asked to fill in a questionnaire about their generic competences and academic performance. Results indicate that students who rated themselves as good in self-reliance, time-management and teamwork were likely to do better in their first year. In addition, the authors said that:

Provision aimed at helping students to develop these skills during first year may help to improve performance overall. In the university where this study took place, it has been found beneficial to alert new students to the importance of these skills (Goldfinch & Hughes, 2007, p. 271).

Similarly, Carroll, Cacciattolo & McKenna (2012) sustain that growing evidence shows that character strengths like commitment to learn, positive values, social competence and a sense of purpose were associated with school success and leadership. In addition, Brewster, Curtis, McCarthy, Rodgers and Stoloff (2012) relate the course characteristics and content to student success among students completing psychology programmes at 110 institutions in North America. They correlate student success with a pedagogy that focuses specifically on the undergraduates and their experiences. Another inspiring research that discusses this aspect was held by Carroll et al. (2012), who used a self-study research methodology. The authors are three teacher educators teaching three different units of academic study in the School of Education at Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia. These teacher educators used a positive educational practice, focusing on character strengths, goal setting and mindfulness (being aware of what is happening in the present moment) in addition to the typical content of mathematics education, literacy education and postgraduate research methods. Overall, the results are very positive since the positive educational practice helped the students to pass their test and made them realize that they can use their character strengths in different areas of their life, including education.

Specific generic competences seem to have an effect on one's personal life. Since PSD practice is based on generic competences, and since I explore the contribution of such practice to the holistic development of students, such research is applicable for my study. Park, Peterson and Seligman (2006) make reference to the Values In Action classification of strengths (VIA), that was developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004). The authors explain that the VIA specifies essential positive traits categorized in six broad virtue classes, which are wisdom (cognitive strengths) and knowledge, courage (emotional strengths), justice (civic strengths), humanity (interpersonal strengths), temperance (strengths that protect against excess) and transcendence (strengths that forge connections with the larger universe) (Park & Paterson, 2011). The research presents feedback about the top five character strengths of each individual who completes the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS). This is a 240-item self-questionnaire based on the strengths in the VIA classification. All respondents (2087 adults) were asked to complete VIA-IS and the Satisfaction with Life Scale, which is a 5-item self-report questionnaire measuring one's evaluation of life satisfaction. They were also requested to mention whether they had a serious physical or medical condition or a serious psychological problem or emotional difficulty. Results show that in case of respondents who had bravery, kindness and humor as character strengths, their life satisfaction was least affected when faced with physical illness; whereas those who had appreciation of beauty

and love of learning as character strengths, their life satisfaction was least affected when faced with a psychological disorder. This indicates that character strengths, hence the generic competences, contribute to the life satisfaction of the individual and well-being.

Another study (Nath & Pradhan, 2012) investigated the relationship between positive affect (such as joy, love interest, contentment, hope and gratitude), psychological resilience¹⁶, physical health and psychological well-being¹⁷. The sample consists of 146 engineering, management and research students with an age range of 17-32 years, from IIT Kharagpur, who completed a set of standard tests including Positive Negative Affectivity Scale, Ego Resiliency Scale, Psychological Well-Being Scale and Multi-Dimensional Health questionnaire. Results indicate that positive affect is positively correlated with psychological resilience, physical health and psychological well-being. Another result shows that the more resilient a person is, the more capable s/he is to maintain positivity, leading to better physical health and psychological well-being. Similarly, Fredrickson (2001) argues that positive affect¹⁸ leads to long term growth. Fredrickson, Larkin Tugade and Waugh (2003) further say that frequent experiences of

¹⁶ Effective coping and adaptation, despite the negative circumstance in the life of a person (Masten, 2001).

¹⁷ Judgements of self acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life and positive relations with others (Keyes & Ryff, 1995).

¹⁸ The experience of positive feelings.

positive affect increase physical and psychological well-being and develop psychological resilience which help a person to face adverse situations (Alper, Cohen, Doyle, Skoner, & Turner, 2003). According to the broaden and build theory, positive affect also has the capacity to broaden the action held (for example contentment sparks the urge to integrate) (Fredrickson, 2001) and broaden people's attention, thinking and flexibility leading to personal growth and functioning (Fredrickson & Kurtz, 2011). In addition, positive affect leads to faster cardio-vascular recovery from stress (Branigan, Fredrickson, Mancuso, & Tugade, 2000), can undo the after-effects of negative affect¹⁹ which increases the probability to protect one's health (Nath & Pradan, 2012), increases the functioning of the immune system (Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, Muller, Rosenkrantz, Santorelli, & Schumacher, 2003), facilitates the undoing of lingering negative emotions and fuels resilience (Fredrickson & Kurtz, 2011). This clearly indicates that the generic competences of resilience and positive affect contribute to the life of an individual.

A generic competence which is explored by various researchers is that of self-esteem. People with a moderate self-esteem seem to have better relationships, make individuals more willing to speak up in groups, leads to a greater happiness and enhances initiative and pleasant feelings

¹⁹ The experience of negative feelings.

(Baumeister, Campbell, Kreuger, & Vohs, 2003). A related generic competence is that of optimism which is associated with higher subjective well-being²⁰ (Carver, Fulford, Miller, & Scheier, 2009).

As a result, literature shows that researchers tend to perceive generic competences as having an impact on the life of an individual, hence education based on such competences, which is both person-centred and holistic, is recommended. Literature presents the need for education to tackle both the skills of achievement as well as the skills of well-being (Ernst et al., 2009) and that undergraduate programmes must “develop insight into their own and others’ behavior and mental processes and apply effective strategies for self-management and self-improvement” (American Psychological Association, 2007, p. 20).

3.6 Conclusion

Research question 3 is aimed at exploring perceptions about the contribution of PSD practice, within the undergraduate experience, to the well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability of young undergraduates. The holistic aims made up a particular dimension

²⁰ Positive and negative evaluations about one’s life (Deiner & Ryan, 2011).

in PSD practice (Table 3.1-Dimension C). As a result, each item of this dimension was explained in detail, so as to provide a working definition for each. Existent statistics indicating the state of Maltese young people (in relation to the five aspects mentioned above) as well as existent foreign literature about the contribution of holistic education, or specific generic competences, to the life of an individual were presented.

After exploring the definition of PSD practice through the PSD Scale (Chapters 2 and 3), by referring to Dimension A (the development of generic competences), Dimension B (the active role of the students), Dimension C (the holistic aims) and Dimension D (the effectiveness of the methods used), I delve through the methodology used in this research study.

Chapter 4:

A journey of discovery

4.1 Introduction

Research is the systematic study of a topic (Langdridge, 2004) which comprises an understanding of the world. It is informed by our perceptions as well as understandings about our world(s), and “what we see as the purpose of understanding ... People have long been concerned to come to grips with their environment and to understand the nature of the phenomena it presents to their senses” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 3). In this experience of comprehending both the environment and the reality, Matthews and Ross (2010) mention research as a way of addressing it. Blaikie (2007) argues that a research explores a problem through a set of research questions, strategies, paradigms and researcher’s stance.

The present research addresses a research problem which explores the perceptions of stakeholders about Personal and Social Development (PSD) practice in Malta, the way it is included within the University of Malta (UoM) undergraduate experience, and its contribution to the well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle as well as employment and employability of late adolescent and early adult undergraduate UoM students. In doing so, it answers the following three main questions:

1. What is the perception of University of Malta stakeholders with regards to PSD practice in Malta?
2. To what extent and in what ways is PSD practice applied to the undergraduate experience as offered by the University of Malta?
3. To what extent does PSD practice, offered through the University of Malta undergraduate experience, help young undergraduates to enhance their well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability?

In order to answer these questions, a grounded theory methodology was used and different methods, making up a mixed method research, helped to give depth to the research. Creswell and Clark (2011) quote different authors who provide an alternative name to mixed method research. These are: third methodological movement (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), and multiple ways of seeing and hearing (Greene, 2007). Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) define mixed method research as an intellectual and practical synthesis “based on qualitative and quantitative research ... it recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results” (p. 129). Creswell and Clark (2011) explain that through mixed methods research, the researcher collects and analyses data

persuasively and rigorously. The authors further stress the point that “when preparing a research study employing mixed methods, the researcher needs to provide a justification for the use of this approach” (p. 5). As a result, this chapter rationalizes the use of a mixed methods research in addition to the use of particular research strategies, paradigms, methods and researcher’s stance.

A mixed methods research entailed the use of different research methods to answer the research questions. An internet search was held to answer research questions 1 and 2. Semi-structured interviews with final year undergraduate late adolescents and early adults, Deans, policy-makers, education academics, the Minister for Education and Employment and the Pro-Rector of the UoM were used to answer research questions 1, 2 and 3 whereas questionnaires were filled in by UoM undergraduates to answer research questions 2 and 3.

As a method, the semi-structured interview was used to provide an in-depth analysis of perceptions about the research area. The research was also aimed at providing statistics and numbers, which will be presented to policy makers, politicians and professionals. For this reason, the questionnaire as a research tool, was also employed. Both the questionnaire

and the semi-structured interview, in addition to the internet search, made up the mixed method research.

In this chapter, I explore my stance in the research and the grounded theory methodology and I present an in-depth rationale of the philosophical background. I also explain why both quantitative and qualitative data were employed. Following this, I present how the grounded theory methodology was used. The questionnaire and the semi-structured interview, as research methods, are analysed in terms of how they contributed to my research study. This chapter also explores the research cohort in detail, the way participants were recruited and the research process. Validity and reliability of research tools are discussed. This is followed by a description of the ethical considerations and the way I collected and analysed the data.

4.2 My Position in the Research Study

Every researcher has a background, a cultural context and behavioural dispositions which might influence the study. “Social reality exists, so as to speak, twice, in things and minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 127). The habitus comprises my values, dispositions and expectations. From a standpoint

theory (ST) approach, every research phase is conditioned by the researchers standpoint (Jermier, 1998), or as Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis (2002) refer to it as situatedness, made up of one's viewpoints, perspectives, outlooks and positions. ST is mainly a political and social epistemology (Wylie, 2003; Harding, 1993), used by social scientists, sociologists, political theorists and feminist researchers. "A standpoint perspective involves how human beings perceive and understand the world; how people adopt a particular standpoint view; how humans socially construct the world; and how humans perceive their social group membership affecting their own standpoints" (Falzon, 2012, p. 131).

Given that I followed a grounded theory methodology throughout the research, I was immersed thoroughly in the experiences of young people to explore their ideas about the research area. I wanted to actively listen to their views, so I had a learner role, which helped me to get immersed into their world and understand their perceptions. This enabled me to do the research with, rather than on other people (Blaikie, 2007). When using such stance, I had to be cautious. Bourdieu warns the researcher to engage in a self-referential awareness, thus engaging in "epistemological vigilance" (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 89). Fries (2009) argues that this is achieved not through a Weberian like emphasis on value neutrality of the researcher, but through an understanding of one's own culture that directs intellectual

orientations. Bourdieu (2004) and Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) refer to a process known as participant objectivation, which is facilitated by a reflexive sociology, whereby:

Biographies and behaviours of the social scientists in relation to their object of study must be taken into account if social science is to be successful as a scientific enterprise. The social researcher occupies a place in the social world, which is the object of study, and must therefore adopt a critical awareness of his or her own social location to both the research object and process (Fries, 2009, p. 329).

From the beginning of the research, I felt that it was important to define my standpoint and to be aware of my position as an insider researcher.

4.3 My Personal Background

Living in a small island with high expectations for quality education, my professional training in the PSD subject and my work (Preface) motivated me to engage in research about PSD practice in Malta, with a specific focus on the undergraduate experience at the UoM. Perry and Skerritt (2002) argue that it is common to have individuals who choose to do their research in their own organizational setting. Since I am a part-time employee at the UoM and I did research about the same institution, I

engaged in insider research. Being an insider means “being embedded in a shared setting (Holian and Smyth, 2008), emotionally connected to the research participants (Sikes, 2008), with a ‘feel for the game and the hidden rules’ (Bourdieu, 1988, 27)” (Floyd & Arthur, 2012, p. 173). This contrasts with the traditional notions whereby researchers are considered as objective outsiders who are analyzing an aspect which is external to themselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Insider research has both its advantages and disadvantages. Being familiar to the setting and some of the employees, respondents may feel more comfortable to share their experiences (Ibid.). Insider researchers have more regular contact with the field and more in-depth conversations with social actors since they are already acquainted with the field (Taylor, 2011).

On the other hand, Holian and Smyth (2008) claim that even though being an insider may offer a privileged access and information, it may also act as a constraint limiting what is revealed. Such research presents challenges in terms of access, preunderstanding and role duality (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). They argue that albeit insider researchers may have primary access, they may still have difficulties in secondary access, referring to documentation, people and data. The preunderstanding makes such researchers more close to the data, which in itself may confer some

disadvantages. Insider researchers with a preunderstanding may assume too much, may not probe as much as if they are new to the research setting and may find it difficult to gather relevant data because as insider they may be denied deeper access (or secondary access). Having the dual organizational and researcher role within the same institution may cause a difficult or awkward situation, even though Nielsen and Repstad (1993), as cited in Brannick and Coghlan (2007), report that insiders may empathise more and be encouraged to follow the results.

My professional background as well as the insider perspective may have been a source of bias and a question to the reliability of the study, which is analysed in a specific section within this chapter. As an insider researcher, I was cautious to engage in epistemological vigilance by limiting my bias and acting against the challenges of insider perspective, hence increasing the reliability of the research. Before delving through these aspects, I present the grounded theory methodology, the research strategy, the ontological and epistemological assumptions, the methodology and the methods used in the research.

4.4 Grounded Theory –The Methodology

For the purpose of my research, I chose to use the grounded theory methodology. In this section, I explore such methodology in detail. The creators of grounded theory, Barney Glaser, a quantitative researcher and Anslem Strauss, a qualitative researcher, defined the methodology in their seminal book “The Discovery of Grounded Theory”, published in 1967 (Urquhart, 2013). Glaser and Strauss (1967) define it as “the discovery of theory from data-systematically obtained and analysed in social research” (p. 1). The first book highlights the idea that both quantitative and qualitative data are useful and that it is important to generate new ideas. Urquhart (2013) summarizes such methodology by saying that it generates “theories and theories contain relationships between constructs” (p. 6). The author explains that such method is very useful where no previous theory exists and where a process is involved.

Even though Glaser and Strauss originally described grounded theory in the 1960’s, there seems to be a divergence of ideas that differ from the original views of the authors. As explicated in Chapter 1, there are three schools of grounded theory: the Glaserian that is based on the original work of Glaser and his subsequent writings; the Straussian where Strauss and Corbin refined the Glaserian view and the approach put forward by

Charmaz which is the constructivist, that moves away from the positivism associated with both Glaser's and Strauss and Corbin's versions of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000). The dispute started after the publication of Strauss and Corbin's book in 1990 which included a response to their students on how to use grounded theory. In fact, it contains clear guidelines and procedures. Glaser felt that the way they presented grounded theory is too restrictive and argued:

If you torture the data long enough, it will give up!.... the data is not allowed to speak for itself as in grounded theory, and to be heard from, infrequently it had to scream. Forcing by preconception constantly derails it from relevance" (Glaser, 1992, p. 123).

The disagreement was about the process because Strauss and Corbin suggested four prescriptive steps for coding whereas Glaser suggested only three. For the purpose of the research, I did not use the Glaserian or the Straussian approach, because I felt that these are both too positivist. Instead, the constructivist grounded theory does not subscribe only to the objective and positivistic assumptions and realities (Bonner et al., 2006). As explained in previous sections of the thesis, such approach does not assume that the data awaits "discovery in an external world or that methodological procedures will correct limited views of the studies world. Nor does it assume that impartial observers enter the research scene without an interpretive frame of reference" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 509). As a

result, the constructivist approach does not exclude the research context, the personal interests of the researchers and the relationship with participants. As explained further ahead in this chapter and as clearly outlined at the start of the chapter, I approached my research with my personal background. However, I tried as much as possible to identify and limit my bias towards the research. As opposed to the Glaserian and Straussian approach, constructivist grounded theory includes a set of principles and practices, not prescription (Charmaz, 2006) because flexible guidelines are emphasized and rules are avoided.

5.5 Research Strategy

A research strategy portrays the way research questions are answered. Since I explored both generalized views and in-depth perspectives, I made use of deductive and abductive research strategies. Through a deductive research strategy I started to identify regularities, for which I wanted an explanation (Blaikie, 2007). After Step 1 of the research process, comprising an initial research about the UoM students and the 14 semi-structured interviews to define and explore PSD practice in the Maltese Islands, I started to identify certain emerging aspects and regularities. As a result, the next step was that of engaging in an online search of all undergraduate course descriptions of all credits as offered by all faculties

to observe the presence of PSD practice at the UoM. In fact, I noted that the UoM claims to provide PSD practice which varies across different departments in the fourteen faculties. I also observed that within the aims of some courses, generic competences are listed. After identifying these regularities, engaging in literature search about PSD practice and doing a set of semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1), I listed the emerging dimensions and related items that were used to define PSD practice (Table 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 3.1) and to devise the questionnaire and the questions for the semi-structured interview. The questionnaire helped me to deduce certain conclusions with the use of a deductive research strategy where I confirmed or refuted the initial findings of the research process. Results were corroborated with two additional sources of data, the internet search of all course descriptions provided by every faculty and the results from the initial semi-structured interviews. This was held through a process of constant comparison which involves constant comparing of emerging data, thus enhancing rigorous scrutiny (Charmaz, 2006). As presented in Figure 1.1 (Chapter 1), throughout the research there were different steps and results were compared.

Deductive research strategy was not sufficient for my research since I wanted to have in-depth accounts of experiences. As a result, I employed an abductive research strategy (Blaikie, 2007) as well, whereby the use of

the semi-structured interview provided in-depth perceptions in relation to PSD practice. Through abduction, Blaikie (2007) argues that the social world is investigated by asking respondents to explain and redescribe their experiences. Using the deductive and the abductive strategies enabled me to obtain both generalized and in-depth view of the research problem.

4.6 The Interpretivist and Critical Rationalism Research Paradigms

A paradigm is a pattern of belief and practice “that regulate[s] inquiry within a discipline by providing lenses, frames and processes through which investigation is accomplished” (Weaver & Olson, 2006, p. 460). For the purpose of the study, the nature of the research area was analyzed through the research paradigms of interpretivism and critical rationalism (Blaikie, 2006), each having distinct assumptions. Every paradigm consists of ontological, epistemological, axiological and rhetoric assumptions (Gilbert, 2006). Ontological assumptions deal with the nature of social reality investigated whereas the epistemological assumptions have to do with the way in which the knowledge of the reality is obtained (Blaikie, 2007). Axiological assumptions refer to the role of values throughout the research whereas rhetoric assumptions deal with the language of the research, whether formal or informal (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Interpretivism has its origins in hermeneutics, depicting the social reality as interpreted by the meanings that participants produce as part their everyday activities (Blaikie, 2007), and phenomenology, which is a belief in the essence of subjective consciousness that focuses on the “life world, an openness to the experiences of the subjects, a primacy of precise descriptions ... and a search for invariant essential meanings in the descriptions” (Kvale, 1996, p. 38) (ontology). The study has an interpretivist research paradigm where there is an orientation that focuses on the subjective meaning of social action (epistemology) (Cohen et al., 2000; Kvale, 1996; Neuman, 2003; Bryman, 2001; Creswell, 1998; Langdrige, 2004; Denscombe, 2002; Blaikie, 2007; Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996; Benton & Craib, 2001). This means that the experiences of the individuals in the research study were explored (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) through an informal language of research (rhetoric) (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Throughout the research, I was cautious to limit my own biases and personal values (axiology) (Ibid.).

In this research, I was also interested in having statistics which reveal the way PSD practice is included in the undergraduate experience, as offered by the UoM, with the hope of providing valuable feedback to Maltese policy makers, politicians and professionals. A critical rationalism research paradigm was also followed, even though it was difficult to

implement when researching human behavior and perception. Post-positivists reject positivism because they claim that results from pure observation are impossible. In contrast, they argue that the researcher invents regularities which are tested (Blaikie, 2007). Post-positivists affirm that research must be unbiased, therefore it has to be value free (axiology), although this is very difficult to achieve and maybe only a chimera (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In addition, the authors declare that the language used in research which makes use of this paradigm, is generally formal (rhetoric) (Creswell & Clark, 2011). For the research study, I thought that it was appropriate to use this research paradigm, in addition to the interpretivist, for a specific purpose. Reality, from a critical rationalist approach, was measured statistically (epistemology) (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). To be understood, there was no reason to interact with who or what was studied, thus research was more objective (ontology) (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011; Neuman, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Critical rationalist studies are based on statistics and can be replicated, whereby the researcher remains distant from the subjects (axiology) (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), hence resulting in unbiased research (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In reality, both paradigms were used so as to have statistical data and in-depth views. These guided the mixed method research, which is described in the next section.

4.7 Mixed method research

Whether a mixed methods approach is an appropriate choice of methodology for a specific project depends therefore both on one's view of the approach itself, in terms of its strengths and capabilities assessed in relation to other possible approaches and on the project's objectives (Woolley, 2009, p. 8).

At the start of the research, I was convinced that the best research to be used was the qualitative because it generates in-depth results. However, when I reflected about my research questions, I thought that the collection of quantitative data would help me to produce rigorous results and to answer research questions from a larger number of respondents. Creswell and Clark (2011) refer to this as the emerging mixed method design whereby the “use of mixed methods arises due to issues that develop during the process of conducting research” (p. 54). For the exploratory aims of my research study, I felt that I must have in-depth perceptions of participants and statistical data, which can be presented as feedback to policy makers regulating the UoM. In this way, I tried to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data so as to address my research questions. Johnson et al. (2007) claim that a mixed method research is in “equal status” (p. 123), thus believing that qualitative and quantitative data add more insights. The relationship between the two types of data was interactive, because results from the internet search, the semi-structured interview and the questionnaire were mixed during the data collection and

analysis (Greene, 2007). Results elicited from the questionnaire were used to formulate the questions for the semi-structured interview. They were also utilized during the actual interviews to discuss the results. Finally, all results were corroborated.

For this research, quantitative and qualitative data had equal emphasis and importance. This was a lengthy process and required specific researcher skills (Bryman, 2006). Nevertheless, it generated both generalized and in-depth data. Creswell and Clark (2011) argue that a mixed method research provides more evidence for the study of a research problem and provides a bridge across different paradigms. On the other hand, this might be challenging because the researcher is required to have certain skills in collecting quantitative and qualitative data. In order to overcome this challenge, I engaged in a piloting phase before the actual distribution of the questionnaire and before the actual semi-structured interviews. Piloting helped me to produce a final questionnaire which is practical, reliable and valid and to practise interview skills as well as to have reliable and valid questions.

4.8 Quantitative and Qualitative Data Types

Quantitative data is about objective facts while qualitative data focuses more on subjective meanings. Even though quantitative data is claimed to be objective, Van Heugten (2004) argues that “whereas until recently the positivist concern with objectivity and detachment predominated, it is now more widely accepted that these ideals are impossible and perhaps undesirable in human research” (p. 207). Similarly, interpretivists claim that objective reality can “never be captured” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5) and that objectivity is naïve since it maybe an illusion (Sayer, 2000). Guba and Lincoln (2005) argue that: objectivity is “a chimera: a mythological creature that never existed, save in the imagination of those who believe that knowing can be separated from the knower” (p. 208). Despite these claims, quantitative data was collected because I wanted to have statistics about the research area.

Langdridge (2004) argues that both qualitative and quantitative data have their advantages and disadvantages which must be taken in consideration when planning the research. Quantitative data is precise, reliable, thorough due to number of participants involved (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002), controlled, has predictive power (Langdridge, 2004), measures a specific construct, facilitates comparisons and examines the

strength of association between variables (Boyd, Castro, Kellison & Kopak, 2010). In spite of these positive contributions, quantitative data tends to oversimplify the complex nature of human actions, tends to refrain from providing depth and recognizing the individuality of human beings (Langdridge, 2004) and detaches “information from its original ecological ‘real-world’ context (Harre, Moghaddam & Walker, 2003); a phenomenon referred to as decontextualization (Viruel-Fuentes, 2007)” (Ibid., p. 343).

In contrast, qualitative data is more open-ended, inductive, recognizes subjectivity, focuses on interactive processes, does not impose a way of seeing participants and does not impose a pre-set deductive hypothesis (Langdridge, 2004; Bryman, 2001), investigates the entire person holistically within one’s context (Benetka, Braakman & Gelo, 2008) and generates rich data about the experiences of humans (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Boyd et al. (2010) refer to this aspect as idiographic because qualitative data deals with the depth of analysis. However, it is not appropriate to make generalizations or predictions (Langdridge, 2004; Bryman, 2001), it creates difficulties in the assessment of associations that occur between cases and it is not ideal for drawing definitive conclusions due to small sample size (Boyd et al., 2010).

Keeping in mind the advantages and disadvantages of both quantitative as well as qualitative data, for the aims of my research I used both. Quantitative data generated general evidence-based numbers and statistics from a good number of students, whereas qualitative data provided in-depth perceptions about the research area. Using both types of data, I enticed in method triangulation, or as Denzin (1989) and Yin (2009) calls it data triangulation, using different quantitative as well as qualitative data (Neuman, 2003; Olsen, 2004).

“To make empirical data more objective and less subjective, the researcher uses replicative ... and triangulation methods” (Stake, 2005, p. 455). Method or data triangulation, denoting the use of more than one method to gather data (Denzin, 1970), was first used by Campbell and Fiske in 1959 and popularized by the post-modernist writer Denzin in 1989 (Bloor & Wood, 2006). Way back in 1966, Webb, Campbell, Schwartz and Sechrest suggested that “once a proposition has been confirmed by two or more independent measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretation is greatly reduced. The most persuasive evidence comes through a triangulation of measurement processes” (p. 3). Triangulation enables a fuller picture and a deeper understanding, thus providing corroboration (Johnson et al., 2007).

Denzin (1970, 1978) distinguishes between within-method and between-method triangulation. The research comprises the latter type of triangulation since it has contrasting research methods (in this case it applied to the quantitative questionnaire and the qualitative semi-structured interview). Denzin (1978) contends that through between-method triangulation, “the bias inherent in any particular data source, investigators, and particularly method will be cancelled out when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators, and methods” (p. 14). Triangular techniques were chosen to provide less bias (Ibid.), a more holistic view and to endow with more elucidation in relation to the research area (Cohen et al., 2000). The combination of methods and data types led to more rigour, validation, depth, breadth and insight to the research (Falzon, 2012; Johnson et al., 2007). Triangulation was also employed for deepening and widening my own experiences (Olsen, 2004).

4.9 The case study of PSD practice at the University of Malta

A case study provides data on the characteristics of an individual unit, which might be a child, class, school, community (Cohen et al., 2000; Yin, 2009), particular event, process, object, phenomenon or state of affairs (Echo & Evers, 2006). In my research, I present a case study of

stakeholder perceptions about PSD practice within the undergraduate experience at the UoM and its contribution to the well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability of late adolescent and early adult undergraduate UoM students. The case study was chosen because it examines the case which is both bounded in time (undergraduate experiences) and place (UoM). More specifically, I chose to employ multiple case study which is an instrumental study where a number of cases or experiences are studied jointly to understand a phenomenon, which in this case is PSD practice (Stake, 2005). Even though, I engaged in a mixed method research and method triangulation, I kept in mind that “the purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent the case” (Ibid., p. 460). Results do not generalize about the contribution of PSD practice. Henceforth, it was important to keep in mind that I explored perceptions, rather than generalizations, of the research cohort in relation to the research area, despite the fact that I used both qualitative and quantitative data. Case studies were chosen since they have unique features (Nisbet & Watt, 1984). They are strong in reality, recognize the complexity of social truths, and they are a step to action because their insights provide feedback to staff, individual self-development, institution, and policy makers (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1980). For the case study about PSD practice in Malta, with a specific focus on the UoM, I made use of the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview, which are explained in the subsequent sections.

4.10 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a written list of questions which are answered by respondents after interpreting what is expected from them. This puts pressure on the presentation of a questionnaire with an appropriate layout; one that is easy to read, and easy-to-follow (Kumar, 2005). Since I wanted to have a good response rate, I tried to present a short questionnaire named “Learning at the University of Malta” (online link - <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X5YPL7W>), with a focus on close rather than open-ended questions.

Questions 1 to 7 asked the respondents for basic information, including gender, age, place of residence, faculty enrolled to, name of undergraduate degree, number of years attending the Degree Plus programme and the UoM extra-curricular groups which they form part of. Questions 8 to 13 were close-ended questions, whereby students ticked those items which indicate the presence or absence of PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate courses. Question 14 was also close-ended, requesting respondents to reflect on the contribution of the PSD practice to their life. Questions 15 and 16 were open-ended, aimed to provide general feedback about PSD practice at the UoM. The majority of the questions were close ended. This is because the aim was not to generate in-depth

analysis but to have a general view about the extent and the ways in which PSD practice is applied to the UoM undergraduate courses, and its contribution to the young undergraduates. The survey monkey online website was used to devise the questionnaire which was answered online. Survey monkey was chosen because results were easily analysed through SPSS22 statistical software.

Language is another aspect which was considered when devising the questionnaire. Given that University students are fluent and knowledgeable in the English language, I decided to present the questionnaire in this language, because most lectures are held in English. Besides the language, the layout was given particular attention. Bryman (2001) cautions that the questionnaire must have a clear presentation and instructions. For this reason, I decided to do piloting which increased its reliability, validity and practicality since it checked the clarity of questions, removed ambiguities, obtained feedback on the validity of questions, checked the time required for its completion and identified misunderstood or non-completed items (Cohen et al., 2000).

Whilst being practical, convenient, inexpensive and quick to administer (Bryman, 2001; Langdridge, 2004), questionnaires attempted to give a more general view, since they provided data from large numbers of

undergraduate students at once (Langdridge, 2004). Despite these positive contributions, questionnaires are known for the lack of opportunity in clarifying issues. For this reason, I opted to include the semi-structured interview so as to generate in-depth data. Questionnaires are also criticized since they allow respondents to consult with others, thus resulting in a biased reply (Kumar, 2005; Bryman, 2001). Nevertheless, I still decided to use the questionnaire as a research tool since I wanted to generate evidence-based numbers and statistics (Langdridge, 2004). Problems in questionnaires may even result due to: the use of jargon, slang, abbreviations and emotional laden words; ambiguity, confusion and vagueness; double-barrelled, overlapping, leading questions with double-negatives and the start of a questionnaire by a false premise (Neuman, 2003). To avoid these problems, there was the piloting of the questionnaires.

4.11 Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured, depth or ethnographic qualitative interviews grew in popularity after the dissatisfaction with the positivist assumptions of survey research (Bloor & Wood, 2006). They have an informal, conversational character, shaped partly by the interviewer pre-set questions and partly by the emerging concerns. Bloor and Wood (2006) argue that

deriving from the works of Mead and Schutz, depth interviewers look for an inter-subjective bridge, thus having a shared cognition and consensus between themselves and their respondent, allowing sharing information about the respondent's world. Through a flexible approach between the interviewer and the interviewee, such process may be enhanced through techniques namely: empathy, open-ended questions and intentional pausing (Bryman, 2001).

Kvale (1996) uses two metaphors to explain the aims of the interviewer. During such method, the interviewer has two roles: a miner who unearths the valuable metal, representing the experiences of the interviewee and a traveller on a journey discovering the world and instigating the process of reflection. The interviewer has to be skilled in how to ask questions and in how to deal with the emotional dynamics of the interview made up of five stages (Ibid.). During the anti-positivist enthusiasm phase, the interviewer is very motivated and enthusiasm is at its peak. In the second stage, the interview-quoting phase, the interviewer is still very motivated during the initial interviews and in the third stage, the working phase of silence, a lot of patience is required. The last two stages present other challenges for the interviewer because in stage four, which is the aggressive phase of silence, interviews would have been completed and there is a lot of stress for analysis. In the last stage,

characterized by exhaustion, the interview project would have become overwhelming. Further to these, Creswell (1998) presents other challenges which may be encountered during interviews. These include: being confident in interview skills; bracketing, hence limiting personal bias; handling emotional outbursts; taking notes during the interview, transcribing and matching the level of questions to the ability of the interviewees. In order to overcome such challenges and to have a successful interview, Kvale (1996) suggests that the interviewer must be knowledgeable, gentle, sensitive, open and critical. My experience as a PSD teacher, trained in asking questions for reflection, and the pilot semi-structured interviews helped me to practice such interview skills and attitudes and to overcome these challenges.

Semi-structured interviews allow the respondents not to be constrained by fixed answers (Langdridge, 2004). Nevertheless, they may provide bias in terms of the influence through the interviewer's presence and the failure of the interviewer to probe properly (Neuman, 2003). Similarly, Silverman (2010) posits that interviews do not allow "the beauty of naturally occurring data" which "may show us things we could never imagine" (p. 132), because questions are already pre-set. In order to avoid these challenges, I engaged in a piloting process before the actual interviews, to practise probing skills, and I made use of semi-structured, rather than

structured interviews, so as to allow the interview take its course. Another critique for interviews is derived from constructivist and post-modernist epistemologies who put forward the argument that the interviewer contrives, instead of elicits, the description of the interviewee's social world (Bloor & Wood, 2006). During the research journey, reflexivity, which will be described in this chapter, helped me to reflect on my skills as a researcher, to be aware of my mistakes so as not to repeat them, and to work on my bias, so as not to contrive rather than elicit data. By self-evaluating myself as researcher, I could then engage in semi-structured interviews which focused on interactional and interrelations aspects, emphasizing the narratives constructed by the interviewees. In addition, I tried to be open to the experiences of the interviewees and to search for essential meanings in the descriptions (Kvale, 1996).

4.12 Recruitment of participants

A key feature in grounded theory methodology is theoretical sampling which is a type of sampling where the researcher decides on analytic grounds where to sample next (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This implies that one step of the research process guides the researcher what to sample next. In fact, as immediately explained in Chapter 1, the research process, which is clearly outlined in Figure 1.1, involved a series of steps and each of

these guided me on what to sample in the following step, depending on the arising need. In this way, Urquhart (2013) argues that the theory can be quickly developed based on the emerging concepts and ensures that the research is truly grounded in data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) further comment that through theoretical sampling, which comprises conscious selection of sample groups that might be different, the researcher expands and densifies the theory. In fact for this research study, different categories of people were selected.

Initially 14 semi-structured interviews were held with stakeholders involved in the training of students at further and higher educational level, pioneer PSD teachers and University lecturers, to define and to explore PSD practice. Undergraduate late adolescents and early adults, aged from 17 to 25, were chosen for the purpose of this research because I wanted to focus on young UoM undergraduates, since they make up the majority of the students and they experienced the Maltese education process. At the same time, Deans were chosen because they are those who plan or facilitate learning at the UoM. Policy makers, education academics, the Minister for Education and Employment and the Pro-Rector of the UoM were also interviewed because they could yield an explanation of the emerging concepts. In summary, all these were involved in the research process with the aim of maximising representative validity.

The research sample was selected on purpose to meet the needs of each emerging step (Figure 1.1, Chapter 1). Different methods were chosen in an attempt to appropriately answer the research questions. After ethical approval from the University of Nottingham and the UoM, the final questionnaire was forwarded to the Registrar of the UoM, who subsequently sent it to students via email, inviting them to respond by following the link: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X5YPL7W>. Students were final year undergraduates, chosen through a purposive sampling. Since I wanted responses from undergraduate students, I asked the registrar to send the questionnaire to these students. Even though, this might have been a source of bias, in reality, as I indicate in this chapter (Table 6.1), response rates were proportional to the total number of students in each faculty cluster. With the help of the SPSS software, I excluded responses from students who are more than 25 years old, thus eliminating mature students.

As explained previously, to facilitate comparisons across faculties, these were grouped in four clusters:

- Cluster 1 - Sciences including Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, Faculty of Dental Surgery and Faculty of Science.

- Cluster 2 - Social Sciences including Faculty of Laws, Faculty for Social Well-Being, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy and Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences.
- Cluster 3 - Humanities including Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Theology.
- Cluster 4 - Civil Sciences including Faculty for the Built Environment, Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Information and Communication Technology.

Faculty Cluster	Number of undergraduate final year students aged 17-25	
	Sample	Population
Sciences	68 (24.5%)	376 (22.9%)
Social Sciences	132 (47.7%)	812 (49.6%)
Humanities	52 (18.8%)	247 (15.09%)
Civil Sciences	25 (9.0%)	201 (12.3%)
Total	277 (100%)	1636 (100%)

Table 4.1: Number of UOM young undergraduates categorized by faculty cluster in scholastic year 2013-2014

The last question of the questionnaire asked the respondents whether they would like to be interviewed. If a respondent was willing to be

interviewed, s/he was requested to write the name and the contact details. In fact, I had enough respondents from each faculty cluster. For the selection of the interviewees, who participated in the second set of interviews (Appendix 2), I made use of stratified sampling, ensuring that this cohort was sampled in a way that the number of respondents was proportional to the number of undergraduates (Langdridge, 2004) from each faculty cluster. As a result, even in the cases of the interviews, the number held with students for each cluster was proportional to the total final year undergraduate student population enrolled in each of the cluster. All Deans of faculty clusters at the UoM were invited for an interview. However, not everyone answered. In general, Deans were interviewed and selected through a purposive sampling, since they were considered as an important source of data collection who helped to understand the research problem (Creswell, 2003). In addition, purposive sampling was also used in the selection of policy-makers, education academics, the Minister for Education and Employment, the Pro-Rector and the interviewees who participated in the initial interviews.

Using grounded theory methodology implies that the researcher must always present results that are grounded in the data, thus having a series of steps which all reveal an emergent theory. For this reason, most participants were recruited through purposive sampling because the sample

was identified after a need arose; following each research step involved in the research process (Figure 1.1, Chapter 1).

4.13 Piloting phases

The questionnaire was aimed to explore the extent and the way PSD practice is included within the undergraduate experience (research question 2) and the contribution of such PSD practice to the holistic development of these students (research question 3). In order to do so, I devised a questionnaire that questions the degree of presence of the items, found in each of the four dimensions that make up PSD practice (Table 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 3.1). In this way, I obtained answers for research question 2, since I explored the development of generic competences in PSD practice (Dimension A), the active role of the student in PSD practice (Dimension B), and the effectiveness of the different methods (Dimension D), and research question 3, since I explored the holistic aims of PSD practice (Dimension C). Before the actual use of the questionnaire, I engaged in a process of piloting. Different types of piloting took place to increase reliability and validity.

4.13.1 Piloting Phase 1-Feedback about the Questionnaire

The initial piloting, was held in November 2013, and consisted of a draft questionnaire answered by ten undergraduate final year students, selected from those whom I lecture. These were invited to test the research tool. The piloting of the questionnaire helped me to obtain feedback about the questions presented in the questions found in the questionnaire, the clarity of the student consent form (Appendix 10), and the clarity of the information sheet (Appendix 9). Piloting provided an idea about the duration of research tools and checked the validity, clarity and quality of the questions (Cohen et al., 2000). It also eliminated ambiguities or difficulties in wording, leading to a research instrument which functioned well as a whole (Bryman, 2001).

Following the answering of the draft questionnaire, a set of questions (Table 4.2) were presented to students, so as to obtain adequate written feedback about the research tool. The main comments were quite positive with claims in favour of investigating such type of education at the UoM. One particular student even explained that the questionnaire was an opportunity to become more aware of the emotional and social benefits of being a University student.

From the feedback obtained from Phase 1 of the piloting, students denoted that the duration was appropriate, although slightly longer than the expected allotted time of five minutes. In addition, they said that questions were clear but some of them were very close to each other. Students said that some multiple choice answers had too many possibilities of answers. When answering the questionnaire, they found it useful to have explanation of certain terms in brackets. They also felt comfortable in answering because the questions did not tackle any confidential issues, therefore they felt that there was no pressure which forced them to lie. Respondents of questionnaires even mentioned that the information sheet was clear and explained the research in detail. After obtaining this feedback, the questionnaire was amended accordingly.

Item	Yes	No	Comments
Was the duration appropriate? Was it too long or too short?			
Were questions clear?			
Did you understand the questions?			
Did questions suggest any answer?			
Are there any questions which you would amend?			
Were you comfortable answering all questions?			
Was the consent form clear?			
Did you understand the consent form?			
Was the information sheet clear?			
Did you understand the information sheet?			
Any other comments			

Table 4.2 – Feedback form filled after the piloting of the questionnaire

For each question, possible answers were checked again, so that those which were similar were amalgamated in one. In this way, each question had less alternative answers. The pilot questionnaire was also shared with a statistics expert working at the UoM, who suggested changes in the design of the questionnaire in a way that it is translated into SPSS results.

After checking the structure of the questionnaire and amending it accordingly, I asked the registrar of the UoM to send the link of the questionnaire to all undergraduate final year students (this step was held in December 2013) and asked them to fill it in. This generated results from 345 students, which helped me to validate the dimensions and the related items, with the use of the Cronbach Alpha and the Exploratory Factor Analysis. Each question in the questionnaire was planned in a way that it addresses an item that is part of the dimensions (presented in Chapters 2 and 3) that make up the PSD Scale, measuring the PSD Practice. As a result, it was important to validate them, because when confirming the dimensions and items, I could also confirm the validity of the questionnaire (since it was devised on the 4 dimensions that were identified in this research as making up PSD practice). With the use of the Cronbach's Alpha and the Exploratory Factor Analysis, which helped me to analyse results from 345 students, these dimensions and items were confirmed.

The Cronbach's Alpha was used to check the internal consistency, thus checking how closely related a set of items are as a group. The Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to assess the factorial/construct validity, by checking that each dimension is distinct from the other and that all items for each dimension are different from the items of the other dimensions. This was an important step in piloting because if the statistical tests revealed that the dimensions were not distinct from each other and if the items in each dimension did not compliment each other, I would have had to amend them, to revise the questionnaire and to re-submit it. In the next two sub-sections, I explain in further detail the use of Cronbach's Alpha and the Exploratory Factor Analysis

4.13.2 Piloting Phase 2- Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency between the items describing a dimension, and therefore how closely related a set of items are as a group. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient exceeding 0.7 indicates satisfactory internal consistency between the items. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ranging from 0.5 to 0.7 indicates middling internal consistency between the items whereas a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient less than 0.5 indicates poor internal consistency between the items. Dimension A consists of 17 items (Table 6.5) and measures the

development of generic competences in PSD practice. The Cronbach's Alpha (0.935) indicates excellent internal consistency between the items (Table 4.3). Moreover, all the pairwise correlation coefficients are positive and range from 0.283 to 0.700 (Table 4.4). All these correlations are significantly greater than 0.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.934	0.935	17

Table 4.3: The Cronbach's Alpha of Dimension A

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9	Item 10	Item 11	Item 12	Item 13	Item 14	Item 15	Item 16	Item 17
Item 1	1.000	0.645	0.308	0.341	0.360	0.456	0.514	0.468	0.362	0.312	0.335	0.418	0.462	0.373	0.467	0.426	0.448
Item 2	0.645	1.000	0.441	0.466	0.462	0.511	0.510	0.514	0.456	0.324	0.364	0.543	0.472	0.450	0.350	0.425	0.409
Item 3	0.308	0.441	1.000	0.555	0.533	0.539	0.425	0.410	0.423	0.344	0.317	0.366	0.322	0.305	0.326	0.462	0.354
Item 4	0.341	0.466	0.555	1.000	0.700	0.496	0.463	0.429	0.517	0.283	0.315	0.387	0.380	0.419	0.487	0.488	0.422
Item 5	0.360	0.462	0.533	0.700	1.000	0.592	0.546	0.515	0.529	0.395	0.358	0.432	0.394	0.421	0.516	0.611	0.480
Item 6	0.456	0.511	0.539	0.496	0.592	1.000	0.604	0.679	0.538	0.462	0.483	0.500	0.475	0.534	0.420	0.557	0.468
Item 7	0.514	0.510	0.425	0.463	0.546	0.604	1.000	0.610	0.455	0.341	0.423	0.490	0.521	0.479	0.521	0.563	0.459
Item 8	0.468	0.514	0.410	0.429	0.515	0.679	0.610	1.000	0.578	0.456	0.532	0.580	0.487	0.578	0.461	0.541	0.522
Item 9	0.362	0.456	0.423	0.517	0.529	0.538	0.455	0.578	1.000	0.477	0.432	0.427	0.360	0.480	0.476	0.523	0.517
Item 10	0.312	0.324	0.344	0.283	0.395	0.462	0.341	0.456	0.477	1.000	0.544	0.355	0.325	0.340	0.300	0.422	0.357
Item 11	0.335	0.364	0.317	0.315	0.358	0.483	0.423	0.532	0.432	0.544	1.000	0.498	0.456	0.485	0.370	0.428	0.430
Item 12	0.418	0.543	0.366	0.387	0.432	0.500	0.490	0.580	0.427	0.355	0.498	1.000	0.591	0.485	0.373	0.480	0.407
Item 13	0.462	0.472	0.322	0.380	0.394	0.475	0.521	0.487	0.360	0.325	0.456	0.591	1.000	0.680	0.452	0.495	0.430
Item 14	0.373	0.450	0.305	0.419	0.421	0.534	0.479	0.578	0.480	0.340	0.485	0.485	0.680	1.000	0.484	0.468	0.439
Item 15	0.467	0.350	0.326	0.487	0.516	0.420	0.521	0.461	0.476	0.300	0.370	0.373	0.452	0.484	1.000	0.661	0.506
Item 16	0.426	0.425	0.462	0.488	0.611	0.557	0.563	0.541	0.523	0.422	0.428	0.480	0.495	0.468	0.661	1.000	0.653
Item 17	0.448	0.409	0.354	0.422	0.480	0.468	0.459	0.522	0.517	0.357	0.430	0.407	0.430	0.439	0.506	0.653	1.000

Table 4.4: The inter-item correlation matrix of the items in Dimension A

DIMENSION A The development of generic competences in PSD practice	
Item 1	Teamwork
Item 2	Leadership
Item 3	Stress management
Item 4	Self-esteem
Item 5	Dealing with my feelings effectively
Item 6	Problem-solving
Item 7	Communication
Item 8	Decision-making
Item 9	Resilience
Item 10	Time management
Item 11	Self-acceptance
Item 12	Initiative
Item 13	Creativity
Item 14	Critical thinking
Item 15	Ability to empathise
Item 16	Conflict management
Item 17	Adjustment to new situations

Table 4.5: Key of the items in Dimension A

Dimension B comprises 13 items (Table 4.8) and describes the active role of the student in PSD practice. The Cronbach's Alpha (0.929) shows an excellent internal consistency between the items (Table 4.6). In addition, all the pairwise correlation coefficients are positive and range from 0.334 to 0.743 (Table 4.7). All these correlations are significantly greater than 0. Originally, this dimension included another item 'Considered the different interactions I have in my life'. However, this item was weakly correlated with the other items and reduced the Cronbach's Alpha to 0.578 indicating weak internal consistency between the items. For this reason, this item was removed causing a rise in the Cronbach's Alpha, thus resulting in an improved internal consistency between the items.

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.929	0.929	13

Table 4.6: The Cronbach's Alpha of Dimension B

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9	Item 10	Item 11	Item 12	Item 13
Item 1	1.000	0.624	0.418	0.437	0.395	0.461	0.512	0.526	0.394	0.525	0.409	0.448	0.474
Item 2	0.624	1.000	0.508	0.450	0.506	0.620	0.534	0.606	0.561	0.645	0.531	0.457	0.546
Item 3	0.418	0.508	1.000	0.453	0.394	0.559	0.357	0.365	0.544	0.380	0.509	0.453	0.526
Item 4	0.437	0.450	0.453	1.000	0.485	0.520	0.334	0.359	0.616	0.349	0.600	0.592	0.620
Item 5	0.395	0.506	0.394	0.485	1.000	0.601	0.390	0.492	0.563	0.456	0.563	0.557	0.529
Item 6	0.461	0.620	0.559	0.520	0.601	1.000	0.406	0.468	0.672	0.474	0.581	0.523	0.606
Item 7	0.512	0.534	0.357	0.334	0.390	0.406	1.000	0.489	0.426	0.413	0.391	0.406	0.431
Item 8	0.526	0.606	0.365	0.359	0.492	0.468	0.489	1.000	0.458	0.629	0.459	0.393	0.485
Item 9	0.394	0.561	0.544	0.616	0.563	0.672	0.426	0.458	1.000	0.447	0.743	0.547	0.657
Item 10	0.525	0.645	0.380	0.349	0.456	0.474	0.413	0.629	0.447	1.000	0.476	0.425	0.471
Item 11	0.409	0.531	0.509	0.600	0.563	0.581	0.391	0.459	0.743	0.476	1.000	0.639	0.691
Item 12	0.448	0.457	0.453	0.592	0.557	0.523	0.406	0.393	0.547	0.425	0.639	1.000	0.583
Item 13	0.474	0.546	0.526	0.620	0.529	0.606	0.431	0.485	0.657	0.471	0.691	0.583	1.000

Table 4.7: The inter-item correlation matrix of the items in Dimension B

DIMENSION B The active role of the student in PSD practice	
Item 1	Encouraged me to participate
Item 2	Made me feel central to my own learning
Item 3	Helped me to open and self-disclose my feelings
Item 4	Encouraged me to ask questions so as to reflect critically
Item 5	Elicited my knowledge and experiences
Item 6	Made reference to my interests
Item 7	Considered my background
Item 8	Focused on personal aspects, not only academically
Item 9	Focused and developed my character qualities
Item 10	Focused on my capacity and my talents
Item 11	Focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the life challenges
Item 12	Focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the course challenges
Item 13	Centred around the development my potential

Table 4.8: Key of the items in Dimension B

Dimension C is made up of 10 items (Table 4.11), measuring the holistic aims of the student in PSD practice. The Cronbach's Alpha (0.933) is indicative of an excellent internal consistency between the items (Table 4.9). Similar to Dimension A and B, all the pairwise correlation coefficients are positive and range from 0.326 to 0.825 (Table 4.10). All these correlations are significantly greater than 0.

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.932	0.933	10

Table 4.9: The Cronbach's Alpha of Dimension C

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix										
	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9	Item 10
Item 1	1.000	0.501	0.329	0.524	0.326	0.543	0.473	0.354	0.362	0.532
Item 2	0.501	1.000	0.650	0.680	0.554	0.575	0.657	0.562	0.552	0.549
Item 3	0.329	0.650	1.000	0.623	0.717	0.561	0.633	0.764	0.656	0.610
Item 4	0.524	0.680	0.623	1.000	0.588	0.746	0.676	0.633	0.530	0.553
Item 5	0.326	0.554	0.717	0.588	1.000	0.570	0.573	0.825	0.594	0.546
Item 6	0.543	0.575	0.561	0.746	0.570	1.000	0.719	0.620	0.458	0.588
Item 7	0.473	0.657	0.633	0.676	0.573	0.719	1.000	0.630	0.596	0.554
Item 8	0.354	0.562	0.764	0.633	0.825	0.620	0.630	1.000	0.610	0.592
Item 9	0.362	0.552	0.656	0.530	0.594	0.458	0.596	0.610	1.000	0.630
Item 10	0.532	0.549	0.610	0.553	0.546	0.588	0.554	0.592	0.630	1.000

Table 4.10: The inter-item correlation matrix of the items in Dimension C

DIMENSION C The holistic aims of PSD practice	
Item 1	Helped me to feel physically healthy
Item 2	Helped me to develop my intellect
Item 3	Helped me to deal with others effectively
Item 4	Contributed to my personal satisfaction in relation to my career path
Item 5	Helped me to have a meaning and a purpose in life
Item 6	Facilitated the way I recognise and manage my emotions
Item 7	Made me feel happy about my life
Item 8	Helped me to develop as an individual
Item 9	Provided the necessary competences to obtain employment
Item 10	Trained me in how to cope well in the place of work

Table 4.11: Key of the items in Dimension C

Dimension D comprises 8 items (Table 4.14), all measuring the effectiveness of the methods used in PSD practice. The Cronbach's Alpha (0.756) shows good internal consistency between the items (Table 4.12). All the pairwise correlation coefficients are positive and range from 0.039 to 0.619 (Table 4.13). All these correlations are significantly greater than 0.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.757	0.756	8

Table 4.12: The Cronbach's Alpha of Dimension D

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8
Item 1	1.000	0.283	0.146	0.172	0.183	0.175	0.177	0.169
Item 2	0.283	1.000	0.314	0.385	0.333	0.204	0.423	0.224
Item 3	0.146	0.314	1.000	0.310	0.619	0.296	0.308	0.119
Item 4	0.172	0.385	0.310	1.000	0.332	0.276	0.523	0.267
Item 5	0.183	0.333	0.619	0.332	1.000	0.342	0.413	0.039
Item 6	0.175	0.204	0.296	0.276	0.342	1.000	0.308	0.230
Item 7	0.177	0.423	0.308	0.523	0.413	0.308	1.000	0.241
Item 8	0.169	0.224	0.119	0.267	0.039	0.230	0.241	1.000

Table 4.13: The inter-item correlation matrix of the items in Dimension D

DIMENSION D - The effectiveness of the methods used in PSD practice	
Item 1	Online learning
Item 2	Brainstorming
Item 3	Role-play
Item 4	Discussion
Item 5	Energizer
Item 6	Case studies
Item 7	Sharing of experiences
Item 8	Information from lecturer

Table 4.14: Key of the items in Dimension D

4.13.3 Piloting Phase 3: Exploratory Factor Analysis

After checking the internal consistency of the items, thus confirming that all items in the four dimensions complement each other, I assessed the factorial or construct validity of dimensions of the PSD Scale. Exploratory factor analysis was used to assess the dimensionality and to confirm the structure of the instrument. In this way, I checked that each dimension is distinct from the others and that each item in each dimension is different from each item in the other dimension. Factorial validity was carried out by using principal component factor analysis for the four latent dimensions. Exploratory factor analysis, with direct oblimin rotation was performed, using the SPSS22 statistical software, in order to be able to explain how well the 48 items can be grouped into four dimensions/subscales. Direct Oblimin is a standard method which allowed for the correlation of factors and which helped me to examine the underlying structure of the data. There are advantages in using oblique (direct oblimin) factor analysis. One of the advantages is that the factor axes can be rotated to any position without changing the correlations among the items. Kline (1994) argues that correlated axes reflect the real world and that it is rare that factors are truly orthogonal, hence uncorrelated. When I analyzed the data, it was evident that although the respondents were discriminating between the items, some of them tended

to provide high rating scores throughout, while others tended to provide low rating scores throughout. So the oblique (direct oblimin) method was more appropriate to identify the underlying latent structures (factors) since these were slightly correlated. Other methods (e.g. Varimax rotation) assume that the latent structures (factors) are orthogonal (uncorrelated).

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic assesses sampling adequacy and measures the proportion of variance in items that might be caused by the underlying factors. It specifically assesses whether the partial correlations among variables are small, where a KMO value greater than 0.5 indicates that factor analysis is useful. The Bartlett's test of sphericity tests whether the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, which would indicate that the factor model is inappropriate, hence the items are unrelated and so unsuitable for structure detection. P-values less than 0.05 indicate that the items are suitable for detection. Both the KMO value (0.942) and the Bartlett's p-value (approx. 0) indicate that factor analysis was essential (Table 4.15).

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.942
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	10287.555
	Df	1128
	P-value	0.000

Table 4.15: The KMO and Bartlett's Test

The Kaiser-Guttman rule is the most commonly used by analysts to identify the number of latent dimensions. It states that the number of dimensions to be extracted should have an eigenvalue greater than 1. This rule, however, is more appropriate when extraction is carried out by Principal Component Analysis.

Dimension	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
A	17.057	35.535	35.535
B	3.451	7.190	42.725
C	2.493	5.194	47.919
D	2.387	4.972	52.891

Table 4.16: Total variance explained
(Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis)

Table 4.16 above shows that the first four dimensions/factors have an eigenvalue which is greater than one and together they explain 52.89% of the total variation in the data. The Pattern Matrix (Table 4.17) displays the absolute values of the factor loadings when using a Principal Component Analysis extraction and a direct-oblimin (oblique) rotation. Factor loadings

after an oblique rotation are displayed in the pattern matrix (Table 4.17). This type of rotation allows some correlation among the dimensions. Factor loadings with absolute value less than 0.275 were removed. The seventeen items measuring Dimension A: The development of generic competences in PSD practice, load strongly on Factor 1. The thirteen items measuring Dimension B: The active role of the student in PSD practice, weighs heavily on Factor 2. The eight items measuring Dimension D: The effectiveness of the methods used in PSD practice, load strongly on Factor 3. The ten items measuring Dimension C: The holistic aims in PSD practice, weigh heavily on Factor 4. This confirms the factorial validity of the instrument.

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
A1-Teamwork	0.618			
A2-Leadership	0.742			
A3-Stress management	0.668			
A4-Self-esteem	0.678			
A5-Dealing with my feelings effectively	0.690			
A6-Problem-solving	0.788			
A7-Communication	0.662			
A8-Decision-making	0.718			
A9-Resilience	0.752			
A10-Time management	0.482			
A11-Self-acceptance	0.503			
A12-Initiative	0.659			
A13-Creativity	0.637			

A14-Critical thinking	0.672			
A15-Ability to empathise	0.558			
A16-Conflict management	0.663			
A17-Adjustment to new situations	0.640			
B1-Encouraged me to participate		0.497		
B2-Made me feel central to my own learning		0.543		
B3-Helped me to open and self-disclose my feelings		0.678		
B4-Encouraged me to ask questions so as to reflect critically		0.732		
B5-Elicited my knowledge and experiences		0.628		
B6-Made reference to my interests		0.778		
B7-Considered my background		0.507		
B8-Focused on personal aspects, not only academically		0.363		
B9-Focused and developed my character qualities		0.818		
B10-Focused on my capacity and my talents		0.355		
B11-Focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the life challenges		0.798		
B12-Focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the course challenges		0.806		
B13-Centred around the development of my potential		0.770		
C1-Helped me to feel physically healthy				0.656
C2-Helped me to develop my intellect				0.745
C3-Helped me to deal with others effectively				0.694
C4-Contributed to my personal satisfaction in relation to my career path				0.840
C5-Helped me to have a meaning and a purpose in life				0.688
C6-Facilitated the way I recognise and manage my emotions				0.810
C7-Made me feel happy about my life				0.767
C8-Helped me to develop as an individual				0.723
C9-Provided the necessary competences to obtain employment				0.696
C10-Trained me in how to cope well in the place of work				0.742
D1-Online learning			0.401	
D2-Brainstorming			0.598	
D3-Role-play			0.713	

D4-Discussion			0.628	
D5-Energizer			0.790	
D6-Case studies			0.536	
D7-Sharing of experiences			0.647	
D8-Information from lecturer			0.287	

Table 4.17: Pattern Matrix Table

After confirming the validity of the dimensions and the items, I re-confirmed such results using the Confirmatory Factor Analysis, held through the AMOS software.

4.13.4 Piloting Phase 4- Confirming results through AMOS

As explained earlier, given that the dimensions and items were important since they were used for the questionnaire and the questions in the semi-structured interviews, the AMOS software was used to re-confirm such dimensions and items, with the use of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The results from the Cronbach's Alpha and the Exploratory Factor Analysis were positive and confirmed the four dimensions and their related items. As a result, the questionnaire, which was devised on these dimensions and items that make up PSD practice, was kept as it was. The CFA helped me to present a validated model for PSD practice. It started by the step of specification of the path diagram, indicated in Figure 4.1. After the step of specification (Figure 4.1), there

was the process of identification, which was used to check whether the model is identified and can be measured. For this, I used the T-rule, which states that the t-value for the model should be less than or equal to half the number of observed variables multiplied by the number of observed variables +1. In this case the t value should have been less than 1,176. The result, from the output part of AMOS which states the number of regression weights, the number of covariance and the number of variances, shows that t was 820, hence less than 1,176 and so the model was identified and estimated. For the step of estimation, different steps were followed, until the fit indices were explored.

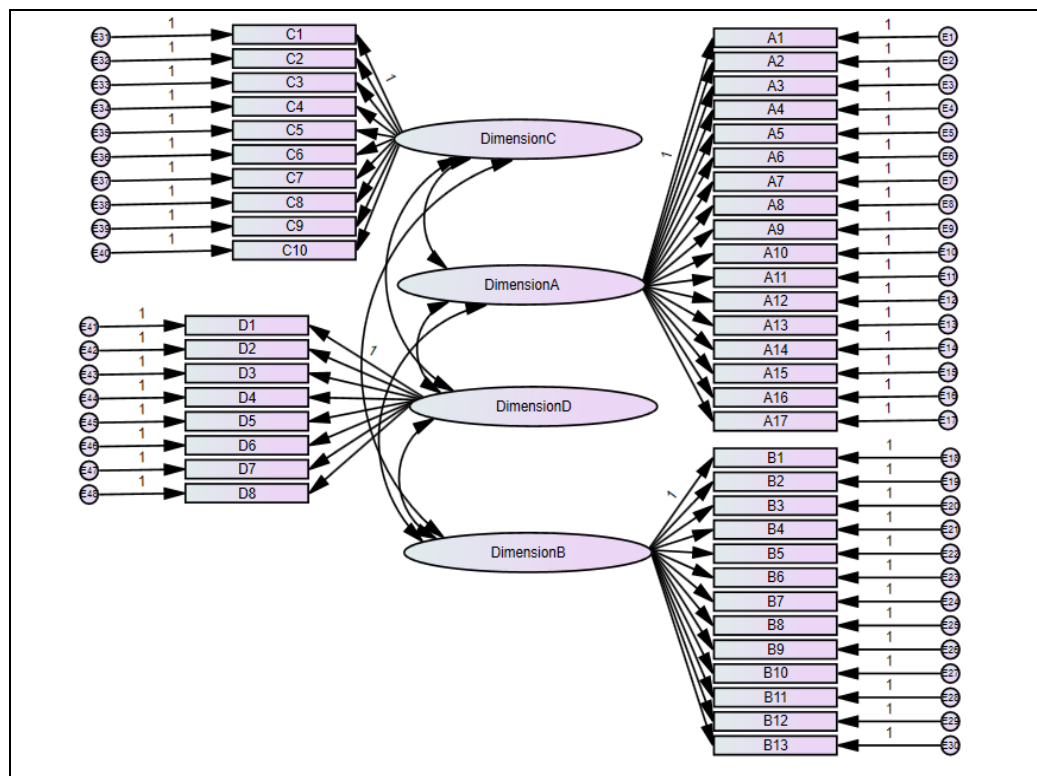


Figure 4.1 – Specification of the path diagram

DIMENSION/SUBSCALE A The development of generic competences in PSD practice	
A1	Teamwork
A2	Leadership
A3	Stress management
A4	Self-esteem
A5	Dealing with my feelings effectively
A6	Problem-solving
A7	Communication
A8	Decision-making
A9	Resilience
A10	Time management
A11	Self-acceptance
A12	Initiative
A13	Creativity
A14	Critical thinking
A15	Ability to empathise
A16	Conflict management
A17	Adjustment to new situations
DIMENSION/SUBSCALE B The active role of the student in PSD practice	
B1	Encouraged me to participate
B2	Made me feel central to my own learning
B3	Helped me to open and self-disclose my feelings
B4	Encouraged me to ask questions so as to reflect critically
B5	Elicited my knowledge and experiences
B6	Made reference to my interests

B7	Considered my background
B8	Focused on personal aspects, not only academically
B9	Focused and developed my character qualities
B10	Focused on my capacity and my talents
B11	Focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the life challenges
B12	Focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the course challenges
B13	Centred around the development my potential
DIMENSION/SUBSCALE C The holistic aims of PSD practice	
C1	Helped me to feel physically healthy
C2	Helped me to develop my intellect
C3	Helped me to deal with others effectively
C4	Contributed to my personal satisfaction in relation to my career path
C5	Helped me to have a meaning and a purpose in life
C6	Facilitated the way I recognise and manage my emotions
C7	Made me feel happy about my life
C8	Helped me to develop as an individual
C9	Provided the necessary competences to obtain employment
C10	Trained me in how to cope well in the place of work
DIMENSION/SUBSCALE D The effectiveness of the methods used in PSD practice	
D1	Online learning
D2	Brainstorming
D3	Role-play

D4	Discussion
D5	Energizer
D6	Case studies
D7	Sharing of experiences
D8	Information from lecturer

Table 4.18: Key to Figure 4.1

The estimation started by checking the regression weights. From table 6.19, it was noticed that nearly all parameter estimates were found to be significant. This is because nearly all the standard errors (S.E.) are less than half the value of the parameter estimates, the critical ratios (C.R.) are nearly all greater than the modulus of 1.96 and the corresponding p-value (P) is greater than 0.05. However, the table also shows that all the maximum likelihood parameter estimates are significant with the exceptions of the following:

- D8 to Dimension D
- D7 to Dimension D
- D6 to Dimension D
- D5 to Dimension D
- D4 to Dimension D
- D3 to Dimension D
- D2 to Dimension D
- D1 to Dimension D

The observed variables related with Dimension D were found to be non-significant. Nevertheless, the overall model had positive results, backed from Exploratory Factor Analysis, and factor Dimension D was retained in the Confirmatory Factor Analysis model.

Regression Weights

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
A1	<---	DimensionA	1.000				
A2	<---	DimensionA	1.175	0.113	10.379	***	
A3	<---	DimensionA	0.989	0.110	9.022	***	
A4	<---	DimensionA	1.037	0.103	10.057	***	
A5	<---	DimensionA	1.167	0.106	10.978	***	
A6	<---	DimensionA	1.196	0.102	11.740	***	
A7	<---	DimensionA	1.091	0.096	11.399	***	
A8	<---	DimensionA	1.212	0.102	11.880	***	
A9	<---	DimensionA	1.213	0.113	10.692	***	
A10	<---	DimensionA	0.923	0.104	8.861	***	
A11	<---	DimensionA	0.935	0.095	9.868	***	
A12	<---	DimensionA	1.126	0.109	10.365	***	
A13	<---	DimensionA	1.105	0.106	10.412	***	
A14	<---	DimensionA	1.067	0.099	10.769	***	
A15	<---	DimensionA	1.139	0.104	10.984	***	
A16	<---	DimensionA	1.185	0.106	11.205	***	
A17	<---	DimensionA	1.041	0.100	10.375	***	
B1	<---	DimensionB	1.000				
B2	<---	DimensionB	1.227	0.093	13.141	***	
B3	<---	DimensionB	0.920	0.087	10.567	***	
B4	<---	DimensionB	1.029	0.092	11.186	***	
B5	<---	DimensionB	1.154	0.101	11.388	***	
B6	<---	DimensionB	1.305	0.106	12.326	***	
B7	<---	DimensionB	0.846	0.081	10.434	***	
B8	<---	DimensionB	1.131	0.107	10.582	***	
B9	<---	DimensionB	1.266	0.110	11.547	***	
B10	<---	DimensionB	1.026	0.098	10.457	***	
B11	<---	DimensionB	1.215	0.102	11.934	***	
B12	<---	DimensionB	1.111	0.100	11.089	***	
B13	<---	DimensionB	1.278	0.104	12.319	***	
C10	<---	DimensionC	1.408	0.132	10.677	***	
C9	<---	DimensionC	1.408	0.148	9.510	***	
C8	<---	DimensionC	1.607	0.158	10.185	***	
C7	<---	DimensionC	1.420	0.147	9.687	***	
C6	<---	DimensionC	1.400	0.147	9.531	***	
C5	<---	DimensionC	1.545	0.155	9.966	***	

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
C4	<---	DimensionC	1.474	0.154	9.592	***	
C3	<---	DimensionC	1.600	0.168	9.513	***	
C2	<---	DimensionC	1.275	0.134	9.503	***	
C1	<---	DimensionC	1.000				
D8	<---	DimensionD	3.592	2.984	1.204	0.229	
D7	<---	DimensionD	9.150	7.402	1.236	0.216	
D6	<---	DimensionD	6.657	5.411	1.230	0.219	
D5	<---	DimensionD	8.336	6.762	1.233	0.218	
D4	<---	DimensionD	6.754	5.475	1.234	0.217	
D3	<---	DimensionD	6.842	5.554	1.232	0.218	
D2	<---	DimensionD	5.227	4.118	1.269	0.204	
D1	<---	DimensionD	1.000				

Table 4.19: Regression weights

For the estimation, the standardized regression weights were also considered. These give an indication of the correlation between the observed variable and the corresponding common factor. When considering the standardized regression weights (Table 4.20), it is noted that the estimates are not equal or greater than 1. If they were, the observed variable would be the only influence for the factor (i.e. Dimension A). Table 4.20 clearly indicates that none of the observed variables has an estimate greater or equal than 1. In Dimension A, the following observed variables had the highest standardized scores: A8 (0.795) - Decision-making, A6 (0.782) - Problem-solving and A7 (0.750) - Communication. In Dimension B, the observed variables with highest standardized scores were B9 (0.798) - Focused and developed my character qualities, B6 (0.785) - Made reference to my interests, and B13 (0.784) - Centred around the development of my potential. In Dimension C, the variables with the highest scores were C3 (0.864) - Helped me to deal with others effectively,

C8 (0.859) - Helped me to develop as an individual, and C5 (0.818) - Helped me to have a meaning and purpose in life. In Dimension D, the variables with the highest scores were D7 (0.681) - Sharing of experiences, D4 (0.584) - Discussion and D5 (0.572) - Energizer.

Standardized Regression Weights

	Estimate
A1 <--- DimensionA	0.614
A2 <--- DimensionA	0.662
A3 <--- DimensionA	0.558
A4 <--- DimensionA	0.636
A5 <--- DimensionA	0.712
A6 <--- DimensionA	0.782
A7 <--- DimensionA	0.750
A8 <--- DimensionA	0.795
A9 <--- DimensionA	0.688
A10 <--- DimensionA	0.544
A11 <--- DimensionA	0.620
A12 <--- DimensionA	0.661
A13 <--- DimensionA	0.664
A14 <--- DimensionA	0.694
A15 <--- DimensionA	0.653
A16 <--- DimensionA	0.733
A17 <--- DimensionA	0.661
B1 <--- DimensionB	0.645
B2 <--- DimensionB	0.757
B3 <--- DimensionB	0.648
B4 <--- DimensionB	0.695
B5 <--- DimensionB	0.710
B6 <--- DimensionB	0.785
B7 <--- DimensionB	0.569
B8 <--- DimensionB	0.651
B9 <--- DimensionB	0.798
B10 <--- DimensionB	0.642
B11 <--- DimensionB	0.757
B12 <--- DimensionB	0.688
B13 <--- DimensionB	0.784
C10 <--- DimensionC	0.726
C9 <--- DimensionC	0.743
C8 <--- DimensionC	0.859
C7 <--- DimensionC	0.771
C6 <--- DimensionC	0.753
C5 <--- DimensionC	0.818

	Estimate
C4 <--- DimensionC	0.756
C3 <--- DimensionC	0.864
C2 <--- DimensionC	0.741
C1 <--- DimensionC	0.522
D8 <--- DimensionD	0.298
D7 <--- DimensionD	0.681
D6 <--- DimensionD	0.508
D5 <--- DimensionD	0.572
D4 <--- DimensionD	0.584
D3 <--- DimensionD	0.540
D2 <--- DimensionD	0.453
D1 <--- DimensionD	0.076

Table 4.20: Standardized Regression Weights

DIMENSION/SUBSCALE A The development of generic competences in PSD practice	
A1	Teamwork
A2	Leadership
A3	Stress management
A4	Self-esteem
A5	Dealing with my feelings effectively
A6	Problem-solving
A7	Communication
A8	Decision-making
A9	Resilience
A10	Time management
A11	Self-acceptance
A12	Initiative
A13	Creativity
A14	Critical thinking
A15	Ability to empathise

A16	Conflict management
A17	Adjustment to new situations
DIMENSION/SUBSCALE B The active role of the student in PSD practice	
B1	Encouraged me to participate
B2	Made me feel central to my own learning
B3	Helped me to open and self-disclose my feelings
B4	Encouraged me to ask questions so as to reflect critically
B5	Elicited my knowledge and experiences
B6	Made reference to my interests
B7	Considered my background
B8	Focused on personal aspects, not only academically
B9	Focused and developed my character qualities
B10	Focused on my capacity and my talents
B11	Focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the life challenges
B12	Focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the course challenges
B13	Centred around the development my potential
DIMENSION/SUBSCALE C The holistic aims of PSD practice	
C1	Helped me to feel physically healthy
C2	Helped me to develop my intellect
C3	Helped me to deal with others effectively
C4	Contributed to my personal satisfaction in relation to my career path
C5	Helped me to have a meaning and a purpose in life
C6	Facilitated the way I recognise and manage my emotions

C7	Made me feel happy about my life
C8	Helped me to develop as an individual
C9	Provided the necessary competences to obtain employment
C10	Trained me in how to cope well in the place of work
DIMENSION/SUBSCALE D The effectiveness of the methods used in PSD practice	
D1	Online learning
D2	Brainstorming
D3	Role-play
D4	Discussion
D5	Energizer
D6	Case studies
D7	Sharing of experiences
D8	Information from lecturer

Table 4.21: Key to Table 4.20

For the estimation, the covariances (Table 4.22), the variance (Table 4.23) and the squared multiple correlations (Table 4.24) were also considered. Table 4.22 indicates that most of the covariances are significant because the standard error (S.E.) is less than half the value of the parameter estimates, most of the critical ratios (C.R.) are greater than 1.96 and most of the corresponding p-values (P) are greater than 0.05. There were some exceptions like for example the covariants of E3 corresponding to A3 (Stress Management) and E5 corresponding to A5 (Dealing with my feelings effectively). In these two examples the estimate has an S.E. which is not half the value of the parameter estimate, the CR is not greater than

1.96 and the corresponding p-value is less than 0.05. However, I decided to retain them because the overall model had positive results, backed from Exploratory Factor Analysis.

Covariances

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
DimensionA	<-->	DimensionD	0.026	0.021	1.216	0.224	
DimensionB	<-->	DimensionD	0.030	0.025	1.222	0.222	
DimensionA	<-->	DimensionC	0.180	0.028	6.408	***	
DimensionA	<-->	DimensionB	0.290	0.041	7.012	***	
DimensionB	<-->	DimensionC	0.192	0.029	6.707	***	
DimensionC	<-->	DimensionD	0.016	0.013	1.213	0.225	
E39	<-->	E36	-0.055	0.014	-3.917	***	
E37	<-->	E36	0.070	0.015	4.720	***	
E36	<-->	E34	0.092	0.016	5.904	***	
E36	<-->	E33	-0.028	0.011	-2.575	0.010	
E33	<-->	E31	-0.064	0.016	-4.095	***	
E26	<-->	E28	0.142	0.027	5.225	***	
E25	<-->	E27	0.251	0.043	5.872	***	
E19	<-->	E27	0.166	0.034	4.854	***	
E18	<-->	E26	-0.095	0.026	-3.640	***	
E18	<-->	E19	0.094	0.030	3.126	0.002	
E16	<-->	E17	0.181	0.034	5.362	***	
E15	<-->	E16	0.211	0.037	5.712	***	
E12	<-->	E13	0.193	0.043	4.468	***	
E10	<-->	E11	0.245	0.046	5.285	***	
E34	<-->	E32	0.068	0.014	4.779	***	
E42	<-->	E41	0.206	0.054	3.821	***	
E28	<-->	E29	0.116	0.028	4.164	***	
E3	<-->	E4	0.261	0.049	5.382	***	
E1	<-->	E15	0.101	0.041	2.434	0.015	
E40	<-->	E31	0.095	0.022	4.286	***	
E48	<-->	E45	-0.298	0.058	-5.096	***	
E28	<-->	E30	0.093	0.026	3.589	***	
E24	<-->	E25	0.093	0.036	2.593	0.010	
E21	<-->	E29	0.108	0.032	3.421	***	
E2	<-->	E12	0.136	0.044	3.083	0.002	
E3	<-->	E5	0.050	0.041	1.234	0.217	
E3	<-->	E6	0.121	0.037	3.289	0.001	
E19	<-->	E25	0.110	0.035	3.133	0.002	
E18	<-->	E24	0.115	0.035	3.273	0.001	
E6	<-->	E15	-0.098	0.031	-3.172	0.002	
E5	<-->	E16	0.096	0.031	3.128	0.002	
E4	<-->	E15	0.128	0.039	3.275	0.001	

Table 4.22: The Covariances

Table 4.23 shows that the variances are nearly all significant (except for Dimension D) because their standard error (S.E.) is less than half the value of the parameter estimates, the critical ratios (C.R.) are greater than 1.96 and the corresponding p-values (P) are greater than 0.05. The variance is the average of the squared difference from the mean. Despite some exceptions in Dimension D, I decided to attain the model, as it is based on my positive results obtained from the Exploratory Factor Analysis.

Variances

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
DimensionA	0.463	0.076	6.121	***	
DimensionB	0.432	0.067	6.453	***	
DimensionC	0.171	0.034	5.012	***	
DimensionD	0.007	0.011	0.620	0.535	
E1	0.765	0.061	12.490	***	
E2	0.822	0.067	12.332	***	
E3	1.003	0.079	12.650	***	
E4	0.736	0.059	12.480	***	
E5	0.612	0.051	12.099	***	
E6	0.421	0.036	11.551	***	
E7	0.430	0.036	11.870	***	
E8	0.397	0.035	11.461	***	
E9	0.760	0.062	12.235	***	
E10	0.941	0.074	12.673	***	
E11	0.648	0.052	12.483	***	
E12	0.755	0.061	12.345	***	
E13	0.716	0.058	12.320	***	
E14	0.568	0.047	12.204	***	
E15	0.806	0.065	12.373	***	
E16	0.559	0.046	12.202	***	
E17	0.646	0.052	12.339	***	
E18	0.605	0.050	12.207	***	
E19	0.484	0.042	11.648	***	
E20	0.505	0.041	12.325	***	
E21	0.489	0.041	12.067	***	
E22	0.566	0.047	12.021	***	
E23	0.459	0.040	11.406	***	
E24	0.646	0.051	12.562	***	
E25	0.751	0.061	12.304	***	

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
E26	0.394	0.035	11.139	***	
E27	0.651	0.053	12.301	***	
E28	0.476	0.041	11.670	***	
E29	0.593	0.049	12.144	***	
E30	0.441	0.039	11.400	***	
E40	0.303	0.025	12.154	***	
E39	0.274	0.023	12.022	***	
E38	0.157	0.014	10.813	***	
E37	0.234	0.020	11.819	***	
E36	0.255	0.022	11.646	***	
E35	0.202	0.018	11.467	***	
E34	0.278	0.023	12.132	***	
E33	0.148	0.014	10.420	***	
E32	0.228	0.019	12.104	***	
E31	0.455	0.036	12.674	***	
E48	0.923	0.073	12.641	***	
E47	0.674	0.068	9.895	***	
E46	0.887	0.075	11.812	***	
E45	0.995	0.089	11.134	***	
E44	0.613	0.055	11.183	***	
E43	0.794	0.069	11.581	***	
E42	0.737	0.061	12.141	***	
E41	1.195	0.092	13.054	***	

Table 4.23: The Variances

Table 4.24 indicates the squared multiple correlations which show the percentage of variance explained by the item to the factor. It shows that variable A8 explains 63.20% of the variation present in the Factor Dimension A, the variable B9 explains 63.7% of the variation present in the Factor Dimension B, the variable C3 explains 75% of the variation present in the Factor Dimension C and the variable D7 explains 46.4% of the variation present in Factor Dimension D. On the other hand, the smallest percentage of variation can be found in variable D1 in Dimension D (0.6%), in the variable C1 (27.3%) in Dimension C, in the variable B7 (32.4%) in Dimension B and variable A10 (29.6%) in Dimension A.

Squared Multiple Correlations

	Estimate
D1	0.006
D2	0.205
D3	0.291
D4	0.342
D5	0.328
D6	0.258
D7	0.464
D8	0.089
C1	0.273
C2	0.549
C3	0.747
C4	0.572
C5	0.669
C6	0.568
C7	0.595
C8	0.738
C9	0.552
C10	0.528
B13	0.615
B12	0.474
B11	0.573
B10	0.412
B9	0.637
B8	0.424
B7	0.324
B6	0.616
B5	0.504
B4	0.483
B3	0.420
B2	0.574
B1	0.417
A17	0.437
A16	0.538
A15	0.427
A14	0.482
A13	0.441
A12	0.437
A11	0.385
A10	0.296
A9	0.473
A8	0.632
A7	0.562
A6	0.612
A5	0.508
A4	0.404
A3	0.311
A2	0.438
A1	0.377

Table 4.24: Squared Multiple Correlations Group Number 1 – Default

After presenting the regression weights, the standardized regressions weights, the covariances, the variances and the squared multiple correlations, I am now presenting the different fit indices which indicate whether the model of PSD practice, based on the four dimensions and their related items, is good.

Fit indices

Model	CMIN/DF
Default model	2.086

Table 4.25: Fit indices

As illustrated in Table 4.25, the relative chi-square ratio was found to be 2.086 which is less than 5. This is the cut-off point suggested by Alwin, Muthen, Summers and Wheaton (1977). This indicates that it is a good model.

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI
Default model	0.069	0.792	0.766

Table 4.26: The RMR, GFI and AGFI

Hu and Bentler (1999) state that values of the RMR which are less than 0.08 indicate that the model is acceptable and values which are less than 0.10 are seen as adequate. Hence, for this model the RMR is 0.069 (Table 4.26), which is less than 0.08, therefore the model is acceptable.

Greenspoon and Saklofske (1998) suggest that the cut-off point of the GFI should at least be 0.8. In this model it is nearly less than 0.8 (Table 4.26).

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	0.800	0.783	0.885	0.874	0.884

Table 4.27: The NFI, RFI, IFI, TLI and CFI

The NFI, IFI and TLI and CFI are between 0.8 and 0.9 (Table 4.27). As a result, the model fits the data suitably. The RFI value is less than 0.8, which may indicate that the model is approximately good. The NFI, IFI, and CFI ranges between 0 and 1, where a value close to 1 indicates a perfect model fit. In this model, values are closer to 1 rather than 0 indicating a good model. Hau, March and Wen (2004) maintain a TLI value closer to 1 indicates a good fitted model. In this model, the TLI value is near 1.

Model	RMSEA
Default model	0.056

Table 4.28: The RMSEA

RMSEA value is 0.056 which is less than 0.06. The latter is the cut-off point suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999), therefore the model fits the data well (Table 4.28).

All these fit indices indicate that this four Confirmatory Factor Analysis model fits the data well. Figure 4.2 indicates the path diagram with the modifications. Although some estimates in the Dimension D were not significant, the overall model presented below was found to fit my data set well. These four factors were found to be significant to measure PSD practice. As a result, the questionnaire was left as it was planned originally with each question corresponding to a particular item, found in one of the dimensions.

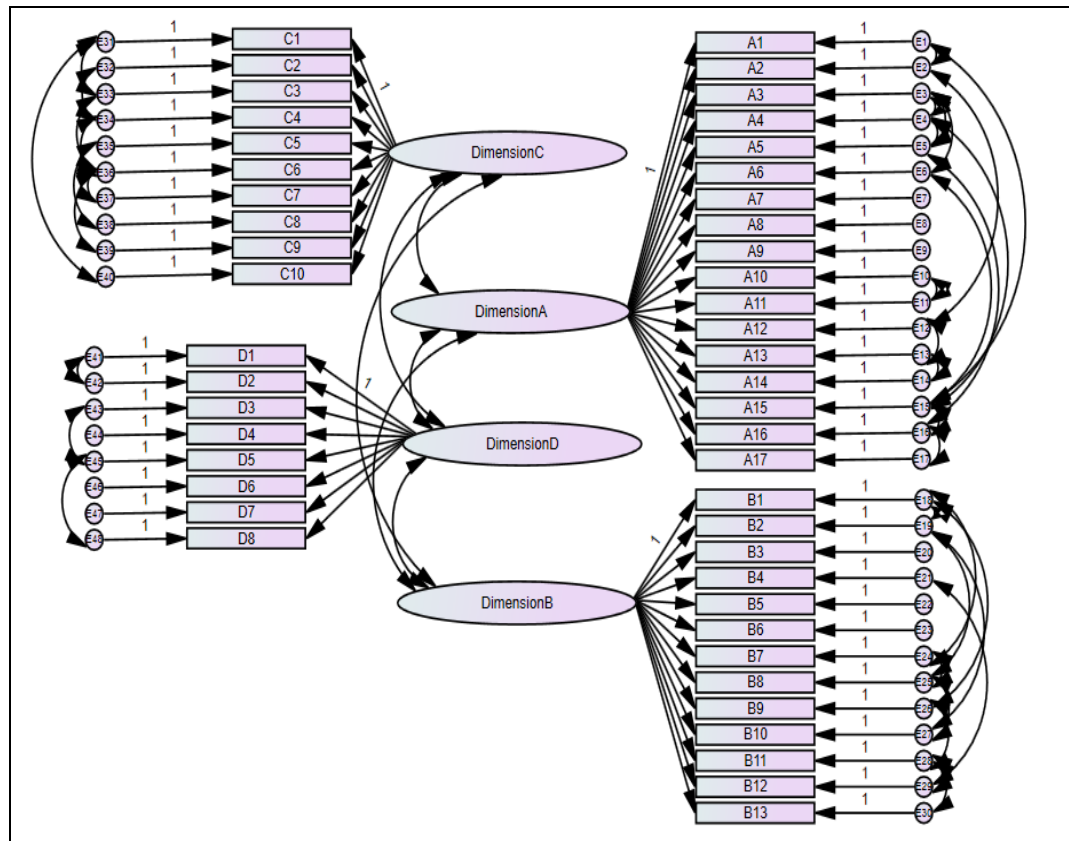


Figure 4.2: The Path Diagram with Modifications

After confirming the model, the dimensions and the items were used for data collection. Since the questionnaire was validated, the same responses were used to generate results about the research questions. After the piloting of the questionnaire and distributing the actual questionnaire, results were analyzed through SPSS22 statistical software.

4.13.5 Piloting Phase 5- Feedback for the Questions in the Semi-structured Interview

The validated dimensions and items helped me to formulate the questions for the semi-structured interviews, which were piloted in March 2014 and amended accordingly in April 2014. Piloting of interviews with two undergraduate students provided feedback about the questions as well as experience and confidence in interview skills. In addition, it helped to detect those questions which possibly make the respondent uncomfortable to answer (Bryman, 2001). Following the pilot interview, interviewees were asked to fill in a feedback form (Table 4.2). Results indicated that the questions explored different aspects of the research area and it made them aware about the holistic aims of the UoM undergraduate experience. However, they commented that I should organize more my research questions, by grouping them in different clusters that tackle a particular

aspect, thus avoiding repetition of questions. Accordingly, the interview questions were grouped in the following six main sets:

Set 1: Perceptions about PSD practice in Malta.

Set 2: Perceptions about the development of generic competences in PSD practice, as implemented through the undergraduate UoM experience.

Set 3: Perceptions about the active role of the students in PSD practice, as implemented through the UoM undergraduate experience.

Set 4: Perceptions about the effectiveness of different methods of learning and assessment in PSD practice, as implemented through the UoM education experience.

Set 5: Perceptions about the aims in PSD practice, as implemented through the UoM undergraduate experience.

Set 6: General feedback about the UoM undergraduate experience.

4.14 The Research Study: Internet search, Questionnaire and Semi-structured Interview

The research started with an initial research about the UoM and 14 semi-structured interviews to define and explore the concept of PSD practice in Malta. Before starting the process, I did one pilot interview which helped me to finalise my questions for the initial semi-structured interviews (Appendix 4). Rather than changing the questions, the pilot interview helped me to practise my interview skills.

Following this, in December 2012-February 2013 an internet search was held to analyse the extent and the ways in which PSD practice is included in undergraduate courses as offered by the 14 faculties at the UoM. As explained before, this search enabled me to generate a table that indicates the name of faculty, name of undergraduate course, name of credits, list of generic competences, method of delivery and whether generic competences are provided in an embedded or modular modes.

After Phase 1 of the piloting of the questionnaire, the Registrar of the UoM sent a request to all final year undergraduate students in December 2013-February 2014, asking them to answer the questionnaire. This helped

me to validate the variables and the items that were included in the questionnaire. The same data of the statistical piloting (total of 345 answered questionnaires) was used again for the analysis of the questionnaire because the Cronbach's Alpha, the Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis showed that there are internal consistency and factorial validity. The use of the online questionnaire, devised through the survey monkey website, and the format of the questionnaire may have encouraged respondents' response rates. In fact, 345 (100 Males and 243 Females) undergraduate students answered the pilot questionnaire. After validating the dimensions and the items of the questionnaire, I decided to use the same data for my actual research because after doing different statistical tests (refer to piloting sections), all dimensions and items resulted as being valid.

The results were then filtered through SPSS22 statistical software, because I was interested in those results which were given by respondents who are 17 to 25 years old. After filtering, the number of respondents was 277 (74 Males and 203 Females- Figure 4.3).

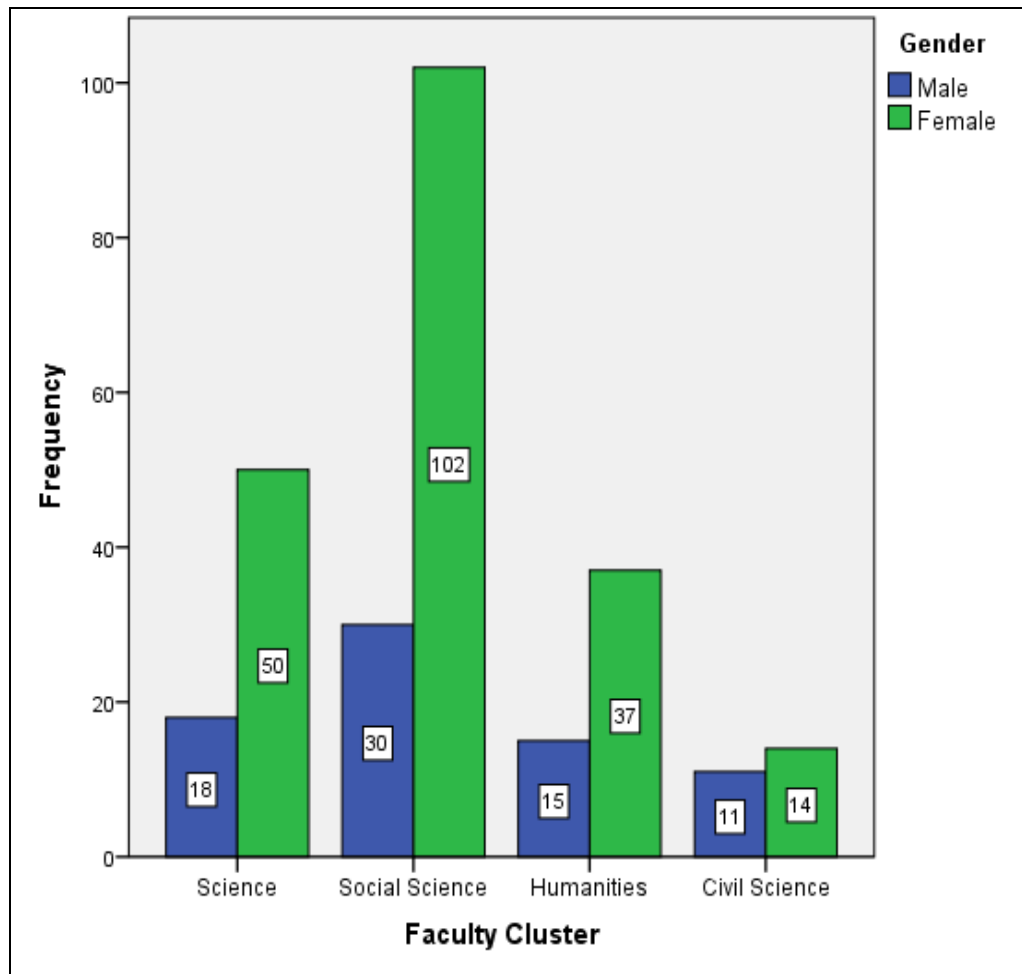


Figure 4.3: The number of male and female students per faculty cluster

At that stage, I was interested in having in-depth subjective explanations of the explored results. As explained in the previous sections, before the actual second set of semi-structured interviews, I did two pilot interviews with undergraduate final year students in March 2014. The feedback obtained helped me to practice interview skills and to amend the questions that were asked to students. The actual semi-structured interviews, held with students, were held in March to April 2014. As indicated in Table 4.29, the total number of young final year UoM

undergraduates who were interviewed was estimated by approximately considering the total amount of final year population in that faculty. Appendix 2 presents a table showing the list of interviewees. Student interviewees were recruited in a specific way. The last question in the questionnaire asked them to forward their mobile number, if they wished to be interviewed. In fact, I had 23 students. In addition, I sent an email to the Deans and eight of them answered back and were willing to participate in the interview. With regards to semi-structured interviews with education academics, policy makers, Minister for Education and Employment and Pro-Rector, emails were sent to them and they willingly accepted to participate in the research. In fact, I had three education academics, five policy makers as well as the Minister for Education and Employment and the Pro-Rector. In total, I had 41 semi-structured interviews, excluding the initial interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were used to answer research questions and to discuss results obtained from the questionnaire. Each semi-structured interview lasted for 1 hour, and was then transcribed and analysed.

Faculty Cluster	Total population of final young UOM undergraduates in scholastic year 2013-2014	Number of young UOM undergraduates
Sciences	376	3
Social Sciences	812	15
Humanities	247	2
Civil Sciences	201	3

Table 4.29: The number of interviewed young final year UOM undergraduates in each faculty

4.15 Reliability and Validity

After analysing the way I did the piloting and the research process, I am presenting the way I tried to maintain reliability and validity. Through the research, I tried to provide consistent, stable and accurate data, resulting in reliability, which is achieved when “scores received from participants are consistent and stable over time” (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 211). By and large, Neuman (2003) lists two types of reliability, which were given particular attention during this research. Research had representative reliability, implying that there was reliability across different groups of people, because it included research participants from different faculties at the UoM, policy-makers and education academics, the Minister for Education and Employment and the Pro-Rector of the UoM. Another type of reliability which Neuman makes reference to, is the equivalence reliability, denoting the use of multiple indicators in the

operationalization of a construct. The internet search, the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview provided results about the research questions related to PSD practice, thus increasing equivalence validity. Kumar (2005) argues that one of the factors affecting reliability of the research instruments, is a clear conceptualization of the constructs. In this research, these were all clearly defined in the literature review of the thesis (Chapters 2 and 3).

Validity is another important criterion of research, concerned with the integrity of conclusions generated from a research study (Bryman, 2001), whereby scores received from participants are “meaningful indicators of the construct being measured” (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 211). Ascertaining validity ensures truth and knowledge (Kvale, 1996), even though validity in insider research is contested because total honesty and openness is impossible (McLeod, 2003). Kumar (2005), Neuman (2003) and Creswell and Clark (2011) present the face, content, criterion, construct and internal validity which were applied to the study presented in this thesis. In this research, I tried to create items in the research tools which have a logical link with the objectives of the study, thus ensuring face validity. Through the research, I ensured that the research tools measure what they are supposed to measure. This was done through a series of piloting phases before the actual semi-structured interviews and

the answering of the final questionnaire. In this way, I worked to have content validity. Another type of validity is the criterion validity which is an indication of whether a method produces results in line with other similar methods (Langdrige, 2004). Through this research, different methods were used to guarantee criterion validity. In this way, results from questionnaires were corroborated to the results obtained through the semi-structured interviews. As explained in the piloting sections, I ascertained that every construct contributed to the concept being studied, thus providing construct validity (Kumar, 2005; Langdrige, 2004). Besides attempting to maintain reliability and validity, I engaged in professional ethical conduct and I tried to limit my personal research bias.

4.16 Ethical Considerations

Ethics deal with considering the ethical dimensions of problems, reflecting on issues, taking difficult decisions and acting with integrity, responsibility and duty (National Youth Agency, 2004). The University of Nottingham and the UoM Research Ethics Committee (UREC) granted permission for the research because every person in the research was treated as an end in itself rather than a means to an end, emphasizing honesty as an absolute principle, thus rejecting any form of deception. Throughout the research, I tried to maintain ethical standards by asking for

an informed consent from interviewees involved in the research. In this way, I ensured confidentiality, maximized beneficence in such a way that the risk of harm would not be possible, and minimized potential psychological and emotional harm to my participants (Floyd & Arthur, 2012).

The British Educational Research Association (2004) claims that educational research must bring respect to the person, whereas other researchers mention the avoidance of bias (Kumar, 2005), the use of appropriate research methodology, the correct reporting, the use of the information appropriately (Punch, 1998), the consent from respondents and sensitivity towards the research as well as confidentiality (Kumar, 2005; Nolen & Putten, 2007; Creswell, 1998; Langdridge, 2004; Wimmer & Dominick, 2003) as part of the ethical considerations. By attempting to follow them, I protected the rights of the participants (Melrose, 2001). The approved PGR Statement of Research Ethics, from the University of Nottingham, ensured that the abovementioned ethical conduct was kept throughout the entire research. In addition to this, a series of consent forms were given to respondents.

For the questionnaires and in-depth semi-structured interviews, respondents were given an Information Sheet (Appendix 9), explaining the

research process. During piloting, respondents also gave me their feedback about the information sheet. Since, no one suggested any changes, I kept it the same throughout the entire research. For the interviews, students were asked to read and sign the Consent Form for Students (Appendix 10). In this way, participants were informed about the research and ensured that the name of participants remained anonymous at all times. The Generic Participant Consent Form (Appendix 11) was given to the Deans and policy makers, education academics, the Minister for Education and Employment and the Pro-Rector who were interviewed. After explaining the aim of the interviews, all Deans, education academics and policy makers accepted not to remain anonymous²¹. On the other hand, the names of the students used in this thesis are anonymous so as to protect their identity. All this safeguarded the ethic of respect for the persons involved in the research, regardless of age, sex, race, religion, political beliefs and lifestyle (British Educational Research Association, 2004). Besides being in line with ethical standards, there was an attempt to maximize the effectiveness of the research through awareness of my personal research bias.

Bias refers to the unconscious experiential and biographical baggage that the researcher brings prior to the start of the research (Cohen et al.,

²¹ This is because their names and roles were important for the analysis.

2000) causing a distortion in the results of the research study (Bloor & Wood, 2006). Charmaz (2006) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) both suggest that every researcher may find it difficult to disassociate from one's baggage. In fact, Charmaz (2006) argues that as researchers we "construct our grounded theories through both our past and our present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives and research practices" (Ibid., p. 10). As a result, at the start of my research, I identified my bias, thus facilitating the process of bracketing, hence limiting, my presuppositions or my preconceived ideas. This was very important because through a reflexive process, I realized that I have three major biases, which may have influenced my research and which I worked upon. Research bias included past experiences and prejudices. Given that I strongly believe in the positive outcomes of PSD practice, I had to pay attention not to assume that my research shows that it contributes positively to the well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability of young undergraduates. Instead, I had to bear in mind that it was just my idea which may have been proved or disproved, depending on the outcomes of the research. This was particularly important because "in knowledge, things are ascertained; they are so and not dubiously otherwise. But experience makes us aware that there is a difference between intellectual certainty of subject matter and our certainty" (Dewey, 1944, p. 188). As a result, I had to make a clear distinction between my predictions or thoughts, which were bracketed, and the results that were obtained. Past

experiences were also part of my biases, identified at the start of my research. When I used to attend the UoM, I felt very satisfied with the outcomes of the PSD degree, which I consider as person-centred and holistic, and which contributed very positively to my well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability. This positive experience, if unrecognized, might have affected the questions I asked in the research tools and the attitude I had as a researcher. In fact, if unidentified, my personal experience might have influenced my research because it might have made me assume that all young people share the same experience.

Another controlled bias was related to my dual role as an employee at the UoM and a researcher within the same institution. As explained earlier, the study involved an insider perspective since I researched within the same institution where I work as a Visiting Assistant lecturer. This was in itself a potential bias because, through an insider research, participants in the research were either colleagues or in some cases students whom I teach or whom I taught in the past years. As a result, this made it important for me to engage in external and internal ethical engagement (Figure 4.4). In order to follow external ethical engagement, I submitted the Ethics forms to the UREC so as to gain ethical approval to the UoM internal review board. I also engaged in internal ethical engagement which refers to deep

ethical concerns that insider researchers have to deal with, when being in the same field where the researcher works, thus having conflicting professional and researcher roles. I attempted to enhance the internal ethical engagement by trying to make it clear to participants about the boundaries that I would like to keep between my role as a researcher and my role as an employee.

Recognising the potential biases and prejudice prior to the research was important for me, since it helped in minimizing errors and in maximizing reliability in the research process.

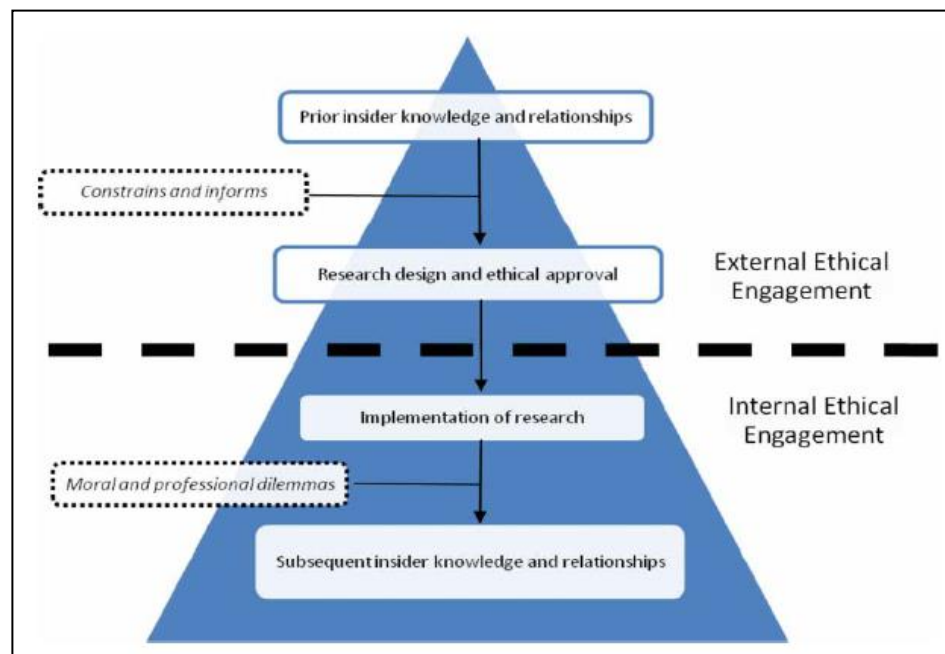


Figure 4.4: Internal and external ethical engagement (Floyd & Arthur, 2012, p. 8)

4.17 Data Presentation and Analysis

In my research, I had the role of an interpretive bricoleur (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), which means that I engaged in an interactive research shaped by my background and personality and by those who surround me. Through this role, I combined different methods and techniques to produce a bricolage.

The product of the interpretive bricoleur's labor is a complex, quiltlike bricolage, a reflexive collage or montage – a set of fluid, interconnected images and representations. This interpretive structure is like a quilt, a performance text, a sequence of representations connecting the parts to the whole (Ibid., p. 6).

After collecting data through the use of the survey monkey (for the questionnaires) and audio-recorder (for the semi-structured interviews), this complex bricolage was presented and analysed. The SPSS22 software helped me to present the quantitative data, thus facilitating the analysis. The NVivo10 software was used to store qualitative texts and to create codes, known as nodes (Gibbs, 2002).

4.17.1 Presenting and Analysing Data from the Quantitative Questionnaire

Data gathered from the questionnaires was presented and analysed through SPSS 22 software. The Kolmogorov Smirnov test was used to determine whether the score distribution of each dimension was normal, so that I could decide whether to use parametric or non-parametric tests. In addition, a series of histograms were created to observe the skewness of the curve, thus being able to accept the null or the alternative hypothesis. The Kruskal Wallis test helped me to compare mean dimension scores between independent groups clustered by faculty cluster, attendance to Degree Plus Programme and participation in extra-curricular groups. Through the SPSS22, I also illustrated the differences in results between the items of each dimension. Error bar graphs were generated to facilitate comparison of results. This provided a clear idea of the extent and the ways in which PSD practice is applied to undergraduate courses as offered by the UoM (research question 2) and the extent to which PSD practice enhances the well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability of young UoM undergraduates (research question 3). In the next chapter, I present these results. Such analysed results were then used to elicit the next set of interview questions, so as to facilitate my understanding of the results and to explore the topic in further detail.

4.17.2 Presenting and Analysing Data from the Qualitative Semi-structured Interview

Qualitative data was analysed through a constructivist grounded theory. After collecting data, there was a stage of analysis through a coding process (Charmaz, 2006) which is the process where data is analysed, interpreted, separated, sorted and synthesized (Grubs, Piantanida & Tananis, 2004). In this research, I followed the coding process presented by Charmaz (2006), which comprises open, focused, axial and theoretical coding (Urquhart, 2013). After having different transcripts, these were inputted in the NVivo10, so as to facilitate the analysis and the constant comparison of data, which is the constant process of comparing different sections of data (Charmaz, 2006). Throughout the research process, memos were kept as notes for myself and helped me to document thoughts related to the emergent codes, categories and interaction between these. Such practice was very important since it was a “pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts” and prompted me to “analyse the data and codes at an early stage of the research process” (Ibid., p. 72). The coding process started off by open coding, which can be done by analysing word by word, line by line, sentence by sentence, incident by incident, paragraph by paragraph or the entire document (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In my case, I used line by line open coding because I

wanted to analyse in detail what the participants were saying. Open coding is the process whereby data is “broken down into discrete parts, closely examined and compared for similarities and differences” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102) to build up categories. During this process, in vivo codes were sometimes used, hence some codes were taken directly from what the participants said (Saldana, 2013). An example of open coding can be found in Chapter 5, Table 5.9 (p. 232). This process was held until there was theoretical saturation, which is the point where I did not find any new codes (Urquhart, 2013).

Once the open coding was done, I did focused coding, which is the second major phase in the coding process (Charmaz, 2006). Focused codes are more directed, selective and conceptual than open codes (Glaser, 1978) and used to identify main categories from all the codes, resulting from open coding. An example of focused coding is found in Chapter 5, Table 5.10 (p. 234). After identifying different codes of data and putting them into categories, I engaged in axial coding (Chapter 5, Figure 5.15, p. 235), which helped me to “uncover relationships among categories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 127) and in illustrating how and why these “cross-cut and link” (Ibid., p. 124). The statements of participants were grouped by the “coding paradigm” (Ibid., p. 128), thus identifying the:

- Conditions which are the causal, intervening and contextual factors;
- Actions or interactions which are the strategies done;
- Consequences which are the immediate, cumulative, reversible, foreseen and unseen actions (Urquhart, 2013).

Finally, all this data was used to produce substantive theory which pertains to the phenomena being studied without making claims to generalise beyond the particular phenomena (Urquhart, 2013). This was generated after eliciting codes, or as termed by grounded theorists, substantive codes, classifying them into categories and finally producing substantive codes. This does not “only conceptualise how substantive codes are related, but also moves [the analysis towards] a theoretical direction” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63). Theoretical codes are presented through four themes in Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9.

4.18 Conclusion

This chapter presented the research strategy, paradigms, methodology and methods which were used to answer the research questions. Research tools and research participants, as well as the ethical conduct, reliability

and validity of the research were also explained. Finally, the chapter delved into the data collection and data analysis processes. Throughout the chapter, reflexivity was kept central. In this way, I engaged in a subjective self-consciousness inquiry, whereby all arguments and decisions about particular strategies, paradigms, methodologies and methods were thoroughly analysed. In addition, during the entire research, I tried to be reflexive as much as possible, thus being thoughtful and consciously self-aware. “Social life is reflexive, that is, it has the capacity to change as our knowledge and thinking changes, thus creating new forms of social life which can, in their turn, be reconstructed” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 43). For this reason, reflexivity helped me to be introspective when I analysed the data gathered through the research tools.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1 Introduction

The study involved the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods, namely the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview. An internet search was also held to engage in an initial mapping exercise about the way PSD practice is provided at the UoM. This chapter presents three separate related studies. As a result, it consists of three parts. Part 1 presents the results from the initial mapping, Part 2 presents the Personal and Social Development (PSD) scale and the results from the quantitative questionnaire, whereas Part 3 presents the results from the qualitative interviews. All these are critically analysed in the analysis chapter.

The questionnaire provided results about the extent and the ways in which PSD practice is applied to the undergraduate experience at the UoM. In addition, it aimed to provide results which indicate the extent to which such practice enhances the well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability of young UoM undergraduates. Results from questionnaire were presented through a set of statistical tests held through SPSS 22. The score distribution of dimensions A, B, C and D and the mean dimension scores grouped by faculty cluster, attendance to Degree Plus and participation in extra-curricular groups were analysed. In addition, a comparison of the mean rating scores between related items in

the dimensions, a comparison of the percentage use of assessment methods and a comparison of the frequency of the perceptions about the UoM undergraduate experience were held.

The semi-structured interviews were used to explain the results of the questionnaire and to explore the perceptions of UoM stakeholders, policy makers, education academics, the Minister for Education and Employment and the Pro-Rector with regards to PSD practice in Malta and within the undergraduate experience and its contribution to the students' holistic development.

This chapter presents all the results from the internet search, the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. As explained above, this chapter has three parts, each of which showing results from a particular research method used.

Results PART 1-Initial mapping

5.2 Introduction – Initial mapping

The research journey started with a mapping exercise about the way PSD practice is offered throughout the University undergraduate experience. This exercise helped me to summarise the findings from the initial mapping and to present them through a diagram which shows the University Curriculum Framework (Figure 5.1). The framework maps the way the UoM is currently helping students to develop holistically and includes all aspects of holistic learning, namely academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular. Data for this mapping exercise was elicited from the online search of all credits and modes of learning at the UoM held in 2012. The mapping exercise is indicative of the way the UOM intends to provide PSD practice, as presented in the website. It is worth noting that the UoM has the intention to include this PSD practice. This is stated in its mission statement: “to promote humanism... to educate graduates for today’s jobs...to stimulate economic development and resilience... to promote sustainable living, entrepreneurship and social solidarity” (University of Malta, 2015c). Nevertheless, the reality was explored in further detail through a set of semi-structured interviews (Appendix 2) held towards the end of the research study with the aim of assessing the truth about the way PSD practice is provided. These results are presented in the last section of this chapter. All results are then critically analysed in the following

chapter, which brings everything together and is centered around a series of themes that answer the three main research questions.

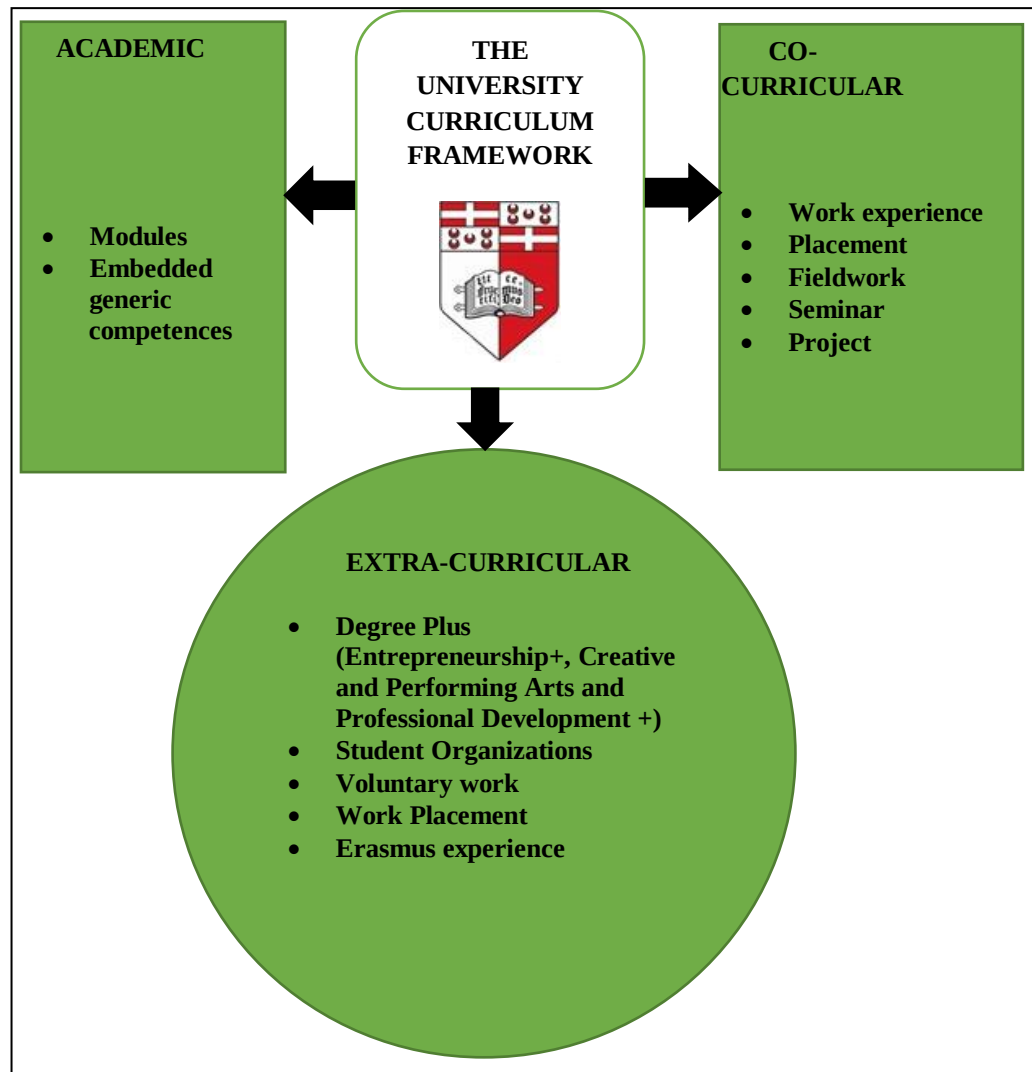


Figure 5.1: The University Curriculum Framework

5.2.1 The PSD practice in the academic content

Every faculty provides different courses, for which a detailed programme description is found on the website of the UoM. This includes a list of study-unit descriptions, each having a similar structured format consisting of unit category, title, level, ECTS credits, name of department and description. The latter has two sections: study-unit aims and learning outcomes, which is further subdivided in knowledge, understanding and skills.

In the section dealing with skills, there is a list of transferable/generic skills (or as used in the thesis generic competences) which are learnt and applied in different contexts. An analysis of the programme description of every course offered to undergraduate students by the 14 Faculties at the UoM (UoM, 2012) helped me to form a table indicating the name of the faculties, name of undergraduate courses, name of credits, list of generic competences, method of delivery and whether it is embedded or modular.

Those study-units which have personal and social generic competences included in the list of aims and transferable/generic skills were classified as embedded whereas those study-units which deal specifically with personal and social generic competences were labeled as modular.

From an online search, it is easily noted that the curriculum of different courses (Table 5.1) is presented as being in line with PSD practice, since it intends to address a set of generic competences which go beyond the academic knowledge, and instead they address the holistic development. Even though, the PSD Practice seems to be provided through a series of modules and embedded generic competences in certain courses, this reality was further explored to assess the co-curricular and extra-curricular content, and also to check whether the generic competences were actually tackled and whether the mode of delivery was experiential and holistic, so as to be truly in line with PSD Practice (as defined in this thesis in Chapters 2 and 3). Such reality was then explored through the qualitative interviews and the quantitative questionnaires. Results from these are presented in Part 2 and 3 of this chapter, whereas in the Analysis Chapters (6, 7, 8 and 9) data is compared and contrasted so that there is a more-depth analysis.

SCIENCES FACULTY CLUSTER

<u>SCIENCES FACULTY CLUSTER</u>	Modules that address specifically the personal and social development of the student	Mode of Delivery	Embedded generic competences, which are found in the study-unit aims and list of transferable/generic skills	Mode of delivery
Faculty of Science	None		Critical thinking, entrepreneurship, decision making, communication, organization and teamwork	Lecture, workshop, project, group learning and seminar
Faculty of Dental Surgery	PSC1001-Leadership and Communications Skills 1 for Dental Hygienists - aimed to develop communication, teamwork, leadership, conflict management, empathy, feedback, assertiveness, self-reflection and personal growth.	Seminar	Critical thinking, teamwork, time management, decision making, communication, personal growth and problem solving	Lecture, project, practicum, tutorial and practical
	PSC2001-Leadership and Communications Skills 2 for Dental Hygienists - aimed to develop value clarification, decision making, emotional literacy and stress management.	Seminar		
	PSC3001-Leadership and Communications Skills 3 for Dental Hygienists - aimed to develop self-awareness, personal values and personal attitudes.	Seminar and tutorial		
Faculty of Health Sciences	NUR2305-Sensitivity Training in Mental Health Nursing - aimed to develop the helping skills of the students.	Lecture	Communication, critical thinking, teamwork, listening, flexibility, leadership, self-esteem, empathy, respect, stress management, conflict management, problem solving, emotional literacy, feedback, reflexivity and organization	Lecture, tutorial, practical or clinical placement
	PSY2631-Helping Skills - aimed to develop the helping skills of the students.	Lecture		
	NUR3518-Inter and Intrapersonal skills - aimed to develop communication, listening, teamwork, leadership, decision making, values, personal strengths and emotional literacy.	Lecture		
	NUR4420-Advanced Communication Skills - aimed to develop empathy, attending, listening, probing, clarification and other helping skills.	Lecture and practical		
	NUR1305-Personal Clinical Skills in Mental Health Nursing - aimed to develop listening, empathy and reflection.	Lecture		

		NUR1306-Introduction to Counselling Skills Mental Health - <i>aimed to develop listening, empathy and reflection.</i>	Lecture			
		IHC2014-Communication Skills for Health Professionals - <i>aimed to develop communication.</i>	Lecture			
		NUR1118-Personal and Professional Development 1- <i>aimed to develop communication, emotional literacy, teamwork and reflection.</i>	Lecture			
		NUR1127-Personal and Professional Development 2 - <i>aimed to develop communication, emotional literacy, teamwork and reflection.</i>	Seminar			
		NUR 1220-Individual and Career Development 2 - <i>aimed to develop communication, emotional literacy, teamwork and reflection.</i>	Seminar			
		NUR3356-Group Dynamics and Counselling for Mental Health Nursing - <i>aimed to develop group competences.</i>	Lecture and group learning			
Faculty of Medicine and Surgery		MDS1011-Communication Skills- Interpersonal Communication Skills and Teamwork - <i>aimed to develop communication, empathy, feedback, assertiveness, teamwork and conflict management.</i>	Tutorial		Communication, listening, teamwork, time management and critical thinking	Lecture
		MDS2025-Interpersonal Communication Skills 1- <i>aimed to develop emotional literacy, decision making, reflection and stress management.</i>	Tutorial			

SOCIAL SCIENCES FACULTY CLUSTER

<u>SOCIAL SCIENCES FACULTY CLUSTER</u>	Modules that address specifically the personal and social development of the student	Mode of Delivery	Embedded generic competences, which are found in the study-unit aims and list of transferable/generic skills	Mode of delivery
Faculty of Education	COU1202- Group and Interpersonal Skills - <i>aimed to develop leadership, communication, teamwork, listening, assertiveness, conflict management and negotiation.</i>	Seminar	Critical thinking, teamwork, self-worth, communication, listening, problem solving, feedback, reflection, emotional literacy, resilience, leadership and decision making	Lecture, tutorial, practical or workshop
	COU3201- Interpersonal Awareness and the Professional Teacher - Some Considerations - <i>aimed to develop self-awareness, decision making, values and emotional literacy.</i>	Lecture		
	COU1102-Interpersonal Communication in PSD - <i>aimed to develop listening and communication.</i>	Lecture		
	COU4102- Reflective Experience on Processing Techniques - <i>aimed to develop reflection, creativity and self-awareness.</i>	Lecture		
	COU1103-Emotional Literacy and the Experiential Learning Cycle - <i>aimed to develop emotional literacy, self-awareness, self-management and empathy.</i>	Lecture		
	COU2101-Understanding the self - <i>aimed to develop the self, value clarification, emotional literacy and decision making.</i>	Lecture		
	EDS2207-Thinking skills and problem solving - <i>aimed to develop the competences mentioned in its title.</i>	Lecture		
	PSY2631-Helping Skills - <i>aimed to develop listening and empathy.</i>	Lecture and seminar		
	COU1201- An Introduction to Intra/Interpersonal Skills - <i>aimed to develop teamwork, leadership, decision making, emotional literacy, self-confidence, assertiveness, feedback, empathy, conflict management, negotiation, listening and communication.</i>	Seminar		
Faculty for Social Well-Being	PSY2631-Helping Skills - <i>aimed to develop listening and empathy.</i>	Lecture and seminar	Critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, decision making, reflection, teamwork, conflict management, self-confidence, stress	Lecture
	SWP2611-Helping Skills for Social Workers - <i>aimed to develop listening and empathy.</i>	Lecture		

	SWP3621-Sensitivity Training for Students of Social Welfare - aimed to focus on personal development.	Seminar		management and career management	
	YTH3803-Sensitivity Training - aimed to focus on personal development.	Seminar			
	SWP1267-Pre-placement - aimed to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.	Placement			
	SWP1341-Social Skills Development - aimed to develop self-awareness, communication and group skills.	Practical			
	SWP2701-Skills for Quality Service - aimed to develop communication, negotiation, conflict management, personal development, time management and stress management.	Practical			
	YTH1009-Youthwork Core Skills 1- aimed to develop listening, empathy, emotional literacy, communication, assertiveness, self-awareness, feedback and conflict management.	Group teaching			
	YTH1010-Youthwork Core Skills 2 - aimed to develop listening, empathy, communication and confrontation.	Group teaching			
	YTH1014- Youthwork Core Skills 3 - aimed to develop leadership, teamwork and group building.	Lecture, independent study-unit, group learning and tutorial			
	PSY3619-Psychology of Small Groups - aimed to develop conflict management, decision making, leadership and group formation.	Lecture			
Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy	MGT2161-Organizational Behaviour - aimed to develop organization, leadership, teamwork and communication.	Lecture		Critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, organization, negotiation, conflict management, teamwork, communication, leadership, emotional intelligence, entrepreneurship and group dynamics.	Lecture and tutorial
	MGT4113-Leadership and Organizational Learning - aimed to develop leadership.	Lecture			
Faculty of Laws	None			Critical thinking, entrepreneurship, decision making, communication, organization and teamwork	Lecture, workshop, project, group learning and seminar
Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences	CST1001-Human Communication - aimed to develop communication.	Lecture and seminar		Communication, leadership, organization and critical thinking	Lecture

HUMANITIES SCIENCES FACULTY CLUSTER

<u>HUMANITIES FACULTY CLUSTER</u>		Modules that address specifically the personal and social development of the student	Mode of Delivery		Embedded generic competences, which are found in the study-unit aims and list of transferable/ generic skills	Mode of delivery
Faculty of Arts		PSY2631-Helping Skills - <i>aimed to develop listening, basic and advanced empathy.</i>	Lecture and seminar		Critical thinking, emotional literacy, teamwork, time management, listening, communication, conflict management, self-consciousness, leadership, reflexivity, organization, group processes, relationship building, stress management, decision making, career management and self-confidence	Lecture
		CST1001-Human Communication - <i>aimed to develop communication.</i>	Lecture and seminar			
		PSY1625-Psychology of Communication - <i>aimed to develop listening, feedback and communication.</i>	Lecture			
Faculty of Theology		None			Critical thinking, entrepreneurship, decision making, communication, organization and teamwork	Lecture, workshop, project, group learning and seminar

CIVIL SCIENCES FACULTY CLUSTER

<u>CIVIL SCIENCES FACULTY CLUSTER</u>		Modules that address specifically the personal and social development of the student		Embedded generic competences, which are found in the study-unit aims and list of transferable/generic skills	Mode of delivery
Faculty of Information and Communication Technology		None		Critical thinking, entrepreneurship, decision making, communication, organization and teamwork	Lecture, workshop, project, group learning and seminar
Faculty of Engineering		None		Time management, teamwork, communication and decision making	Lecture, practical and tutorial
Faculty for the Built Environment		None		Time management, teamwork, critical thinking and communication	Lecture

Table 5.1: The academic content of the undergraduate degrees aimed to develop the personal and social dimension of the student

5.2.2 The PSD practice in the co-curricular activities

In the last sub-section, it was seen that PSD practice at the University of Malta is aimed to be provided through specific credits or embedded competences. From the online search through the University website, it was also observed that there are also activities and learning experiences that complement this academic content. Different degrees provide opportunities for work experience, placements, fieldwork, seminars and projects, which all make part of the co-curricular aspect of holistic learning. Through these modes, the students are given the opportunity to have an active role and to be reflective practitioners by observing, practising and reflecting on their personal and social generic competences.

Some of these are: communication, decision making, assertiveness, public speaking, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, time management, creativity, critical thinking, conflict management and adjustment to new environments. Very often for these type of activities, students tend to have a more active role and there is a mentor or a tutor who supports the learning process and who can be a guide for reflection.

5.2.3 The PSD practice in the extra-curricular activities

From the online search, it is evident that the UOM provides an opportunity to students to develop their personal and social dimension through extra-curricular activities. This is held through the Degree Plus programme, different student organizations, voluntary work and work placement. The Degree Plus programme is aimed at offering an opportunity to all students at the university, on a voluntary basis, to enrich themselves with generic competences through different extra-curricular activities which are person-centred and holistic.

Amongst the activities that are offered, there are: ‘Entrepreneurship+’, ‘Creative and Performing Arts’ and ‘Professional Development +’, which are aimed to develop entrepreneurship, creativity and public speaking respectively, all of which are important generic competences for personal and social development. At the University premises, there is the DegreePlus office, from where a team of staff members coordinate the extra-curricular activities. Every student has the opportunity to take part in one of the areas within the Degree Plus programme. The time slots for the Degree Plus are Wednesdays and Fridays, during which no scheduled lectures are allowed to be held.

The UoM also provides opportunities for voluntary work with the aim of helping students to practice social and teamwork skills, enhancing their ability to plan and manage small scale projects and improving their employability (UoM, 2015b). It also offers a range of student organizations and the ERASMUS experience (an EU student exchange programme), which are also aimed to develop the personal and social development of young people, thus being part of PSD practice at the UoM.

***Results PART 2- The Personal and Social
Development (PSD) scale and the quantitative questionnaire***

5.3 Introduction - The Personal and Social Development (PSD) scale and the quantitative questionnaire

After going through the initial mapping exercise (Chapter 5, Part 1), which gave an indication of the way the PSD Practice is intended to be included within the academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, the aim of this section is to present the entire PSD scale that was developed from the interview data and from theories that are related to such practice (presented in Chapters 2 and 3). In the absence of an existing single definition, the scale was deemed as an essential step in the research process that explores PSD practice. As pointed out in Chapters 2 and 3 (Literature Review), there are different theories that guide this practice. In line of these, together with the results from the initial semi-structured interviews, a set of four dimensions and their related items were elicited. From the start of the research, it was felt that the research cannot explore PSD practice in Malta, and specifically at the UoM, unless there is a clear summative definition of the practice and of what it entails. As a result, the presence or absence of the four dimensions provide an indication of whether the practice is provided at the UoM. The methodology chapter has shown that the dimensions and items were statistically tested and approved, hence being suitable to define and assess the presence of the PSD practice. This PSD Scale may be also used to assess the presence of this practice in other educational systems in Malta and even abroad.

5.3.1 The Personal and Social Development (PSD) Scale

This research has shown that the PSD scale is made up of four dimensions and their related items (Table 5.2). From the literature (Chapters 2 and 3) and the interview data, it resulted that the practice has the following dimensions, which distinguish it from other educational practices:

- Dimension A - The development of generic competences
- Dimension B - The active role of the student
- Dimension C - The holistic aims
- Dimension D - The effectiveness of the methods used

After validating the scale using the Cronbach's Alpha (Chapter 4.13.2), the Exploratory Factor Analysis (Chapter 4.13.3) and the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Chapter 4.13.4), thus checking for the distinctiveness of the dimensions and the relatedness of the items, a path diagram was developed which presents the PSD model. In this model, the four dimensions are presented as distinct from each other, whereas the items in each dimension are closely related (Figure 5.2). The dimensions and items that define PSD practice were used to set up the questions in the quantitative questionnaire. In the following sections, results from this research tool are presented, which indicate the extent and the way in which PSD practice is offered through the undergraduate experience, as well as the effect of the practice on the holistic development of the students.

<u>DIMENSION/SUBSCALE A</u> <u>The development of generic competences in PSD practice</u> Teamwork Leadership Stress management Self-esteem Dealing with my feelings effectively Problem-solving Communication Decision-making Resilience Time management Self-acceptance Initiative Creativity Critical thinking Ability to empathise Conflict management Adjustment to new situations	<u>DIMENSION/SUBSCALE B</u> <u>The active role of the student in PSD practice</u> Encouraged me to participate Made me feel central to my own learning Helped me to open and self-disclose my feelings Encouraged me to ask questions so as to reflect critically Elicited my knowledge and experiences Made reference to my interests Considered my background Focused on personal aspects, not only academically Focused and developed my character qualities Focused on my capacity and my talents Focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the life challenges Focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the course challenges Centred around the development my potential
<u>DIMENSION/SUBSCALE C</u> <u>The holistic aims of PSD practice</u> Helped me to feel physically healthy Helped me to develop my intellectual Helped me to deal with others effectively Contributed to my personal satisfaction in relation to my career path Helped me to find meaning and a purpose in life Facilitated the way I recognise and manage my emotions Made me feel happy about my life Helped me to develop as an individual Provided the necessary generic competences to obtain employment Trained me in how to cope well in the place of work	<u>DIMENSION/SUBSCALE D</u> <u>The effectiveness of the methods used in PSD practice</u> Online learning Brainstorming Role-play Discussion Energizer Case studies Sharing of experiences Information from lecturer

Table 5.2: The validated PSD scale

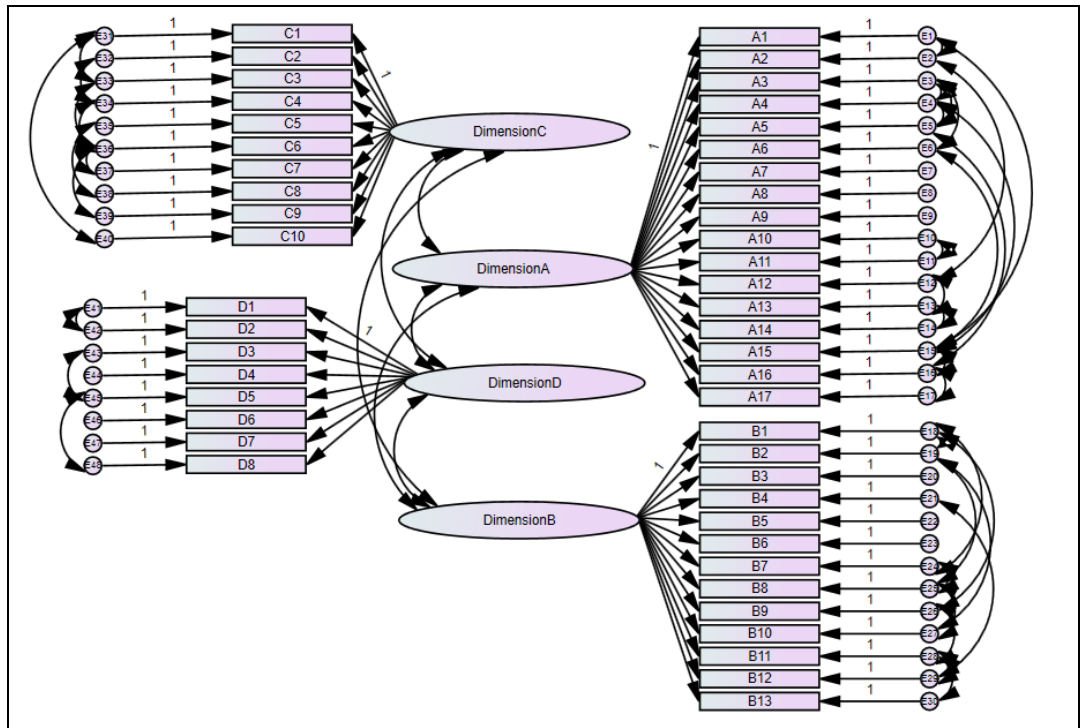


Figure 5.2: The Path Diagram with Modifications

Results from the questionnaire were analysed through a set of statistical tests held through SPSS 22. The score distribution of dimensions A, B, C and D, presented through a set of histograms, helped me to visually observe the highest scores, thus showing which dimensions of the PSD practice are present and which ones are less visible. The error bar graphs helped me to re-confirm the score distribution of the four dimensions and the related items. Through another statistical test, the Kruskal Wallis Test, the mean dimension scores grouped by faculty cluster, attendance to Degree Plus and participation in extra-curricular groups were analysed. This enhanced the comparison of the four dimensions between different faculty clusters, between students who attended and those who did not

attend the Degree Plus programme, as well as between students who participated in extra-curricular activities and those who did not. Finally, a comparison of the percentage use of assessment methods and a comparison of the frequency of the perceptions about the UoM undergraduate experience was held. In order to answer my research questions, I did not compare data by demographics like age, locality where students live, nationality, ethnicity and religion. Even though, the gender of the respondents was requested, there was no comparison of results by gender because it is not the aim of the research and it is not related to my research questions. Instead, I compared mean dimension scores by faculty cluster and by those who attended the Degree Plus programme or extra-curricular activities and those who did not. In this way, the link between the presence of PSD practice and holistic aims was assessed, thus answering my research questions.

5.3.2 The Score Distribution of Dimensions A, B, C and D

For each dimension/subscale, the score ranged from 1-5, where one corresponds to the most negative aspect of the dimension and five corresponds to the most positive aspect of the dimension. Table 5.3 explains the range of scores for each dimension. As explained in the previous chapters, all dimensions make up PSD practice. High scores indicated that the respondents said that they felt their presence in the

undergraduate UoM experience, which contributed to PSD practice. Low scores showed that the respondents hardly felt that they existed within their undergraduate experience, hence PSD practice was lacking.

Name of dimension	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Dimension A: The development of generic competences in PSD practice	The generic competences were not developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience	The generic competences were weakly developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience	The generic competences were moderately developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience	The generic competences were considerably developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience	The generic competences were strongly developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience
Dimension B: The active role of the student in PSD practice	Students strongly disagreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience	Students disagreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience	Students neither agreed nor disagreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience	Students agreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience	Students strongly agreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience
Dimension C: The holistic aims in PSD practice	Students strongly disagreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims	Students disagreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims	Students neither agreed nor disagreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims	Students agreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims	Students strongly agreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims
Dimension D: The effectiveness of different methods in PSD practice	Students did not find the different methods as effective	Students found different methods as weakly effective	Students found different methods as moderately effective	Students found different methods as considerably effective	Students found different methods as strongly effective

Table 5.3: Key to scores of Dimensions A, B, C and D

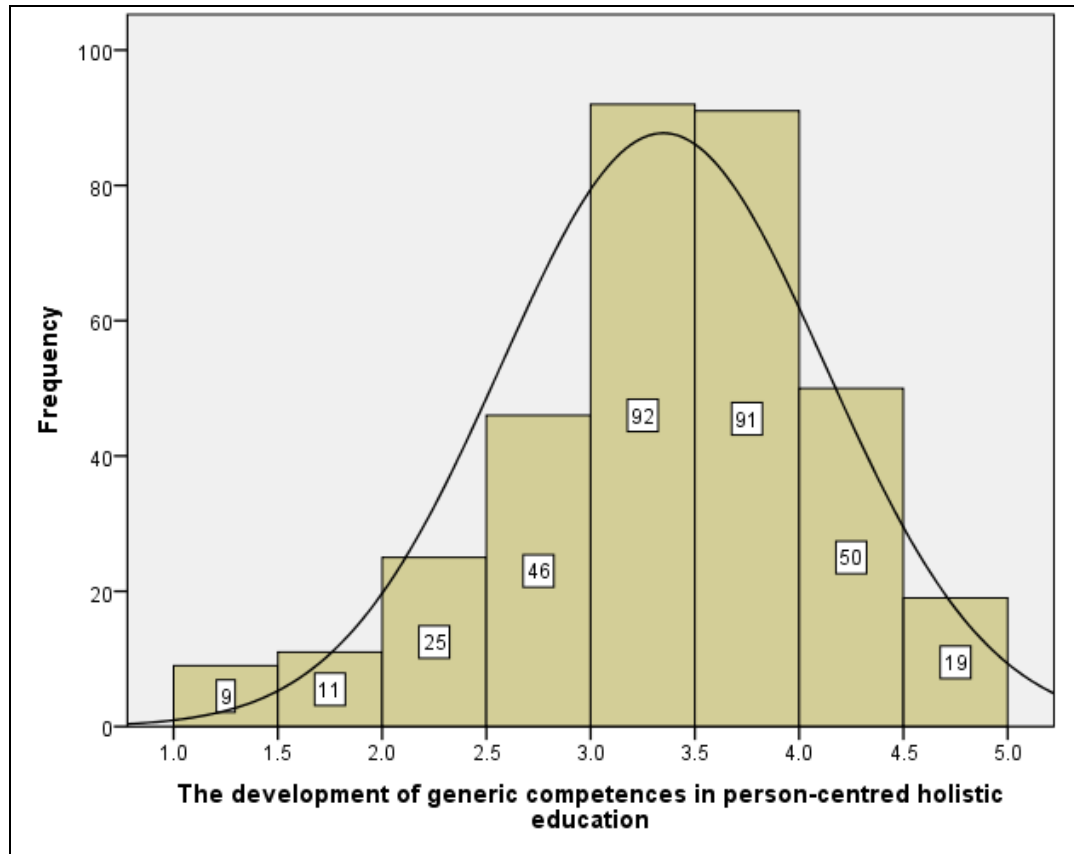
Different established tests were used to check the skewness of the curve, thus helping me to decide whether to use parametric or non-parametric tests, to analyse results from the questionnaires. The Kolmogorov Smirnov test was used to determine whether the score distribution of each dimension was normal. The null hypothesis specified that the score distribution of a dimension was normal and was accepted if the p-value exceeded the 0.05 level of significance. The alternative hypothesis specified that the score distribution of a dimension was skewed (not normal) and was accepted if the p-value was less than 0.05 criterion. The Kolmogorov Smirnov p-values of each dimension (approximately 0 – Table 5.4) was less than the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that each dimension score distribution was not normal, thus accepting the alternative hypothesis, hence non-parametric tests were employed throughout the statistical analysis.

		Development of generic competences in PSD practice	The active role of the student in PSD practice	Holistic aims of PSD practice	Effectiveness of the methods used in PSD practice
N		343	343	343	343
Normal Parameters	Mean	3.348	3.129	3.274	3.358
	Std. Deviation	0.780	0.770	0.612	0.591
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	0.081	0.104	0.243	0.070
	Positive	0.046	0.049	0.238	0.038
	Negative	-0.081	-0.104	-0.243	-0.070
Test Statistic		0.081	0.104	0.243	0.070
P-value		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Table 5.4: The One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

All dimension score distributions were left skewed (Figure 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6), showing that the 3 and 4 scores were always the highest, hence most students answered 3 and 4. This shows that most young undergraduate students, who answered the questionnaire, believed that the UoM undergraduate experience moderately or considerably developed their generic competences (Dimension A), had a neutral position about the fact that it placed them at the heart of the education system (Dimension B), had a neutral position about the fact that PSD practice developed them holistically (Dimension C) and believed that the use of different effective methods was moderately or considerably effective (Dimension D).

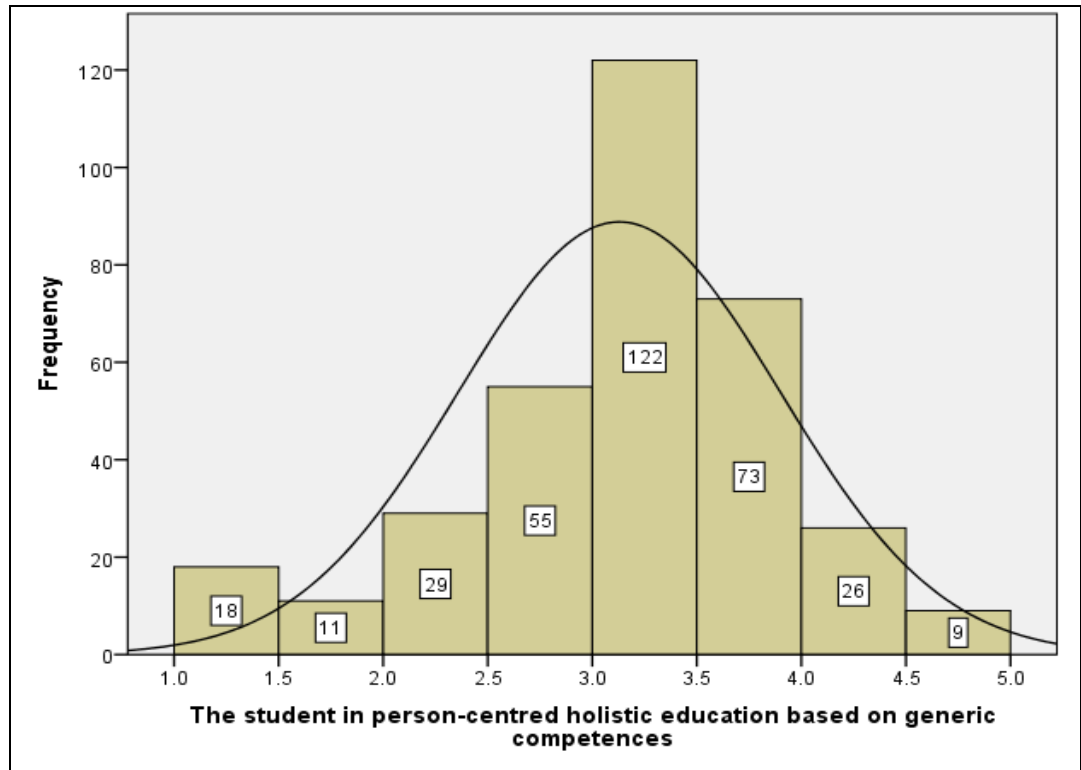
As a result, in terms of Dimensions A, B, C and D, many respondents agreed that the undergraduate experience comprised PSD practice, due to 3 and 4 scores for Dimensions A and D. On the other hand, the majority neither agreed nor disagreed about their active role and that PSD practice developed them holistically, due to several 3 scores in Dimensions B and C.



Key to scores –

Name of dimension	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Dimension A: The development of generic competences in PSD practice	The generic competences were not developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience	The generic competences were weakly developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience	The generic competences were moderately developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience	The generic competences were considerably developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience	The generic competences were strongly developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience

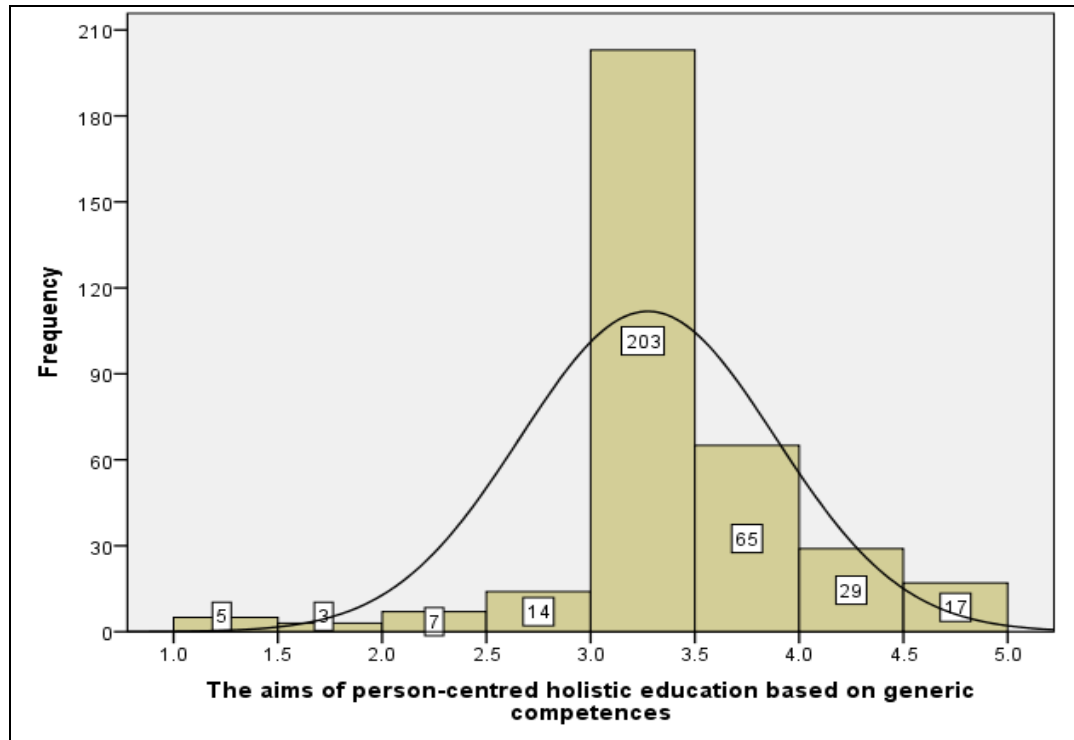
Figure 5.3: Histogram showing the score distribution of Dimension A within the UoM undergraduate experience



Key to scores-

Name of dimension	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Dimension B: The active role of the student in PSD practice	Students strongly disagreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience	Students disagreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience	Students neither agreed nor disagreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience	Students agreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience	Students strongly agreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience

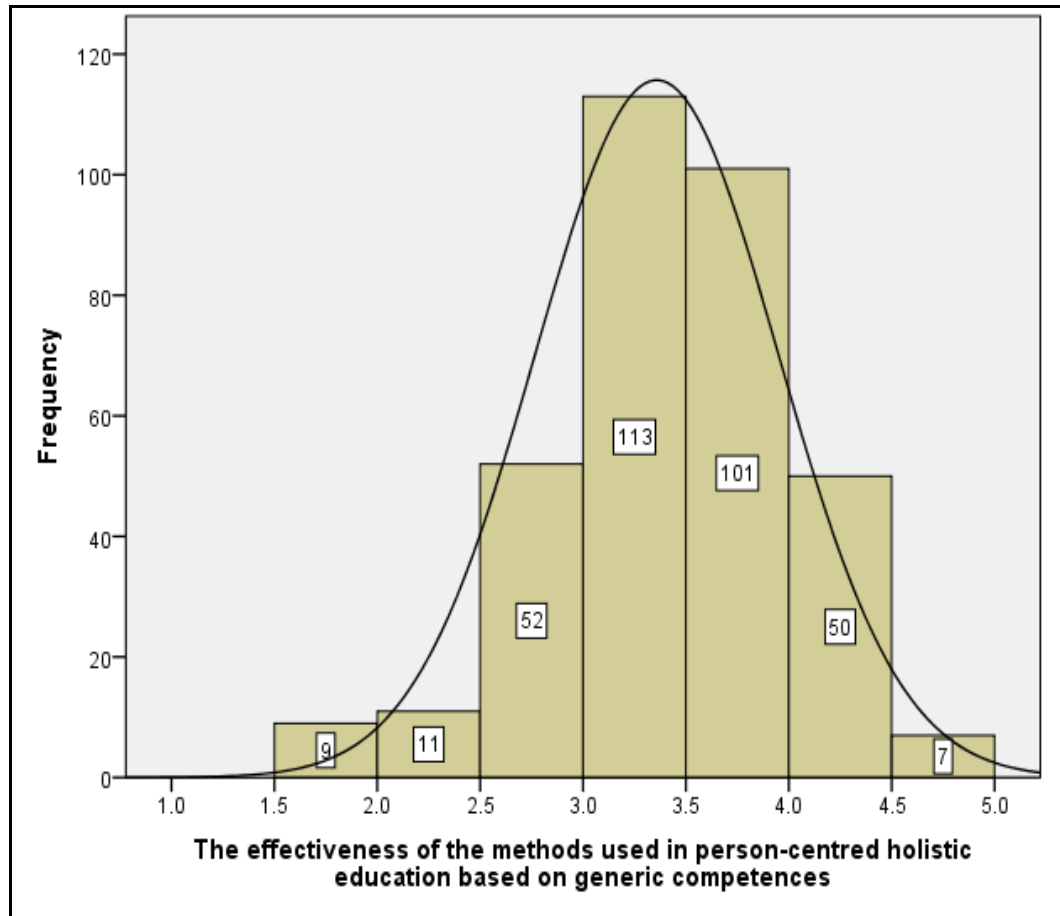
Figure 5.4: Histogram showing the score distribution of Dimension B within the UoM undergraduate experience



Key to scores-

Name of dimension	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Dimension C: The holistic aims in PSD practice	Students strongly disagreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims	Students disagreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims	Students neither agreed nor disagreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims	Students agreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims	Students strongly agreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims

Figure 5.5: Histogram showing the score distribution of Dimension C within the UoM undergraduate experience



Key to scores-

Name of dimension	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Dimension D: The effectiveness of different methods in PSD practice	Students did not find the different methods as effective	Students found different methods as weakly effective	Students found different methods as moderately effective	Students found different methods as considerably effective	Students found different methods as strongly effective

Figure 5.6: Histogram showing the score distribution of Dimension D within the UoM undergraduate experience

5.3.3 Mean Dimension Scores grouped by Faculty Cluster, attendance to Degree Plus and Participation in Extra-Curricular Groups

The Kruskal Wallis test was used to compare mean dimension scores between several independent groups clustered by faculty cluster, attendance to Degree Plus programme and participation in extra-curricular groups as offered by the UoM. The null hypothesis specified that the mean dimension score varied marginally between the groups and was accepted if the p-value exceeded the 0.05 level of significance. The alternative hypothesis specified that the mean dimension scores varied significantly between the groups and was accepted if the p-value was less than the 0.05 criterion.

Table 5.5 shows that the Science faculty cluster (Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, Faculty of Dental Surgery and Faculty of Science) has the highest mean score for each dimension (A:3.41, B:3.16, C:3.36, D:3.35). This means that most respondents in this faculty cluster believed that their undergraduate experience at the UoM helped them to develop different generic competences, placed them at the centre of the education system, focused on holistic aims and used a range of effective methods for learning, hence they said that PSD practice was present and that it contributed to their holistic development. Following it,

there is the Social Science faculty cluster (Faculty of Laws, Faculty for Social Well-Being, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy and Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences) (A:3.32, B:3.08, C:3.26, D:3.34). The Civil Science faculty cluster (Faculty for the Built Environment, Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Information and Communication Technology) ranks third in the mean scores for Dimensions A (3.24), B (2.89) and D (3.24). For Dimension C, there is the Humanities faculty cluster (Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Theology) which ranks third in the mean scores (3.21). The Humanities faculty cluster has the least mean score for Dimensions A (3.20), B (2.87) and D (3.16) whereas the Civil Science faculty cluster has the least mean score for Dimension C (2.90).

The differences between the mean rating scores of Dimensions A, B and D are not statistically significant as their p-values exceed the 0.05 level of significance. However, the p-value of Dimension C when grouped by faculty cluster does not exceed the 0.05 criterion. As a result, it is statistically significant and a generalization was elicited, showing that generally the young UoM undergraduates in the Science, Social Sciences, Humanities and Civil Science faculty cluster tended to differ significantly with regards to their opinion about the holistic aims of PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience. Generally, young undergraduate

students from the Civil Science faculty cluster were least likely to believe that their course had holistic aims, which go beyond the academic. The mean rating scores provided by students from the Humanities, Science and Social Sciences faculty clusters are fairly comparable indicating that these students share similar views about how their course developed them holistically.

Mean dimension score grouped by faculty cluster						
		Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value	Minimum	Maximum
Dimension A (The development of generic competences in PSD practice)	Science	3.41	0.661	0.497	1.18	4.82
	Social Science	3.32	0.711		1.00	4.76
	Humanities	3.20	0.835		1.29	5.00
	Civil Science	3.24	0.968		1.00	4.65
	Total	3.31	0.750		1.00	5.00
Dimension B (The active role of the student in PSD practice)	Science	3.16	0.616	0.238	1.15	4.38
	Social Science	3.08	0.768		1.00	4.85
	Humanities	2.87	0.935		1.00	4.69
	Civil Science	2.89	0.677		1.00	3.92
	Total	3.04	0.765		1.00	4.85
Dimension C (Holistic aims of PSD practice)	Science	3.36	0.526	0.030	2.00	4.80
	Social Science	3.26	0.542		1.00	5.00
	Humanities	3.21	0.723		1.00	5.00
	Civil Science	2.90	0.627		1.00	4.00
	Total	3.24	0.593		1.00	5.00
Dimension D (Effectiveness of the methods in PSD practice)	Science	3.35	0.550	0.372	1.63	4.38
	Social Science	3.34	0.571		1.75	5.00
	Humanities	3.16	0.705		1.50	4.38
	Civil Science	3.24	0.578		2.38	4.38
	Total	3.30	0.596		1.50	5.00

Table 5.5: The mean score for Dimensions A, B, C and D grouped by faculty cluster

Table 5.6 illustrates the mean dimension scores grouped by the number of years the students attended the Degree Plus Programme, which is also part of PSD practice. Young undergraduate students who attended the Degree Plus Programme for at least four years scored highest in Dimensions A (3.69), B (3.36) and C (3.55). This indicates that these students felt that the UoM undergraduate experience developed their generic competences, placed them at the centre of their education and developed them holistically, hence there was the experience of PSD practice. On the other hand, those students who attended the Degree Plus Programme for only one year, scored highest in Dimension D (3.45). This shows that these students are most likely to find the range of different techniques used in PSD practice effective. Young undergraduate students who attended the Degree Plus Programme for one year scored second highest in Dimension A and B (3.32 and 3.11 respectively) and those who never attended the Degree Plus Programme scored second highest in Dimensions C and D (3.27 and 3.31 respectively). The latter group also scored third highest in Dimensions A and B (3.32 and 3.10 respectively). Young undergraduate students who attended the programme for one year scored third highest in Dimension C (3.26) whereas those who attended the same programme for two years scored third highest in Dimension D (3.10). The young undergraduates who attended the programme for three years, ranked fourth in Dimensions A (3.31) and B (2.70), whereas those who attended the same programme for two and four years or more, ranked

fourth in Dimensions C (3.06) and D (2.94) respectively. Finally, those who scored less in Dimensions A, B, C and D were those who attended the Degree Plus Programme for two years, in case of Dimensions A (3.19) and B (2.67) and for three years, in case of Dimensions C (2.86) and D (2.75). The differences between the mean scores of Dimensions A and C vary marginally across the five groups as their p-values exceed the 0.05 level of significance. However, the mean scores of Dimensions B and D vary significantly since their p-values are less than the 0.05 criterion. This means that I can generalize that students who did the Degree Plus Programme for at least four years are scoring significantly higher in Dimension B than their counterparts who participated for shorter durations in this programme, thus tending to believe more that PSD practice within UoM undergraduate experience places them at the centre of the education process. Students who participated for at most a year in the Degree Plus Programme are scoring significantly higher in Dimension D than the others who participated for longer duration, hence believing that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience makes use of different effective methods for learning.

Mean dimension score grouped by participation in Degree Plus Programme						
		Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value	Minimum	Maximum
Dimension A (The development of generic competences in PSD practice)	For 1 year	3.32	0.718	0.645	1.29	5.00
	For 2 years	3.18	0.831		1.59	4.65
	For 3 years	3.31	0.872		1.47	4.35
	For 4 years or more	3.69	0.356		3.29	4.24
	Never	3.32	0.755		1.00	4.82
	Total	3.31	0.750		1.00	5.00
Dimension B (The active role of the student in PSD practice)	For 1 year	3.10	0.727	0.029	1.00	4.69
	For 2 years	2.67	0.725		1.15	3.85
	For 3 years	2.69	0.786		1.00	3.69
	For 4 years or more	3.36	0.569		2.62	4.31
	Never	3.08	0.776		1.00	4.85
	Total	3.04	0.765		1.00	4.85
Dimension C (Holistic aims of PSD practice)	For 1 year	3.26	0.498	0.055	2.00	5.00
	For 2 years	3.06	0.684		1.20	4.60
	For 3 years	2.86	0.726		1.00	3.90
	For 4 years or more	3.55	0.362		3.00	4.10
	Never	3.27	0.603		1.00	5.00
	Total	3.24	0.593		1.00	5.00
Dimension D (Effectiveness of the methods in PSD practice)	For 1 year	3.46	0.503	0.002	1.75	4.50
	For 2 years	3.10	0.553		2.13	4.00
	For 3 years	2.75	0.835		1.63	4.00
	For 4 years or more	2.94	0.304		2.50	3.38
	Never	3.31	0.599		1.50	5.00
	Total	3.30	0.595		1.50	5.00

Table 5.6: The mean score for Dimensions A, B, C and D grouped by participation in Degree Plus Programme

The mean scores of the dimensions, as grouped by the number of undergraduate young students participating in extra-curricular groups were also estimated. Out of 277 respondents, 144 (52.0%) stipulated that they participated in extra-curricular groups as offered by the UoM. This also makes up part of PSD practice. Even though there are different options, there were 133 undergraduate young students who said that they did not

participate in any of the extra-curricular groups (Table 5.7). From the respondents who participated in extra-curricular groups, most of them claimed that they were involved in Kunsill Studenti Universitarji (22.9%) and the Malta Health Students' Association (MHSA) (20.1%).

Frequency Table		Frequency	Percentage
Extra-Curricular activities followed by young undergraduates	Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe (AEGEE)	6	4.2%
	Association International des Etudiants de Science, Economie et Commerce (AIESEC)	16	11.1%
	Arts Student Association (ASA)	9	6.3%
	Association of Student of Commercial Studies (ASCS)	7	4.9%
	BetaPsi (BPsi)	13	9.0%
	Communication Association (Comm. A.)	2	1.4%
	Department of English Students Association (DESA)	9	6.3%
	European Law Student Association (ELSA)	6	4.2%
	European Studies Organisation (ESO)	2	1.4%
	Ghaqda tal-Malti – Università	9	6.3%
	Ghaqda Studenti tal-Kriminologija (GhSK)	1	0.7%
	Ghaqda Studenti tal-Ligi (GhSL)	10	6.9%
	Ghaqda Studenti tat-Teologija (GhST)	2	1.4%
	Green House	3	2.1%
	Grupp Universitarji Ghawdxin (GUG)	7	4.9%
	International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE)	3	2.1%
	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (IEEE)	3	2.1%
	Insite (INSITE)	8	5.6%
	ICT Student Association (ICTSA)	5	3.5%
	Young European Federalists (JEF)	2	1.4%
	Kunsill Studenti Universitarji (KSU)	33	22.9%
	Malta Health Students' Association (MHSA)	29	20.1%
	Malta International Relations Students Society (MIRSA)	2	1.4%
	Malta Medical Students Association (MMSA)	11	7.6%
	Moviment Graffiti	2	1.4%
	Moviment Kattoliku Studenti Universitarji (MKSU)	3	2.1%
	The Malta Pharmaceutical Students Association (MPSA)	4	2.8%
	The Malta University Film Club (MUFC)	3	2.1%
	The Malta University Sports Club (MUSC)	11	7.6%
	Organizzazzjoni Studenti Qwiebel (OSQ)	2	1.4%
	Pulse	11	7.6%
	Science Students' Society (S3)	14	9.7%
	Society of Architecture and Civil Engineering Students (SACES)	2	1.4%
	Studenti Demokristjani Maltin (SDM)	12	8.3%
	Students for Healthy Living (SFHL)	1	0.7%
	Studenti Harsien Soċjali (SHS)	4	2.8%
	Students Philosophical Society	7	4.9%
	Students Sociology Association (SSA)	4	2.8%
	Terra di Mezzo Malta (TDM 2000 Malta)	5	3.5%
	University Bible Group	1	0.7%
	University Engineering Student Association (UESA)	8	5.6%
	University of Malta Geographical Society (UMGS)	7	4.9%
	University of Malta Racing (UoMR)	1	0.7%
	We Are – The University of Malta LGBTQI Organisation (We Are)	8	5.6%
	Youth for the Environment (Y4TE)	14	9.7%

Table 5.7: The number of students attending different extra-curricular groups

The Kruskal Wallis test was not carried out for each extra-curricular group, since the number of participants was extremely small. As a result, the test was held to compare score means of those who participated and those who did not. From Table 5.8, it is evident that those students who participated in extra-curricular groups scored higher in Dimensions A (3.44), B (3.13), C (3.35) and D (3.39), than those who did not. This indicates that the students who participated in extra-curricular groups tended to believe more that the PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience developed their generic competences, placed them at the centre of the education process, developed them holistically and found the range of methods for learning as effective. The p-values for Dimensions A, C and D are less than the 0.05 level of significance indicating that mean scores differ significantly between those who participated and those who did not. Hence, it can be generalized that students who participated in extracurricular activities scored significantly higher in Dimensions A, C and D than their counterparts who do not participate. The p-value for Dimension B (0.088) is marginally higher than the 0.05 criterion indicating that differences between the mean scores are considerable but not statistically significant.

Mean dimension score grouped by participation in extracurricular groups

		Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value	Minimum	Maximum
Dimension A (The development of generic competences in PSD practice)	Participate	3.44	0.680	0.007	1.29	5.00
	Do not participate	3.18	0.800		1.00	4.76
Dimension B (The active role of the student in PSD practice)	Participate	3.13	0.680	0.088	1.08	4.69
	Do not participate	2.94	0.839		1.00	4.85
Dimension C (Holistic aims in PSD practice)	Participate	3.35	0.581	0.006	1.70	5.00
	Do not participate	3.12	0.584		1.00	4.60
Dimension D (The effectiveness of the methods in PSD practice)	Participate	3.39	0.568	0.003	1.50	4.63
	Do not participate	3.20	0.611		1.50	5.00

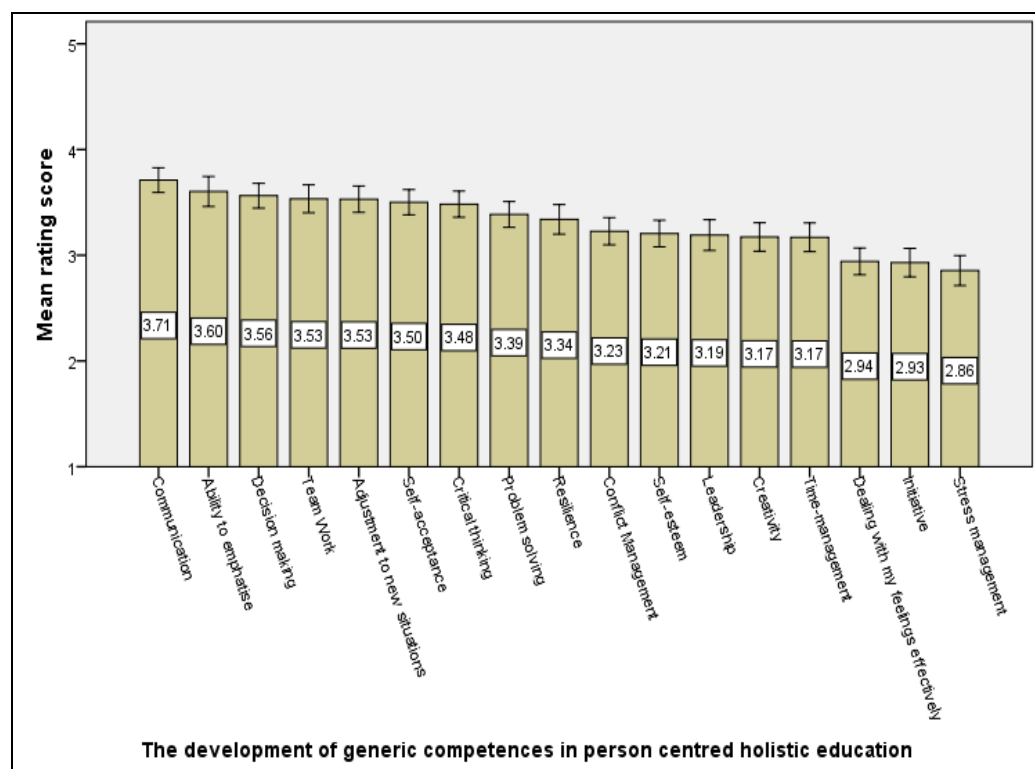
Table 5.8: The mean score for Dimensions A, B, C and D grouped by participation in extracurricular groups

5.3.4 Comparing Mean Rating Scores between Related Items in the Dimensions

A series of error bar graphs were created to compare the mean rating scores between related items making up Dimensions A, B, C and D. The 95% confidence interval was used and provided a range of values for the actual mean rating score given for an item, if the whole population of UoM students had to be included in the study. When two 95% confidence intervals overlapped considerably, it indicated that their respective mean rating scores were comparable and did not differ significantly. On the other hand, when two 95% confidence intervals were disjoint, hence they did not meet, it indicated that their respective mean rating scores differed

significantly. For example the mean rating scores provided for communication (3.71) and ability to empathise (3.60) were comparable since their 95% confidence interval overlapped considerably. However, the mean rating score provided for teamwork (3.53) was significantly higher than the mean rating score for initiative (2.93) since their 95% confidence intervals are disjoint.

The error bar graph in Figure 5.7 displays the 95% confidence intervals of the mean rating scores provided by the participants for the items of Dimension A (the development of generic competences in PSD practice). A 95% confidence interval provides a range of values for the actual mean rating score if all the university students had to participate in this study. All items in Dimension A had a score which ranged from 2.86 to 3.71, where a score of 3 indicates that the competence was moderately developed, and 4 indicates that the competence was considerably developed. There were no items which had a score of 1 (competence was not developed) or 5 (competence was strongly developed).



Key to score-

Name of dimension	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Dimension A: The development of generic competences in PSD practice	The generic competences were not developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience	The generic competences were weakly developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience	The generic competences were moderately developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience	The generic competences were considerably developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience	The generic competences were strongly developed throughout the UoM undergraduate experience

Figure 5.7: An error bar graph showing the mean rating scores of the items in Dimension A as provided through the UoM undergraduate experience

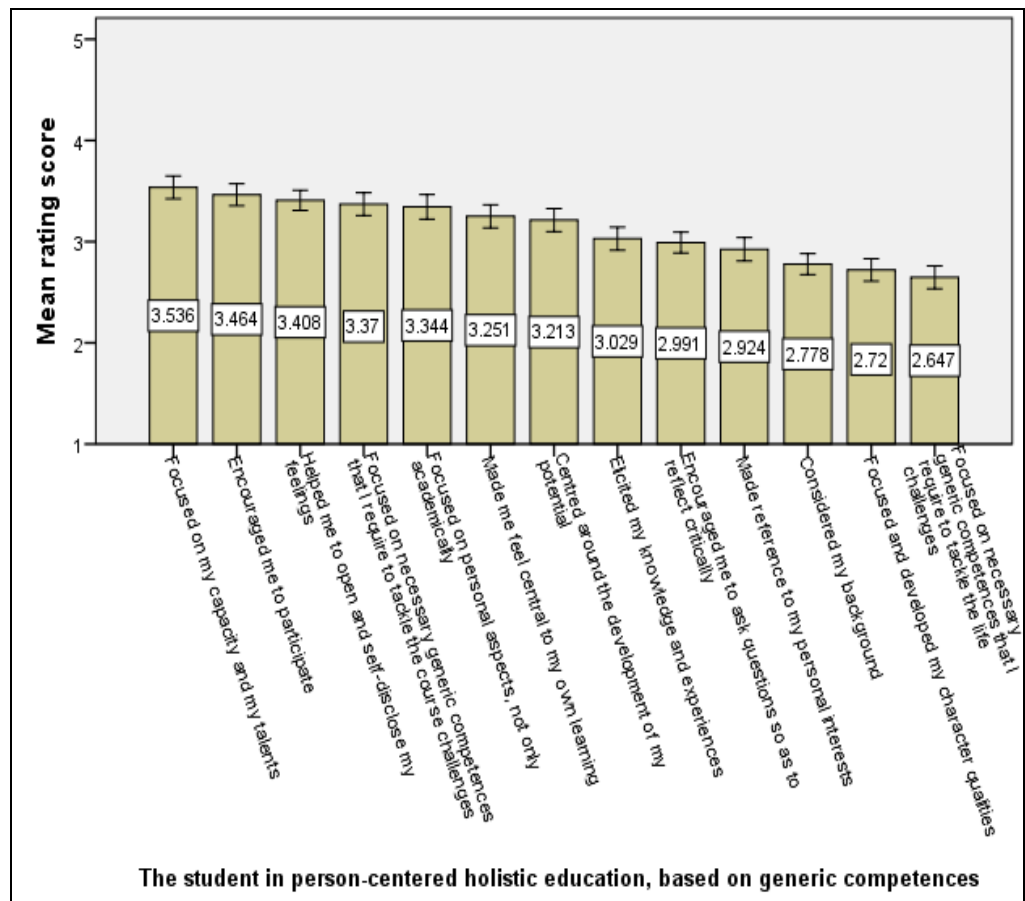
Communication had the highest mean rating score (3.71), followed by the ability to empathise (3.60) and decision-making (3.56). The least competences developed through the UoM undergraduate experience were

stress management (2.86), initiative (2.93) and ‘dealing with my feelings effectively’ (2.94). The mean rating scores for the competences with the highest scores (communication, ability to empathise, decision making, teamwork, adjustment to new situations, self-acceptance, critical thinking, problem solving and resilience) were significantly higher than those of the lowest scores (dealing with my feelings effectively, initiative and stress management), since their 95% confidence intervals are disjoint.

Figure 5.8 presents the mean rating scores of the items in Dimension B (The active role of the student in PSD practice). The error bar graph (Figure 5.8) shows clearly that the scores ranged from above 2.6 to three (neutral - neither disagree nor agree). There were no young UoM undergraduates who marked the score of one (strongly disagree) or five (strongly agree). As a result, most respondents had a neutral position about their active role in the UoM undergraduate experience, which is one of the dimensions that makes up PSD practice.

The items which had the highest mean rating scores were ‘focused on my capacity and my talents’ (3.54), ‘encouraged me to participate’ (3.46) and ‘helped me to open and self-disclose my feelings’ (3.41). The items with the lowest mean rating scores were ‘focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle life challenges’ (2.65), ‘focused and

developed my character qualities' (2.72) and 'considered my background' (2.78).



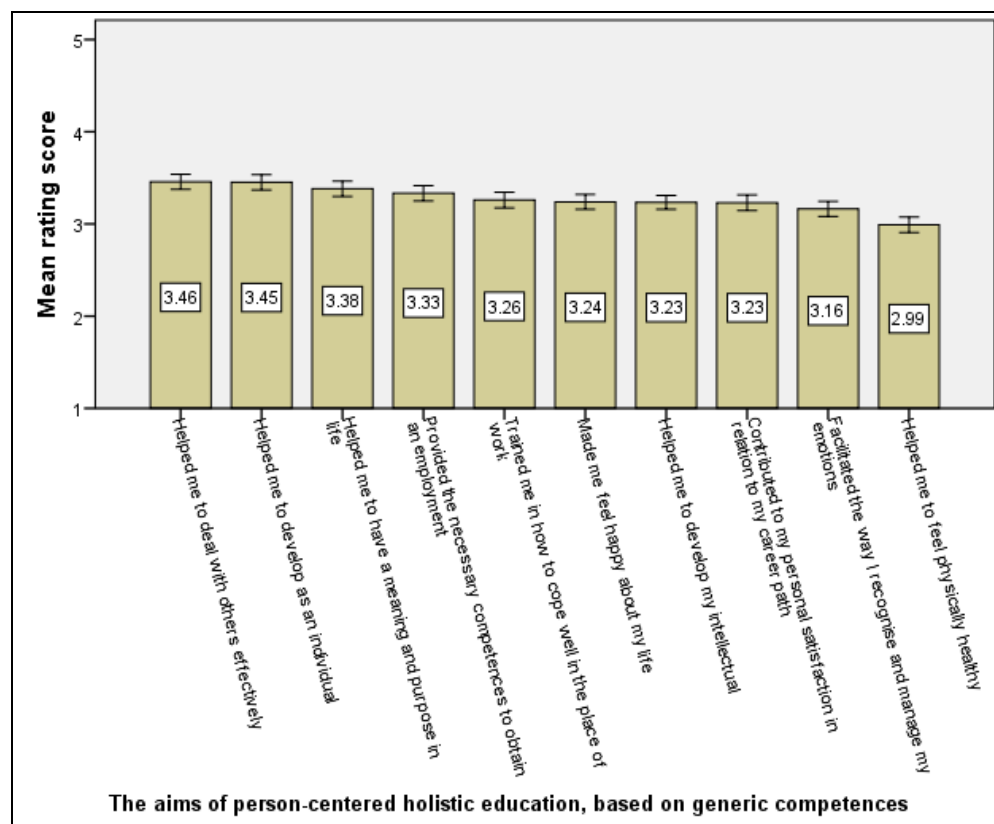
Key to score-

Name of dimension	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Dimension B: The active role of the student in PSD practice	Students strongly disagreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience	Students disagreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience	Students neither agreed nor disagreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience	Students agreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience	Students strongly agreed about their active role within the undergraduate experience

Figure 5.8: An error bar graph showing the mean rating scores of the items in Dimension B as provided through the UoM undergraduate experience

The mean rating scores for items with the highest scores (focused on my capacity and my talents, encouraged me to participate, helped me to open and self-disclose my feelings, focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the course challenges, focused on personal aspects not only academically, made me feel central to my own learning and centred around the development of my potential) were significantly higher than those of the lowest scores (focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle the life challenges, focused and developed my character qualities and considered my background), since their 95% confidence intervals are disjoint.

Items in Dimension C (the holistic aims of PSD practice) had similar scores which were nearly all close to three (neutral position, therefore they neither agree nor disagree) (Figure 5.9). This clearly shows that all respondents had a neutral position about the development of holistic aims through PSD practice within undergraduate courses. The items with the highest mean rating scores were ‘helped me to deal with others effectively’ (3.46), ‘helped me to develop as an individual’ (3.45) and ‘helped me to have a meaning and purpose in life’ (3.38). The items with the lowest mean rating scores were ‘helped me to feel physically healthy’ (2.99), ‘facilitated the way I recognise and manage my emotions’ (3.16) and ‘contributed to my personal satisfaction in relation to my career path’ (3.23).



Key to scores-

Name of dimension	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Dimension C: The holistic aims in PSD practice	Students strongly disagreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims	Students disagreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims	Students neither agreed nor disagreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims	Students agreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims	Students strongly agreed that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience focused on the holistic aims

Figure 5.9: An error bar graph showing the mean rating scores of the items in Dimension C as provided through the UoM undergraduate experience

The mean rating scores for the aims with the highest scores (helped me to deal with others effectively, helped me to develop as an individual, helped

me to have a meaning and purpose in life, provided the necessary competences to obtain employment) were significantly higher than those of the lowest score (helped me to feel physically healthy), since their 95% confidence intervals are disjoint. The other intervals overlap considerably, thus showing that their respective mean rating scores are comparable and do not differ significantly.

Another dimension which was explored was that of the effectiveness of different methods of learning. Respondents claimed that the most methods used during the UoM undergraduate experience were ‘information from lecturer’ (88.3%), discussion (74.8%) and online learning (67.2%), whereas the least methods used were role plays (15.7%) and energizers (16.8%) (Figure 5.10). The error bar graph of Dimension D (Figure 5.11) shows that respondents perceived the ‘information from lecturer’ (3.85), discussions (3.83) and ‘sharing of experiences’ as moderately or considerably effective. Figure 5.10 indicates that both the ‘information from lecturer’ and discussions are the most methods used during their experience as undergraduates. On the other hand, even though young UoM undergraduates perceived the ‘sharing of experiences’ as in between moderately and considerably effective (Figure 5.11), such method is not among the top three techniques used throughout their UoM undergraduate experience (Figure 5.10). Energizers and role plays have the least mean rating scores (2.72, 2.62 respectively), showing that they were not

perceived as effective as the others (Figure 5.11). In fact, such two methods are also the least used techniques during their experience as undergraduates (Figure 5.10). The mean rating scores for the effectiveness of the methods with the highest scores (information from lecturer, discussions, sharing of experiences, case studies, brainstorming and online learning) are significantly higher than those of the lowest score (role-plays and energizers) since their 95% confidence intervals are disjoint.

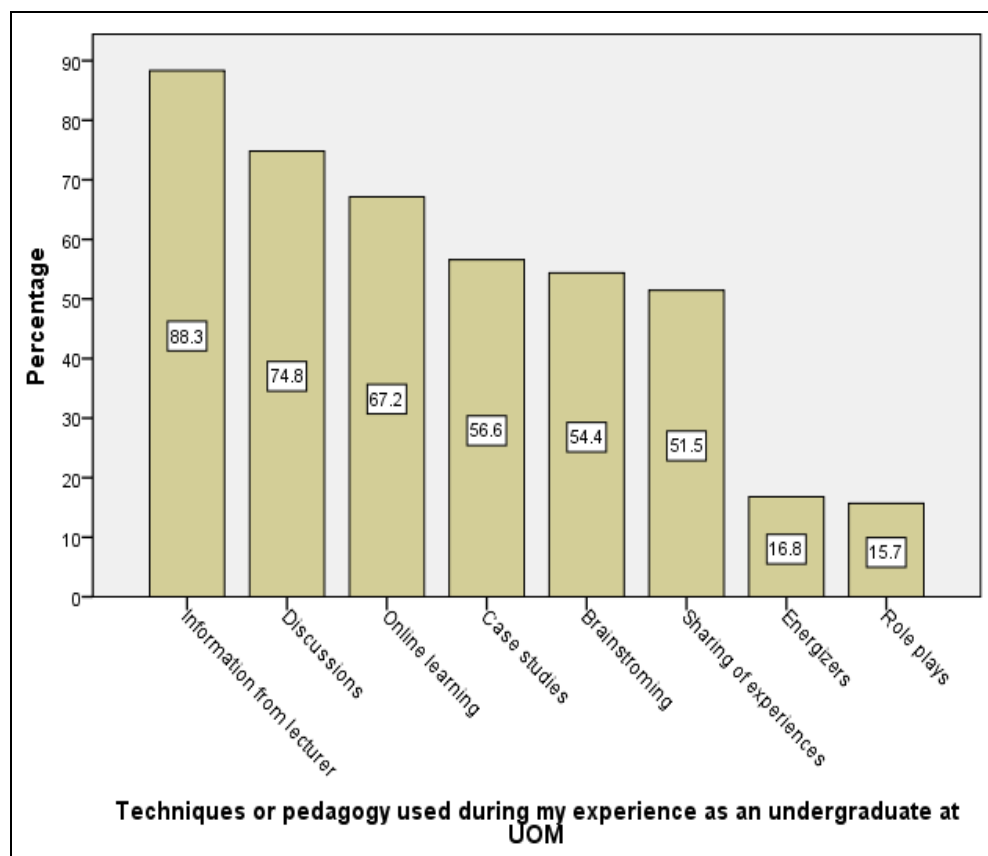
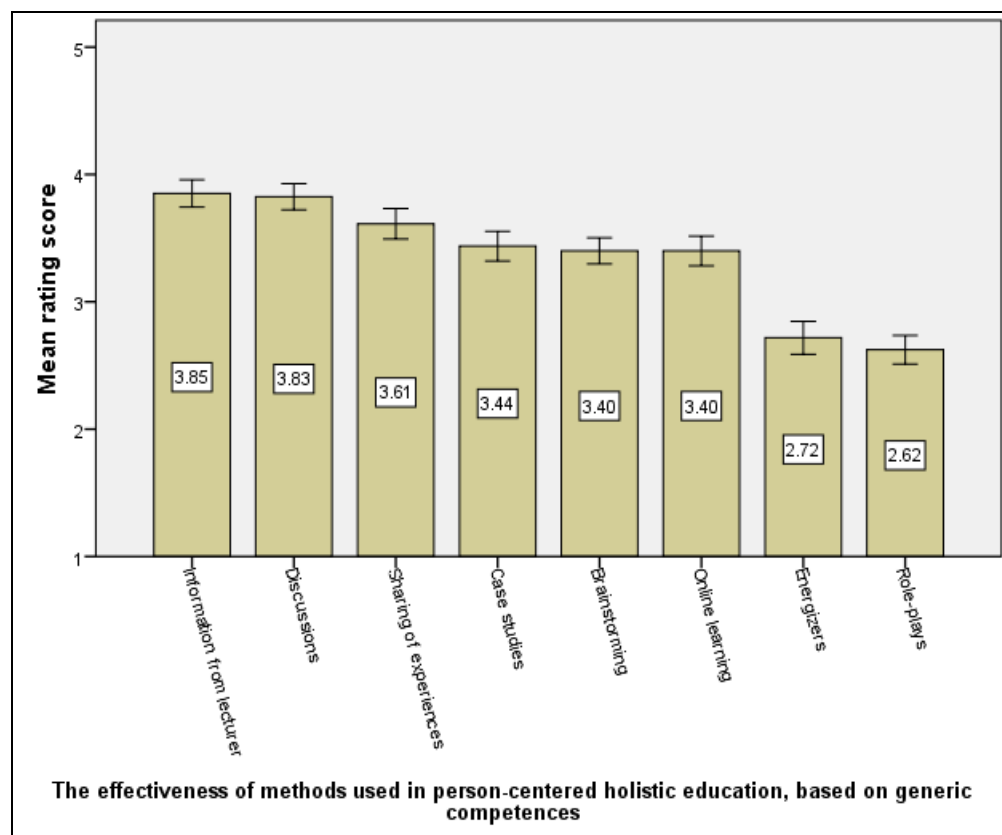


Figure 5.10: A bar graph showing the percentage use of different techniques or pedagogy



Key to scores-

Name of dimension	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Dimension D: The effectiveness of different methods in PSD practice	Students did not find the different methods as effective	Students found different methods as weakly effective	Students found different methods as moderately effective	Students found different methods as considerably effective	Students found different methods as strongly effective

Figure 5.11: An error bar graph showing the mean rating scores of the items in Dimension D as provided through the UoM undergraduate experience

5.3.5 Comparison of Percentage use of Assessment Methods

Respondents indicated that the assessment methods which were mostly used at the UoM were exam (97.06%), assignment (96.32%) and presentation (79.41%), whereas experiment (18.38%), portfolio (27.21%), fieldwork (27.21%) and project (33.09%) scored much lower (Figure 5.12).

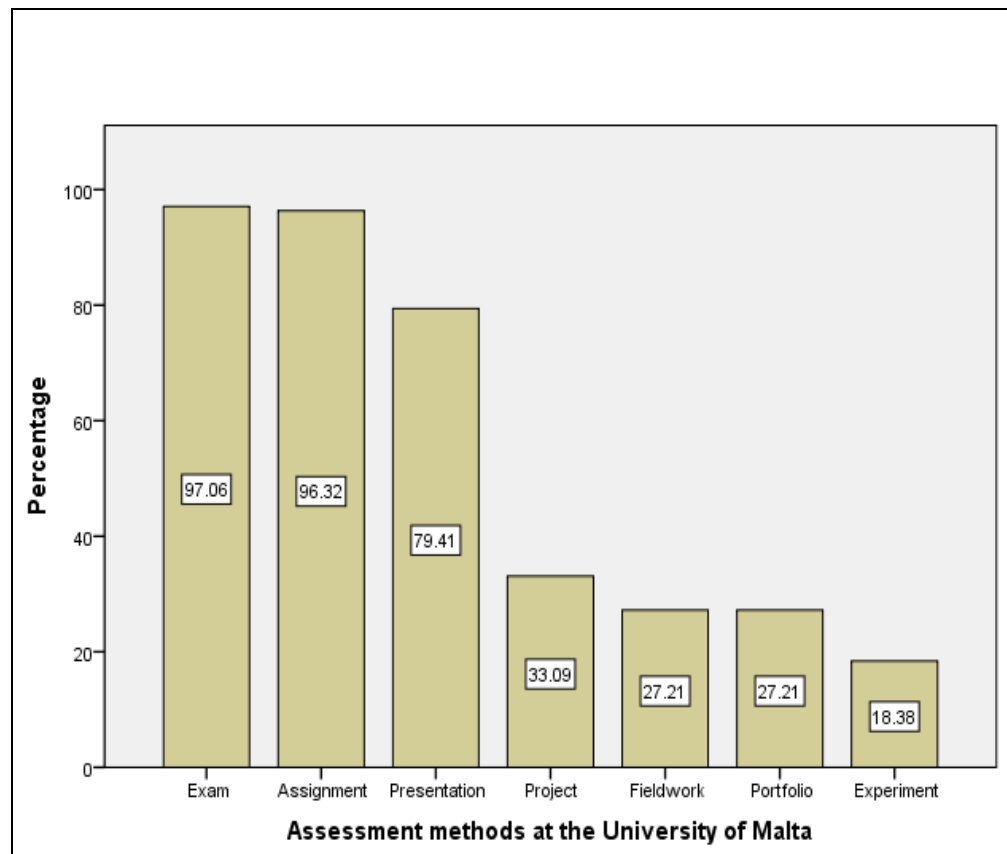


Figure 5.12: A bar graph showing the percentage use of different assessment methods

5.3.6 Comparison of the Frequency of the Perceptions about the UoM Undergraduate Experience

Overall, from a total of 277 respondents, 200 answered the open-ended question about the ways PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience helped them in their life and contributed to their holistic development. From the students' responses a number of themes were identified. The number of times a theme was specified by the students was recorded and a bar graph was produced to display graphically the frequency for each theme, using the facilities of SPSS22.

Respondents said that PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience helped them to gain knowledge (28 students), socialise (23 students) and enhance their self-esteem and self-confidence (15 students) (Figure 5.13). Fourteen students said that PSD practice did not help them in their life, but on the other hand there were also another fourteen students who argued that it enhanced their self-awareness. There were some students who perceived PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience as developing their leadership, creativity, listening, holistic development, open-mindedness, employability, assertiveness, stress management, problem-solving, communication, maturity, stronger personality, resilience, intra/interpersonal skills, time management, critical

thinking and teamwork. Few respondents also said that the experience helped them to find an employment and to become independent.

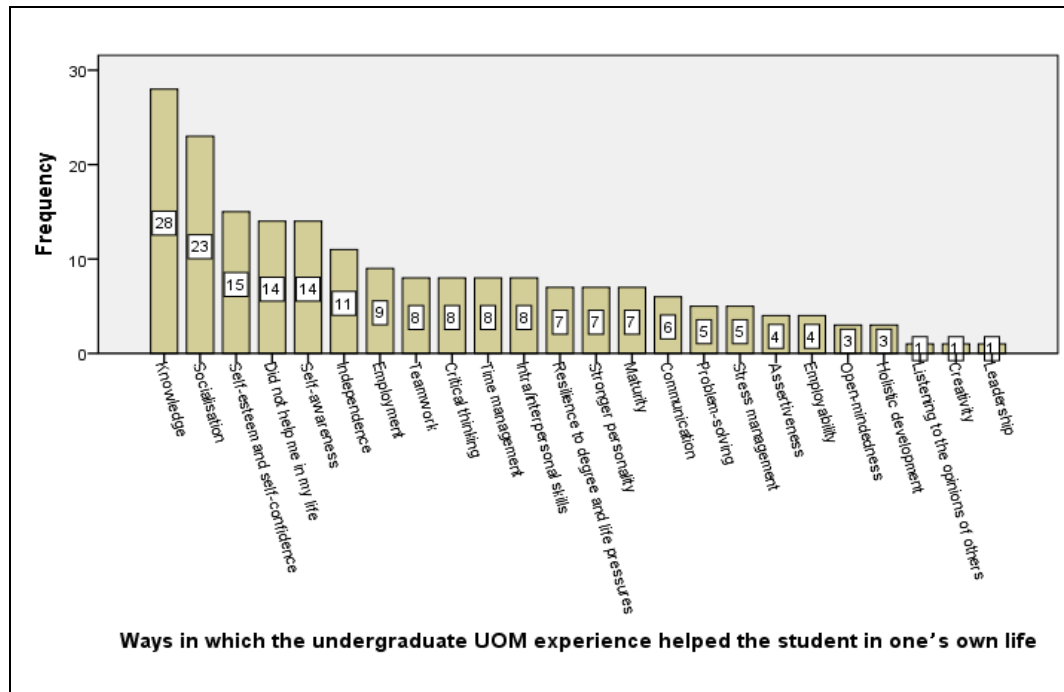


Figure 5.13: A bar graph showing the frequency of the ways that PSD practice within the undergraduate UoM experience developed them holistically

Respondents were also asked to share their suggestions as to how their undergraduate experience at the UoM can be improved. Out of 277 respondents, 150 answered this question and their answers were grouped into themes. For each theme, the frequency was computed by counting the number of times this theme was mentioned by the students. A bar graph was then produced, using the facilities of SPSS22, displaying the frequency for each theme. Among the suggestions, most respondents

claimed that they would like more individual attention from lecturers (23 students), more experiential learning (21 students), more discussion time (17 students) and time management (15 students) (Figure 5.14). There were few other students who said that they would like the UoM undergraduate experience to help them find employment and to have better student advisory service, a buddy/mentor system, less arrogant lecturers, less assignments, smaller classes, more focus on character strengths, more reliable and well-prepared lecturers, more focus on the development of self-esteem and self-confidence, less emphasis on exams, more time to participate in extra-curricular groups and the Degree Plus Programme, more focus on stress management and more person-centred education. There were also few students who would not like to change anything from the experience.

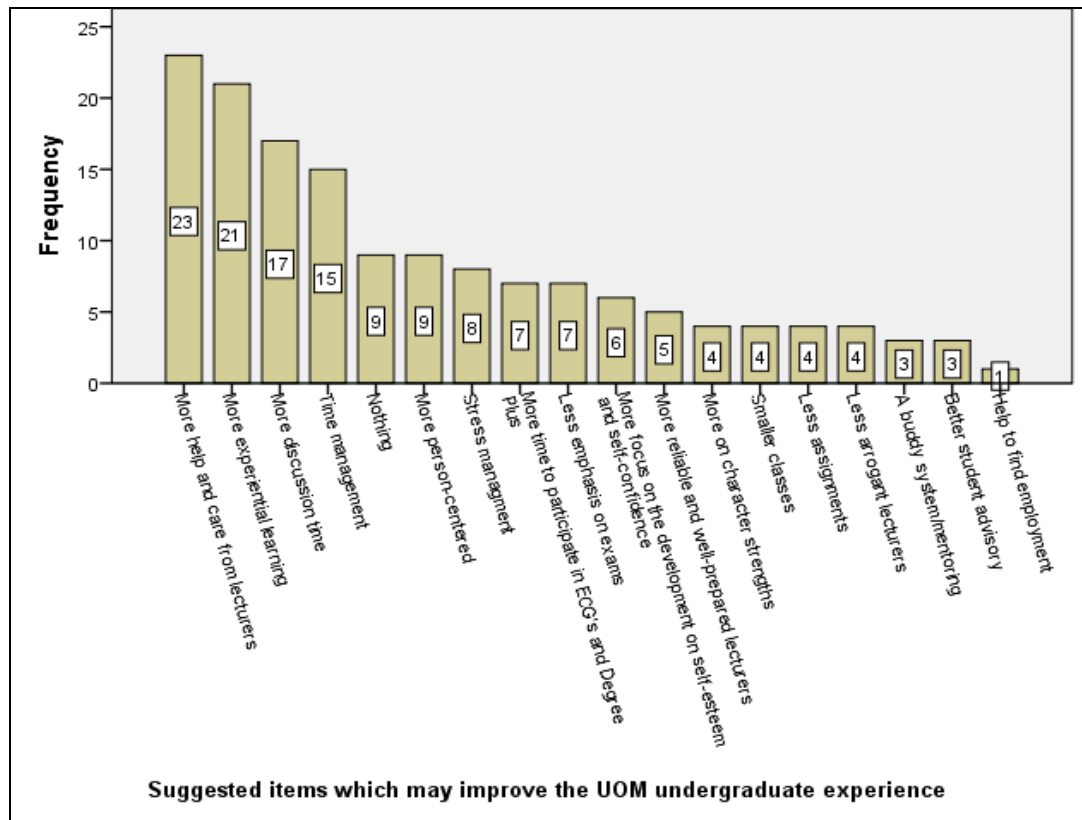


Figure 5.14: A bar graph showing the frequency of the suggestions which would help improve the undergraduate UoM experience

5.3.7 Results from the Questionnaire: Summary

Results from questionnaires presented quantitative data about the frequency of scores of each dimension. It was noted that for each dimension, highest scores ranged from 3 to 4. There were no 1 or 5 scores. This shows that most undergraduate students who answered the questionnaire, believed that the UoM undergraduate experience moderately

or considerably developed their generic competences and perceived the use of different learning methods as moderately or considerably effective. They had a neutral position about the fact that it placed them at the heart of the education system and about the fact that PSD practice developed them holistically.

When grouping the mean dimension scores by faculty cluster, it resulted that the Science faculty cluster had the highest scores in Dimensions A, B, C and D, showing that such faculty cluster provides PSD practice because it caters for Dimension A (the development of generic competence), Dimension B (the active role of the student) and Dimension D (the effectiveness of different methods). In turn, such PSD practice also seems to have developed them holistically, due to high scores in Dimension C (the holistic aims of PSD practice). The Humanities and the Civil Science faculty clusters had the lowest scores.

The mean dimension scores grouped by participation in Degree Plus showed that respondents who spent some years participating in the Degree Plus programme had the highest scores in Dimension A, B and C. This means that the Degree Plus is providing PSD practice because it is enabling Dimension A (the development of generic competence), Dimension B (the active role of the student) and Dimension C (the holistic

aims). When grouping the mean dimension scores by participation in extra-curricular groups, offered by the UoM, those who participated scored higher in all dimensions, than those who did not participate. This also shows that PSD practice is enhanced through extra-curricular groups, since they provided Dimension A (the development of generic competence), Dimension B (the active role of the student) and Dimension D (the effectiveness of different methods). In turn, such PSD practice also seems to have developed them holistically, due to high scores in Dimension C (the holistic aims of the PSD practice).

When comparing the mean rating scores between related items in dimensions, it was found that the generic competences (Dimension A) which had the highest scores were communication, ability to empathise, decision-making, teamwork, adjustment to new situations, self-acceptance and critical thinking, whereas stress management, initiative taking and ‘dealing with my feelings effectively’ had the lowest scores. Additionally, it was also found out that all items in Dimension A had a score which ranged from 2.86 to 3.71, where a score of 3 indicates that the competence was moderately developed, and 4 indicates that the competence was considerably developed. There were no items which had a score of 1 (competence was not developed) or 5 (competence was strongly

developed). This shows that most respondents believed that the UoM undergraduate experience catered for Dimension A.

With regards to Dimension B, respondents gave the highest scores to ‘focused on my capacity and my talents’, ‘encouraged me to participate’ and ‘helped me to open and self-disclose my feelings’. The items with the lowest mean rating scores were ‘focused on necessary generic competences that I require to tackle life challenges’, ‘focused and developed my character qualities’ and ‘considered my background’. Moreover, it was found out that the scores for this dimension ranged from above 2.6 to three (neutral - neither disagree nor agree).

The items with the highest mean rating scores in Dimension C were ‘helped me to deal with others effectively’, ‘helped me to develop as an individual’ and ‘helped me to have a meaning and purpose in life’ whereas those with the lowest mean rating scores were ‘helped me to feel physically healthy’, ‘facilitated the way I recognise and manage my emotions’ and ‘contributed to my personal satisfaction in relation to my career path’. Additionally, it was found that all items in Dimension C were nearly three (neutral position, therefore they neither agree nor disagree).

Respondents also said that the most methods used during the UoM undergraduate experience were ‘information from lecturer’, discussion and online learning, whereas the least methods used were role plays and energizers. Furthermore, respondents perceived the ‘information from lecturer’, discussions and ‘sharing of experiences’ as moderately or considerably effective and ‘sharing of experiences’ as in between moderately and considerably effective. Respondents also argued that the different methods in PSD practice were used and found effective.

From a comparison of the percentage use of assessment methods, it seems that exam, assignment and presentation were the most methods used throughout the UoM undergraduate experience. A comparison of the frequency of the perceptions about the UoM undergraduate experience shows that most respondents said that it helped them to gain knowledge, socialise and enhance their self-esteem and self-confidence. Few respondents said that it developed their leadership, creativity, listening, holistic development, open-mindedness, employability, assertiveness, stress management, problem-solving, communication, maturity, stronger personality, resilience, intra/interpersonal skills, time management, critical thinking and teamwork.

Finally, respondents also presented their suggestions and wished they would have more help and care from lecturers, more experiential learning, more discussion time and time management competence.

Results PART 3- The Qualitative Interviews

5.4 The Qualitative Interviews

A set of semi-structured interviews were held with the aim of analysing the results from the questionnaire in depth and to explore perceptions about the PSD practice, hence answering research questions 1, 2 and 3. As outlined in Chapter 4, the interviews were analysed through open, focused, axial and theoretical coding. In the following chapter, all the data is analysed in detail. As a result, in this section, I will provide examples of each type of coding. From the first step of the constructivist grounded theory, I had a total of approximate 1856 codes. Table 5.9 illustrates an example of the open codes generated from an excerpt of an interview held with Dr Maureen Cole (UoM).

Amanda:	These are the results about the generic competences. Which are your comments?	
Dr Maureen Cole	All of them are important. As I am saying, because we are relational beings so I think that anything that helps us to relate better and also things like decision making, self-esteem, resilience, they are about developing you as a person, are important. I think a University education should be to help you grow as a person, first, and then academically, because ... I think	CODE 20- Stressing the point that we are relational beings. CODE 21-Emphasizing that anything which develops the persons and that helps to relate better is important. CODE 22- Helping the students to grow as persons and then

	they are more important than the academic because ultimately what is important is that you become a whole person. The academic is secondary because the academic you will gain, you will learn it. I mean... but if you do not develop as a whole person, it affects all your life, it affects all spheres of your life. So ultimately if you are more integrated as a person, you are a better team worker, you have better personal relationships, you have a happier life. I think it also leads to a happier life, more satisfaction in your life, so it is a chain. There is a lot of connection.	academically is important for the UoM. CODE23-“ I think they are more important than the academic because ultimately what is important is that you become a whole person. The academic is secondary because the academic you will gain, you will learn it.” CODE24- Not developing holistically affects all spheres of one’s life. CODE 25- Having a person who is more integrated means that the person is a better team worker and would have better personal relationships. CODE 26- Having a clear connection between holistic education, leading to happier life and having life satisfaction.

Table 5.9: An example of open coding

After engaging in open coding, the next step was focused coding, where I started to identify categories and sub-categories. This was done by

reviewing all the codes and sorting them systematically, thus identifying relationships between codes. Table 5.10 lists the categories and subcategories that emerged out of the focused coding.

CATEGORY 1	Malta as a context for the research study
Sub-categories	a. Smallness of the islands b. Limited natural resources c. Reliance on human agency d. The delayed transition to adulthood and delayed independence e. The sense of fear for change and the insular, protective Maltese environment f. The sense of free entitlement to everything
CATEGORY 2	Facilitating factors for PSD practice in Malta
Sub-categories	a. Policies that promote the PSD practice in Malta b. PSD as a compulsory curricular subject in Maltese primary and secondary schools c. Different opportunities for the PSD practice in Malta
CATEGORY 3	Obstructing factors for PSD practice in Malta
Sub-categories	a. Too academic oriented system b. Focus on marks and attainment c. Traditional education d. Large number of students per class e. Lack of experience from teachers/lecturers to, at least, balance the traditional approach and the person-centred approach f. Inadequate room set-up
CATEGORY 4	Modes of provision of PSD practice at the UoM
Sub-categories	a. Degree Plus, Extra-curricular groups, Voluntary work and ERASMUS b. Embedded mode c. Modular mode d. Mixed-method mode
CATEGORY 5	The varying levels of generic competences (Dimension A), the active role of the student (Dimension B), and the use of different effective learning methods (Dimension D) within the undergraduate experience
CATEGORY 6	Aspects which facilitated PSD practice within the undergraduate experience
Sub-categories	a. The positive approach of the educators

	b. A constructive, progressive and humanistic pedagogy c. The use of different effective learning methods d. The existence of small groups and circle time format e. A focus on personal aspects f. A focus on the students' life challenges g. A focus on the students' course challenges h. A formative assessment
CATEGORY7	Aspects which hindered PSD practice within the undergraduate experience
Sub-categories	a. A traditional pre-tertiary education b. The negative approach of the educators c. The students' sense of fear and lack of confidence in leaving the comfort zone d. Reluctance from students to engage in the PSD practice e. A socialisation process that makes students believe that the best approach is the traditional, banking education f. "University as a reflection of society" g. A University with an elitist top-down approach h. The predominant use of information-giving i. Lack of pedagogical training of lecturers j. School provenance k. University courses which are knowledge-loaded l. Summative assessment m. Large number of students
CATEGORY 8	The holistic aims of PSD practice within the UoM undergraduate experience
SUB-CATEGORIES	a. PSD practice for well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability b. Hindering PSD practice for holistic aims

Table 5.10: List of categories and sub-categories

Axial coding helped me to identify the conditions (causal, intervening and contextual), the action and the consequences. Figure 5.15 indicates the axial coding used, which comprises all the resultant categories and sub-categories. Finally, different substantive codes were elicited. All these will be presented in the next chapter, dealing with the analysis of the results.

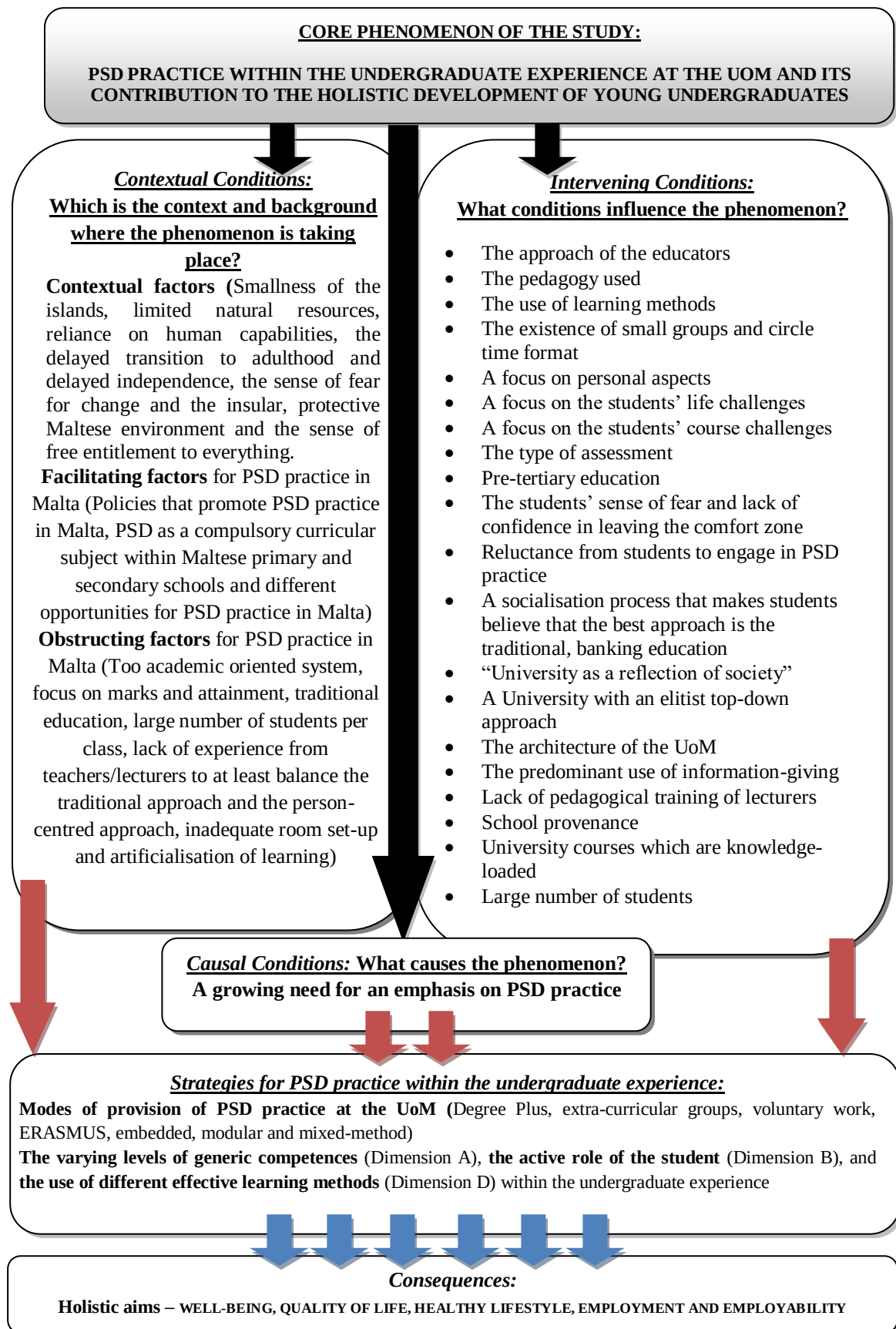


Figure 5.15: Axial coding

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the results of the research methods, presented as three separate but related studies. Results will be analysed in depth in the following chapter where I explore all the results found in Parts 1, 2 and 3 and present different themes that answer the three research questions. In this way, I generate substantive theories, which is the ultimate goal of the constructivist grounded theory.

Chapter 6: Analysis of Results - The Maltese Context for PSD Practice

6.1 Introduction

The analysis of the data was held constantly throughout the research process. Grounded theory methodology encourages the use of memos thus enhancing the researcher to write up any ideas about the emergent data (Urquhart, 2013). Memos gave me the chance to reflect on the results, to keep a record of my thoughts, to be reflexive and to plan different steps in the research (Figure 1.1, Chapter 1). In this way, data was analysed after each research step. Since the study followed a grounded theory methodology, data elicited from the interviews (summarised and presented in categories and subcategories - Table 5.10 - page 234), the internet search (mapping exercise - presented in Part 1 of the Results), the questionnaire (statistical data - presented in Part 2 of the Results), and the existent literature (Chapters 2 and 3) was compared and contrasted. Using these results, I created the following four main themes:

THEME A: The Maltese context for PSD practice

THEME B: The traditional, academic Maltese Education System that hinders PSD practice

THEME C: Opportunities for PSD practice at the University of Malta

THEME D: PSD practice at the University of Malta for holistic aims

Themes A and B answer research question 1 about the perceptions of stakeholders regarding Personal and Social Development (PSD) practice in

Malta. Theme C answers research question 2 about the way the PSD practice is included within the undergraduate degrees at the University of Malta (UoM). Theme D answers research question 3 about the link between PSD practice and holistic aims.

Throughout the chapter, I make reference to excerpts from the semi-structured interviews. All names of students are fictitious to protect the identity of the interviewees, whereas the names of the other interviewees are not, because their names and roles are important for the analysis. In order to facilitate comparisons across faculties, I slightly amended the grouping used by UoM researchers Prof. Carmel Cefai and Prof Liberato Camilleri in their research held in 2009. In this way, the 14 faculties were grouped in four clusters:

- Cluster 1 - Sciences including Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, Faculty of Dental Surgery and Faculty of Science.
- Cluster 2 - Social Sciences including Faculty of Laws, Faculty for Social Well-Being, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy and Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences.

- Cluster 3 - Humanities including Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Theology.
- Cluster 4 - Civil Sciences including Faculty for the Built Environment, Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Information and Communication Technology.

6.2: The Maltese Context for PSD practice

Malta is a small island state (Sultana, 1997a; Sultana & Baldacchino, 1994; Borg & Mayo, 2006a; Pisani, 2012) predominantly Roman Catholic (Borg & Mayo, 2006a) with limited natural resources, a surface area of 316 km², a resident population of around 400, 000 (National Statistics Office, 2010; Pisani, 2012; Sultana & Baldacchino, 1994) located in the Mediterranean region which is surrounded by the African, Asian and European continents. It was a common argument, when discussing the perceptions of interviewees about PSD practice in Malta, that the Maltese context presents a particular scenario for this practice. This chapter will highlight this specific context, which facilitates, and at the same time, hinders PSD practice in Malta, and also at the UoM.

6.2.1 The Smallness of the Islands, the Limited Natural Resources and the Reliance on Human Capabilities

The smallness of the islands and the limited natural resources seem to have a direct influence on the provision of PSD practice in Malta. Mr Joseph Farrugia (Malta Employers Association) said that we “need to ensure that we work hard especially for a country that is small, no resources. It makes it all more essential to understand that whatever we have, we really have to work hard for it”. Several interviewees claimed that the smallness of the islands and the limited natural resources put stress on Maltese citizens to develop their human capabilities, hence it makes it important to have an education system based on PSD practice.

The National Employment Policy in Malta (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014b) shows that mainstream economic theory links economic growth to the country’s extent of investment in human capability, apart from physical capital in terms of productive assets and technology. As a result, the investment in human capabilities, through holistic education (or as called in this thesis ‘PSD practice’) remains an important objective for Malta’s economy, given also that it is a small state that has to compete with other much larger countries. Since Malta has lack of natural resources (Sultana, 1997a; Borg & Mayo, 2006a), and relies

mainly on the service industry, there is an urgent quest for an investment in human resources. Additionally,

The scale of current economic turmoil, social changes, increased globalization, and demographic changes leading to an ageing population, all require a future workforce with a different portfolio of knowledge and skills and a new approach to education policy as an integral part of medium to long term planning to respond to these changes (Sciberras, 2009, p. 14).

The need for human capital for the country's economy was recognised by several interviewees and is very much influenced by the neo-liberal approach, where "public goods (like education) are converted into consumption goods as the ideology of the marketplace takes hold" (Borg & Mayo, 2006b, p. 2). Bartlett and LeGrand (1993) warn that if this happens, the system would be 'producing' efficient students who are suitable for the world of work. In his semi-structured interview, Mr Ian Mifsud from the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education sustained that:

Economy is always lying in all the arguments. It might not be explicitly stated but it will always be like that. It would be naïve for us not to acknowledge that we need to always take it in consideration... when discussing education policy issues, you need to keep always clearly in front of you what are your values and what ought to be the consensual values with regards to education, so it's all about those three aims (lifelong learning, employability and active citizenship) to keep them very clear in your mind, but at the same time you have to understand that without a sound economy, all of these will not exist. In societies where there aren't sound economies, there is no discourse about active citizenship and lifelong learning because the basic necessity has been taken away. This goes back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. If you don't have the natural physiological needs, you cannot think of other needs. And economy addresses the physiological needs because it gives security, it gives safety.

With this economical discourse²², the individual is seen as a human capital necessary to satisfy the needs of the economy. In this way, inspired by this discourse which is also affecting Malta, education in general focuses on utilitarian aims rather than the well-being, healthy lifestyle and quality of life of every individual student, thus failing to provide a proper PSD practice. At the same time, the Maltese Ministry of Education and Employment (2012) warns that if this happens it may result in confusing priorities which are detrimental to persons, institutions and society. Despite this neo-liberal discourse, the aims of the Maltese National Curriculum Framework 2012 (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012), the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014a) and the Respect for All Framework (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014c) stress the importance of addressing the holistic needs of each individual student and the importance of the active role of the student. This shows that there is a discrepancy in the vision presented in the local education policy documents and the actual practice. Such discrepancy was even confirmed by the Minister for Education and Employment during his interview. From the interviews, it also resulted that despite having the smallness of the islands, the limited natural resources and the reliance on human

²² European Commission, 2005; Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, 2011; Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012; Commission of the European Communities, 2007; European Commission, 2010 a, b, c; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013; Knight & Yorke, 2002, 2006; Birdwell, Grist & Margo, 2011.

capabilities, which demand the Maltese citizens to have the appropriate education system which equips students with the necessary generic competences for economical purposes, inspired also by current trends of globalization and neo-liberal discourse, there are local policies which stress the fact that it should not be linked only to economy but to holistic aims. This discrepancy was even felt by interviewed UoM students who argued that in practice the focus of their course was more on employment and employability rather than holistic needs, thus failing to provide a proper PSD practice and failing to reach the holistic aims mentioned in the mission statement of the UoM (Section 5.2, page 176) and the intended holistic aims presented in the course description of the academic content (Table 5.1, page 185). In fact, results from the histogram showing the aims of PSD practice (Figure 5.5, page 200), indicate that students neither agreed nor disagreed about the holistic aims of the undergraduate experience. It was evident that they felt confused about the aims because, very often it resulted that, even though UoM student interviewees had a PSD practice which focuses on Dimensions A, B and D²³ of the PSD Scale (Table 5.2, page 192), it was not related to their holistic well-being, quality of life and healthy lifestyle.

²³ Dimension A- The development of generic competences, Dimension B- The active role of the student and Dimension D- The effectiveness of the methods.

In summary, the particular context seems to be leading towards the need of PSD practice for utilitarian purposes. On the other hand, policy documents show that this approach should be challenged and replaced by holistic aims.

6.2.2 The Delayed Transition to Adulthood and Delayed Independence, the Sense of Fear for Change, the Insularity of the Islands and the Sense of Free Entitlement

A phenomenon which is particular to the Maltese context is that of young people who have a delayed transition to adulthood and who tend to live longer with their parents. This was stated by the Council of Europe, Directorate of Youth and Sport in 2005 and confirmed by interviewees in this research. This prolonged dependence on the family, the protective family environment coupled with the insular Maltese context (Mr Clyde Caruana, Employment Training Corporation) seem to lead certain young people to be dependent, to be pampered, to resist any change and to be reluctant to be involved in new experiences and activities. In fact, despite having a series of available University extra-curricular activities that are intended to address the personal and social dimension of the students (Figure 5.1 - page 177), Table 5.7 (page 208) indicates that not all students at the UoM were involved in extra-curricular groups. In addition, few

interviewees from the UoM said that they participated in Degree Plus and that they experienced ERASMUS. Prof Carmel Borg said that in his past experience as a Dean of the Faculty of Education at the UoM, he used to note that few students took up the opportunity of ERASMUS. Despite having different students who sustained that the ERASMUS experience gave them an opportunity to explore other methodologies used at Universities abroad that do not rely solely on the traditional approach, and even though they said that they found the experience as enriching, it seems that this opportunity is not taken up by all students. Prof. Carmel Borg explained that:

As Dean I have signed a number of them [agreements for ERASMUS experiences] and unfortunately there are very few who take such opportunities... it has to do with the student himself or herself, fear of the unknown, fear of outer spaces, lack of confidence in leaving this little island and engaging in elsewhere ... As I said fear of space, fear of freedom and lack of confidence in leaving the comfort zone and going elsewhere where there are a number of unknowns. That is very unfortunate. And that explains the deficit between international students coming in and Maltese students going out. If you ask the International office they readily tell you that there is a huge deficit between the numbers coming in and the numbers going out. I know as a former Dean that I have signed a number of agreements and mostly not taken by the students.

Prof. Borg is relating the fact that few UoM students go on ERASMUS to the fear of unknown and the lack of confidence in leaving this little island. Other interviewees linked this to the fact that young people tend to live

longer with parents than other young people living in a country abroad and the fact that they are living in a small island within a quite protective and insular environment (Mr Clyde Caruana), hence being less independent. All these seem to be discouraging UoM students to engage in the ERASMUS experience and in other activities which demand their active participation (a key element in the PSD Scale - Table 5.2 - page 192). At the same time, the fact that few students participate in this experience may show that students prefer attending lectures, having information and succeeding in getting a qualification. Similarly, this might also explain the fact that the UoM student respondents of the questionnaire felt that the information from lecturer was the most method used and it was also the most effective (Figure 5.10 - page 218 and Figure 5.11 - page 219). Mr Joseph Farrugia (Malta Employers Association) related this to the sense of entitlement to everything that is present in Maltese youths, resulting in taking education for granted and in working less hard to develop their generic competences because they might feel that they are entitled to free education, employment and well-being. In turn, different education stakeholders, who were interviewed, argued that they might be less willing to have an active role in learning, to engage in different learning methods and to invest in their generic competences, because they might take it for-granted, they might feel that nothing will change if they do otherwise, and they would still obtain their formal qualification. This might explain the lack of participation in extra-curricular groups (Table 5.7 - page 208),

Degree Plus and other activities which are not compulsory and which provide an effective PSD practice. In this case, despite having the UoM offering a range of activities that are aimed to focus on the personal and social dimension of the individual (Section 5.2.2, page 186 & Section 5.2.3, page 187), young people still focus more on obtaining the certificates, through traditional methods of education, instead of investing in their holistic development.

The smallness of the islands, the limited natural resources and the reliance on human capabilities all seem to lead to the need for PSD practice in Malta, whereas the delayed transition to adulthood and delayed independence, the sense of fear for change as well as the insular protective Maltese environment and the sense of free entitlement to everything seem to limit PSD practice in Malta. Interviewees sustained that this is present throughout the entire education system and persists even at the UoM because the University is “a reflection of society” (Dr Vincent Cassar), indicating that the context of PSD practice in Malta is very important to be considered, hence one of the main themes in the analysis chapter tackles such a context. Even though, as presented earlier in this chapter, there is this need for an investment in PSD practice, due to the fact that Malta is small and is deprived from natural resources; even though local education policy documents stress the need for individuals to be fully equipped with

all generic competences required both for economic competition and also for their well-being, quality of life and healthy lifestyle, and even though, in principle, the UoM intends to provide a PSD practice (Figure 5.1, page 177; Section 5.2.2, page 186; Section 5.2.3, page 187) results from interviews and questionnaire show that the Maltese Education System is very traditional and very often lacks the dimensions of the PSD practice. In addition, UoM student respondents were not sure about their active role and about the holistic aims of their undergraduate experience. Some interviewees explained this by saying that it is the result of the students' sense of fear, lack of confidence in leaving the comfort zone so as to participate and engage in different activities and the reluctance from students to engage in PSD practice, all of which seem to be a characteristic of the Maltese students in general throughout all the Maltese Education System, which continues to persist even at a tertiary level. Dr Vincent Cassar sustained that:

The UoM is nothing else but a reflection of society. Whatever happens here is a reflection of society. I think the UoM, again ... is becoming a very impersonal experience where students are just here to go for the lecture and get a degree and get their credit. They have a nice transcript, you sign it and that's it. As far as I see, in the majority of the students, there isn't that sense for being inquisitive, for wanting to debate, for wanting to experiment with things.

In this excerpt, Dr Cassar mentioned the lack of willingness of students to engage and participate. Nevertheless, despite having these

contextual challenges to PSD practice, UoM interviewees said that, although it was not enough, throughout the entire Maltese Education System there were positive existing practices of PSD consisting of all the four dimensions in the PSD Scale (Table 5.2 - page 192). These were the Personal and Social Development (PSD) as a compulsory subject in Maltese primary and secondary schools and the different opportunities for PSD practice in different post-secondary and tertiary education institutions.

6.2.3 Personal and Social Development (PSD) as a Compulsory Curricular Subject in Maltese Primary and Secondary Schools

PSD practice was enhanced in the late 1980's with the introduction of the subject Lifeskills (which was also known as Personal and Social Education - PSE, Personal and Social Development - PSD and nowadays is known as Personal, Social and Career Development - PSCD) in the Maltese Education System. The different nomenclatures will be used interchangeably to refer to the same curricular subject, as it was and is still used in specific periods along the years.

The PSD subject has been a timetabled subject in the Maltese Islands for the past 25 years (Falzon & Muscat, 2009; Sultana 1992a). Different interviewees (Prof. Alex Torpiano, Lucia, Martha, Therese, Margot,

Tony and Marlene) mentioned the PSD subject in the primary and secondary school years, as facilitating the personal and social development and as consisting of the four dimensions in the PSD Scale (Table 5.2 - page 192)²⁴. In the following paragraphs, I give a brief description of the origins and the content of such a subject. Falzon and Muscat (2009) argue that the origin of the PSD subject is unique. In Malta, it started as a concern for the health and well-being of young people, hence it served as a “panacea for various ills” (Sultana, 1997b, p. 248). “Lifeskills are personally responsible sequences of choices in specific psychological skills areas conducive to mental wellness. People require a repertoire of lifeskills according to their developmental tasks and specific problems of living” (Nelson-Jones, 1991, p. 13). At the beginning, educational programmes were based on the concepts and teaching materials of Button (1974), Hopson and Scally (1981) and Nelson-Jones (1991). The “race for credentials” (Sultana, 1992a) focusing solely on the academic content of the curriculum inspired Mr Joe Sammut, who at that time was the Educational Officer of Guidance and Counselling, to propose to the Education Authorities the introduction of PSE subject in government schools (Muscat, 2009). As a result, Personal and Social Education, was introduced as a compulsory subject in Forms 1 and 2, in all state schools in 1988. The subject was and is still

²⁴ Dimension A-The development of generic competences, Dimension B-The active role of the student, Dimension C-The holistic aims and Dimension D- The effectiveness of the methods.

different from other curricular subjects because “Personal and Social Education is psychologically based, and is not aimed at addressing the content but rather at emphasizing individual development through a change in skills and attitudes” (Giordmaina, 2000, p. 193).

In 2011, there was the revision of the PSCD syllabus (Table 6.1) which fits into the new National Curriculum Framework (Falzon & Muscat, 2009). When analysing these curriculum units, it is easily noted that they aim to tackle Dimension A of the PSD Scale (Table 5.2 - page 192) about the development of generic competences. The PSD subject is taught in Maltese primary and secondary schools in a circle setting. Literature (Camilleri et al., 2012) shows that the Maltese PSD circle preceded the magic circle philosophy which was initially proposed by White (1999 in White 2009) and was popular in the 1990’s in the UK. “Circle time is a structured, distinctive and creative form of group work, where pupils and the group facilitator sit together in a circle” (Smith, 2004, p.8). The geometric configuration of the circle facilitates the interaction between members (Tew, Read & Potter, 2007) and the connectedness (Roffey, 2006; Noble & McGrath, 2008). This setting creates a safe (Curry & Bromfield, 1994), non-judgmental, trusting (Smith, 2004) and empowering (White, 1999 in White, 2009) milieu in which there is an opportunity for communication skills (Barton, Chen, Reichow & Wolery,

2011), self-awareness, social interaction with the others (Ballard, 1982), productivity, problem-solving, action planning (Tew et al., 2007) and conflict management (White, 1999, in White 2009). This is done through a series of activities to promote positive relations within the group (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). Examples are free-thinking activities, discussions, journals, poetry, drama, quizzes and simulation games (Smith, 2004).

Year (Y)	Age (in years)	Curriculum units
1-6	5-10	Group building Myself Relationships Health and safety Closure
7	11	Getting to know my new school environment and peers Respecting ourselves and others All about me Roles and Responsibilities within different social contexts Understanding growing up changes and making responsible choices Making good use of my time
8	12	Establishing a positive environment All about me Promoting the use of social skills Roles and Responsibilities within the different social contexts Understanding growing up changes Making responsibly choices
9	13	Understanding myself within a social context Explore similarities and differences between people Reflecting on one's lifestyle choices Understanding the importance of career planning Understanding growing up changes and making responsible choices Understanding how one can contribute to the well-being of the community
10	14	Establishing relationships through positive communication Roles and responsibilities within relationships Understanding growing up changes and making responsible choices Understanding the importance of career planning Reflecting on one's lifestyle choices Understanding myself within a social context
11	15	Understanding how one can contribute to the well-being of the community Understanding the importance of career planning Establishing healthy relationships through positive behaviour Understanding growing up changes and making responsible choices

Table 6.1: Units in the PSCD syllabus (Adapted from: Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2004, 2005a; Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, 2012a, b, 2014a, b, c)

Dweck (1999) argues that current educational practices and values, reinforce and reward the dominance of performance goals at the expense of learning. On the other hand, during the PSD subject the focus is more on learning goals rather than performance goals. As a result, the subject makes use of Dimension B of the PSD Scale (Table 5.2 - page 192) which is about the active role of students and Dimension D that is about the use of different effective learning methods.

Literature indicates that there is positive feedback from students about the PSD subject. In 2011, a PSD review was held to obtain feedback from students attending primary and secondary schools in the Maltese Islands about the effectiveness of PSD in terms of work and quality of life. Students reading for a Post-Graduate Certificate (PGCE) in PSD at the UoM worked on this review within remits put forward by the Directorate of Quality Assurance within the Ministry of Education. Questionnaires were used as the research tool. Pairs or triads of this cohort researched different school years. Gatt and Micallef (2011) focused on 637 Year 4 and Year 5 primary school students who have PSD as a timetabled subject at school. Results show that these primary school students do not consider PSD as a waste of time and enjoy interactive activities. Borg, Said and Zahra (2011) examined the perspectives of 659 Year 6 students. Their research findings evidence that students appreciate interactive activities

and most of them claim that PSD helps them to understand the importance of treating all people with respect. Debono and Frendo (2011) note that a large number of Form 1 and 2 students argue that PSD is not a waste of time and that the PSD teacher is responsible for the needs of the students. Camilleri and Caruana (2011) research on 1241 third and fourth formers, shows that most participants from this cohort state that PSD helps them understand the importance of equality, issues related to sexuality and the way drugs affect one's life. Fifth formers (Bartolo & Dutton, 2011) perceive the usefulness of topics such as career education, sexuality, relationships and friendship, all of which scored highest among a variety of topics. Similarly, Muscat (2006) did a professional evaluation of the PSD programme in the first three years of secondary school (2003-2006). Through a questionnaire answered by 407 students and interviews with 30 students, she found out that students enjoy PSD, find it useful, and empowering, especially since it is based upon their experiences. Finally, they claim that greater investment in PSD is required. As a result, these studies indicate positive results in relation to the Lifeskills/PSE/PSD/ PSCD subject. They also show that the PSD subject comprises all the dimensions of the PSD Scale (Table 5.2 - page 192). As explained before, the PSD subject is only offered to primary and secondary school students. Results from the interviews show that the PSD subject is providing an opportunity to children and young people to experience one type of PSD practice. The presence of such a subject seems to be promoting and

facilitating PSD practice in Malta. This is because it was mentioned by different interviewees, as the subject that provided space for them to focus on their personal and social development. Besides the PSD subject, student interviewees argued that they had other positive opportunities for PSD practice at primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary level.

6.2.4 Different Opportunities for PSD Practice in Malta

After the introduction of the PSE subject (nowadays called PSCD in state schools) in late 1980's and after the publication of the 'National Minimum Curriculum' in 1999 (Ministry of Education), 'For All Children to Succeed' (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005b), the new 'National Curriculum Framework' (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012), the 'Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024' (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014a) and the 'Respect for All Framework' (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014c), which are in line with PSD practice, the Maltese Education System continued to move more towards the provision of a more holistic education. As explained by different interviewees like Mr George Borg and Mr Ian Mifsud, who are both Director General regulating the Maltese Education System, the introduction of structures like the learning zones

and learning support centres²⁵, nurture groups²⁶ and individualized alternative learning programmes²⁷ are, in principle, aimed at providing a specific programme catering for the specific personal and social developmental needs of each student. Recently, students at primary and secondary school level are offered student services, comprising services from professionals like youth workers, counsellors, psychotherapists, career advisors, school psychologists and anti-substance abuse, anti-child abuse and anti-bullying professionals. In addition, there are also the guidance services that provide career and personal help. Data from interviews shows that in principle, all these services facilitate PSD practice in Malta because they provide the space for students to work on their personal and social dimension through the development of generic competences (Dimension A of the PSD Scale - Table 5.2 - page 192), the active role of the student (Dimension B of the PSD Scale), the holistic aims (Dimension C of the PSD Scale) and the effective learning methods (Dimension D of the PSD Scale).

²⁵ Centres that cater for students with socio-emotional and behavioural difficulties where students are given training in generic competences like emotional literacy.

²⁶ Intervention groups at primary schools that target specific behavioural problems.

²⁷ Tailor-made programmes for Year 11 students who do not apply to sit for the Ordinary Level examinations.

As indicated in previous sections and clearly highlighted by Mr Ian Mifsud, from the Ministry for Education and Employment in Malta, policies regulating the Maltese Education System stress the importance of PSD practice which is not based only on domain specific competences but on generic competences. From interviews with final year undergraduate students (Appendix 2), it seems that in primary and secondary schools there are many opportunities where PSD practice is enhanced. Amongst the range of opportunities that interviewees mentioned, there were: concerts and educational talks (Lucia), nurture groups and learning zones (Martha), discussions (Martha, Therese and Margot), the Core Curriculum Programme²⁸, the Alternative Learning Programme, inclusion measures (Mr George Borg), Physical Education (Therese and Jonathan), guidance and counselling services (Raelene and Margot), elections (Prof. Alex Torpiano), school radio (Prof. Alex Torpiano), drama (Marlene, Tony and Raelene), music (Marlene) and choir (Tony).

After presenting the way PSD practice is offered in primary and secondary school levels, I am now going to analyse such practice in state and state-dependent institutions in Malta. As part of the different opportunities for PSD practice in Malta, interviewees (Appendix 1) mentioned the way PSD practice is implemented at post-secondary and

²⁸ Specialised programme in English, Maltese, Maths and Science for low achievers.

tertiary education institutions. Despite presenting all these opportunities, very often interviewees sustained that these were not enough and that in general the Maltese Education System is still very traditional and focuses more on the attainment of qualifications. Such situation seems to get worse due to the insular, protective Maltese context that tends to limit the active role of the students.

6.2.4.1 PSD practice at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology.

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) was established by public deed of the 11th August, 2000 with the aim of implementing the mission to provide studies and training in the vocational and professional education sectors (Education Act Cap. 327, Laws of Malta) with an international dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy (Malta Qualifications Council, 2010). MCAST is made up of eleven Institutes: Agribusiness, Applied Science, Art and Design, Building and Construction Engineering, Business and Commerce, Community Services, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Information and Communication Technology, Maritime, Mechanical Engineering and Gozo Centre.

After the establishment of MCAST in 2001, stakeholders responsible for its direction believed more that it should have student services and it should have an education which is person-centred, holistic and based on generic competences (information from the interview held with Mr John Bartolo). An example is the specific subject named Personal Development (PD) which is offered to students following Levels 1, 2, 3 courses and the Pathway to Independent Living Programme. The content of the PD at MCAST is based on the ‘Descriptors of Key Competences in the National Qualifications Framework’ (Malta Qualifications Council, 2007). When considering the eight key competences, PD at MCAST lies mostly within the social and civic strand stressing the development of the personal, interpersonal, intercultural, social and civic dimensions which all equip individuals to participate effectively in social and working life (Ibid.).

During his interview, Mr John Bartolo explained how PSD practice is offered at MCAST. In 2009-2010, MCAST introduced PD in Level 2 courses, tackling communication, working with others, problem-solving, self-management and civic competences. The year after, it was included in Vocational Educational Training (VET) Level 1 courses by focusing on health, safety and civic generic competences, effective learning strategies, entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression. In 2011-2012, the PD was included in VET Level 3 courses, in which students have the opportunity to reflect on communication skills, working with others,

problem-solving, self-management as well as social and civic generic competences. Other topics for VET Level 3 courses include the physical world, the living world, health and safety as well as entrepreneurship. In VET levels 1 and 2, the entrepreneurship together with the cultural awareness and expression generic competences are facilitated through seminars.

Students following VET Level 1 courses are asked to do 10 hours voluntary or community work followed by a presentation in class about their experience, on which they are assessed on the acquisition of skills and their communication abilities rather than about their presentation. From 2011-2012, students undertaking VET Level 2 courses started to have 15 hours of community or voluntary work. In 2007, MCAST launched the Pathway to Independent Living Programme, which is a 2 year course helping students with mild to moderate disabilities or learning difficulties to acquire skills for independent living particularly those required to gain and maintain employment. This includes PD focusing on personal, social, health, citizenship, community skills, leisure, daily living skills and work related learning.

Data from interviews indicate that besides the PD subject in certain courses, which provides Dimension A of the PSD Scale (the development

of generic competences - Table 5.2 -page 192), Dimension B (the active role of the students), Dimension C (the holistic aims) and Dimension D (the effective learning methods), MCAST offers services like guidance and counselling, career advice and youth work, which make the MCAST education experience more person-centred and holistic. Mr John Bartolo also said that the extra-curricular activities and voluntary work are promoted throughout the entire courses. All these make up PSD practice at MCAST.

6.2.4.2 PSD practice at the Institute of Tourism Studies.

The ITS is regulated by Chapter 327 of the Education Act 2010. Article 132 states that:

The Minister shall ensure the existence of an institution to provide courses and programmes of education and training, including practical and work experience, at the levels of further and higher education, that lead to recognised qualifications in trades, skills, and professions as may be necessary in the tourism, restaurants and the catering industry and services, and all this in a curricular framework of lifelong learning and the holistic development of the person (Part XI, Article 132, Education Act Cap. 327, Laws of Malta, p. 73).

The ITS provides tertiary, higher, vocational education in the field of tourism studies and offers courses at different levels: Foundation,

Certificate, Diploma and Higher Diploma as well as apprenticeships (Malta Qualifications Council, 2010). From the start of the ITS in 1987, there was always a focus on PSD practice. Reasons for this were stated during the interview with Mr Adrian Mamo, when saying that:

It is useless for me to study knowledge and theory related to management for example and then not knowing how to carry out a presentation and the way I present myself in front of an audience or the way I communicate. So I think it has to be a whole package but also from experience with direct contact from people from industry. This is what they are looking for nowadays rather than the technical skills which are important but (through training) can be easily built in house. We are looking for people with the right attitude, with the right initiative, with an innovative approach and a creative approach.

From the internet search and even from data from the interview, it is noted that although different courses at the ITS are aimed to develop interpersonal, leadership, communication, team-work, problem-solving and creativity generic competences (Institute of Tourism Studies, 2011), thus aimed to enhance Dimension A of the PSD Scale (Table 5.2- page 192), the aims are more linked to employment and employability, thus failing to fully address Dimension C of the PSD Scale (holistic aims). Mr Adrian Mamo stressed the importance of generic competences in the curriculum and was very willing to involve the ITS in projects in which such generic competences are facilitated.

6.2.4.3 PSD practice at Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary and Sir Michelangelo Refalo School.

The Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School and the Sir Michelangelo Refalo School operate at post-secondary level within the Directorates of Education, implying that they are publicly-funded and are part of the public service (Camilleri, 2010). Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary was established in 1984 to provide a revision course at the ordinary level. Nowadays it prepares students for the Malta Matriculation (Intermediate and Advanced Levels) and the Secondary Education Certificate (Ordinary Level) Examinations.

Sir Michelangelo Refalo Sixth Form was established in 1964 and was first found at Ninu Cremona Boys Secondary School. After years, the sixth form was located at Sir Michelangelo Refalo School. It offers five courses: The Matriculation Course Certificate (i.e. MATSEC), the SEC revision course, the Advanced and SEC course, the three Advanced level Course and the Advanced/Intermediate Course (Sir MA Refalo Centre for Further Studies, 2011).

At Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary and Sir Michelangelo Refalo School, PSD practice is embedded throughout the curriculum. Even though, the type of education offered is more targeted to achieve

qualifications, since they are the gateway to the UoM, there are initiatives which are aimed to develop the student personally and socially (Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary, 2014). For example, Sir Michelangelo Refalo School offers complimentary curricular activities which tackle current affairs, public speaking, art, culture, health, safety, sports, voluntary work and psychological training. In the same school, all first year students do a 3 hour course about healthy relationships. This consists of relationship, physiological and theological education in relation to relationships (Sir MA Refalo Centre for Further Studies, 2011). Data from interviews with UoM students indicates that through these activities, students had an experience of Dimension A of the PSD Scale (the development of generic competences - Table 5.2 - page 192), Dimension B (the active role of the students), Dimension C (the holistic aims) and Dimension D (the effective learning methods). Nevertheless, from the internet search, it is noted that the academic content lacks the personal and social development of the person.

6.2.4.4 PSD practice at Ġan Frangisk Abela Junior College.

The Junior College was established in 1995 and forms part of the UoM. It offers a two-year course as a preparation for the Matriculation Certificate which is the University's General Entry Requirement. The

Junior College organizes cultural projects such as concerts, drama, sport, student exchanges, debates and seminars with the aim of providing person-centred holistic education, based on generic competences. Services provided by the College also include counselling, youth work and pastoral guidance, all of which enhance the PSD practice. The mission statement ensures a holistic quality education as a preparation for the enrolment within the UoM (2011). Nevertheless, from the internet search it is also noted that similar to the experience at Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary and Sir Michelangelo Refalo School, the PSD practice lacks in the academic content.

6.2.4.5 PSD practice at St. Aloysius' College.

St. Aloysius' College is a state dependent institution that prepares students for the Matriculation Certificate. It tries to provide person-centred holistic education throughout its curriculum, by focusing on generic competences. The college also offers a specific subject named Personal Development Programme (PDP) to all students. During the interview, Ms Annelise Attard, a lecturer of PDP, explained that the PDP specifically targets the needs of the students, making education both person-centred and holistic. She further explained that this subject started approximately in the year 2000, when the Chaplain used to organize sessions for personal

and social development to St. Aloysius' College students every Fridays and Saturdays. This idea then evolved by the introduction of PDP within the curriculum of St Aloysius Sixth Form students.

Ms Annelise Attard said that at St. Aloysius' College, all students participate in the PDP, which is held in small classes, once a week, during their first year of the course. She explained that in the first year during the first term, there is a focus on personality whereas in the second term the lecturer gives ample space for debates about different social issues namely poverty, justice, political responsibility and refugees. In the third term, students are asked to do a presentation about a selected preferred topic. In their second year, students have career talks and several activities addressing their holistic development replacing the PDP classes (St Aloysius' College Team, 2011). From the interview it was noted that the College provides Dimension A of the PSD Scale (the development of generic competences - Table 5.2 - page 192), Dimension B (the active role of the students), Dimension C (the holistic aims) and Dimension D (the effective learning methods).

6.2.4.6 PSD practice at De La Salle College.

At De La Salle College, which is a state-dependent college that also prepares students for the Matriculation Certificate, all first and second years are encouraged to engage in the extra-curricular activities. Every student has a subject named Personal Awareness Lifeskills (PAL) (De La Salle College Team, 2011). From an interview with Fr Joseph Calleja, a lecturer of PAL, topics tackled during the PAL were revealed. Some of them include: relationships, values, sexuality, jealousy, leadership, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, community development and careers. He claimed that such a subject is unique because it is done in an informal and relaxing setting where students sit on cushions in a circle setting. They are involved in experiential and group work activities. In every class, there are not more than 15 students, giving more space for discussion and confidentiality. As a result, De la Salle College also attempts to provide Dimension A of the PSD Scale (the development of generic competences - Table 5.2 - page 192), Dimension B (the active role of the students), Dimension C (the holistic aims) and Dimension D (the effective learning methods).

6.2.4.7 The University of Malta.

The UoM, the oldest in the British Commonwealth outside the United Kingdom, is the main provider for higher education. In 1769, it was a Jesuit College when it had the status of a general studies institution (Sultana & Baldacchino, 1994; Sultana, 1995). Whilst trying to provide high quality holistic education at post-secondary and tertiary levels, the University engages in ongoing research which is retained crucial in the competitive and open global economy (Sciberras, 2009). Demos (2012) explains the meaning of the term University, which derives from the Latin word ‘Universitas’ meaning ‘the whole’ and in later stage usage ‘society or guild’. “The ‘society’ or ‘guild’ that a universal education took place in, was concerned with ‘the whole’ in the sense of knowledge in its entirety, rather than knowledge of some specific thing” (p. 10). Consequently, Demos (2012) claims that University graduates are supposed to be graduates of universal education, hence holistic education. As clearly outlined in the University Curriculum Framework (Figure 5.1 - page 177), in general PSD practice at the UoM is either aimed to be offered through specific credits that address the personal and social development of the students; or embedded within the aims of the credits; or aimed to be offered through the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Further analysis of how the UoM provides the PSD practice will be presented in

Chapter 8 where I present the theme “Opportunities for PSD practice at the UoM”.

Quality education, in terms of of holistic education, is deemed to be important because every year, the UoM attracts a number of students who want to further their studies at a tertiary education level. The UoM made an important decision in the mid-80s “to implement the ‘hub’ concept in an effort to use its position in the middle of the Mediterranean to provide goods and services to the surrounding countries” (Sultana, 2009, p. 11). The Vision 2010 for further and higher education (National Commission for Higher Education, 2009b) puts demands on Malta to interlock efforts with developments to position Europe “as a leading destination of excellence in education - maintain Malta’s active participation within the Bologna and Copenhagen Processes and implement the necessary actions to position Malta as a centre of excellence in education within the European Higher Education Area up to 2020” (p. 25). The 1999 Bologna Declaration focuses on the improvement of higher education in the EU (Ibid.) whereas the 2002 Copenhagen Declaration recognizes important competences and qualifications (Ibid.).

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter tackled one of the main themes that emerged from the research study, named “The Maltese Context for PSD Practice” that answered research question 1²⁹. Even though the context presents a series of challenges to the PSD practice throughout the entire Maltese Education System, which still persists even at University level, thus indicating that “University is a reflection of society”, it was also evident that there were positive practices that enhanced different dimensions that make up the PSD Scale which defines the PSD Practice. Another important theme that will be delved into detail in the following chapter is that of: “The Traditional, Academic, Maltese Education System that hinders PSD Practice”.

²⁹ What is the perception of University of Malta stakeholders with regards to PSD practice in Malta?

Chapter 7: Analysis of Results - The Traditional Academic Maltese Education System that hinders PSD Practice

7.1 Introduction

The previous theme gave evidence of the policies, the compulsory Personal and Social Development (PSD) subject and the different opportunities for PSD practice within the Maltese Education System, which provided positive experiences in theory and in practice of PSD practice in Malta. Nevertheless, it was also seen that interviewees felt that these were not enough and that the PSD practice throughout the entire Maltese Education System is still lacking. It was also noted that the Maltese context presents some challenges for the proper implementation of this practice. In addition to such contextual challenges, most interviewees sustained that the Maltese Education System is too academically oriented (Prof. Ronald Sultana, Dr Vincent Cassar, Lucia, Alexia, Marco and Carmen) and too focused on marks and attainment (Dr Vincent Cassar, Lucia and Claudia). In this theme, the traditional, academic Maltese Education System that hinders PSD practice in Malta is analysed, thus continuing to answer research question 1 about the perceptions of University of Malta (UoM) stakeholders regarding the PSD practice.

7.2 The traditional pre-tertiary and tertiary education system

The traditional academic education system seems to be persisting throughout all educational levels, including the UoM. As literature

suggests, traditional education with a focus on the transfer of knowledge and academic content “turns them [students] into ‘containers’, into ‘receptacles’ to be ‘filled’ by the teacher ... Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor... This is the ‘banking’ concept of education” (Friere, 2009, p. 52). Accordingly, the traditional approach to education is characterized by the transmission model since knowledge is transmitted to students. The Maltese Education System seems to be characterized by this type of approach. This was evident from the data of the semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1 and 2). In addition, evidence from an international study: Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which assesses the mathematical and science knowledge of primary school students (in 2011 in Malta Year 5 students were assessed) and which presents the scale score measuring school emphasis on academic success that ranges from 11.8 (Northern Ireland) to 8.9 (Tunisia), shows that the mean scale score of Malta is 10.6 which is significantly higher than the international average. This confirms that Maltese schools emphasize the academic achievement when compared to other countries (Ministry for Education and Employment Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education Research and Development Department, 2013a).

Mr Ian Mifsud (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education) argued that whereas policies focus on the holistic aspect of education, in reality this is not always the case:

But when it comes to implementation, I still think that we are too much relying on our academic, traditional models. You would find pockets, instances of experiencing education in a particular school that is truly holistic where you do see a teacher, an educator that has embraced so much these values that throughout her professional work she conveys these messages continuously in all her lessons. But this does not mean that it is reflected throughout.

During his interview, the Minister for Education and Employment, Hon. Dr Evarist Bartolo commented that:

You have to see what the institution itself allows. If it does not allow space for them, you might have several positive documents. But then what happens? I mean what happens in practice?

The Minister questioned whether there is enough space for PSD practice within the Maltese Education System. Even though interviewees said that there are different opportunities for PSD practice, some of them still confessed that there was definitely not enough space for their personal and social development. In fact, Prof. Carmel Borg, from the UoM, identified three models of education: the traditional, which is content-oriented; the interactionist, which is cognitive development oriented and focuses on

higher order skills, like critical thinking and problem-solving; and the transformative, which overlaps with the interactionist but with a more social commitment. Prof. Borg further added that most University students who attend his lectures (who would have followed primary, secondary and post-secondary education) identify themselves with the traditional model. His interpretation of reality shows that through the socialisation process, students are expected “to sit passively, consume knowledge and sit for a summative assessment”. Some interviewees said that in reality students are socialised to believe that the best method is the traditional banking education. As a result, the same interviewees said that students tend to be sceptic about the importance of the development of generic competences (Dimension A of the PSD Scale), their active role (Dimension B of the PSD Scale) and the importance of different learning methods (Dimension D of the PSD Scale), as they do not portray these approaches as significant for their learning. An example is that of Tony who justified the fact that lecturers used mostly this method so as to cover all the content that is expected from them. Luca interpreted the result shown in Figures 5.10 (page 218) and 5.11 (page 219) (showing information from lecturer which is ranked top in terms of its use and its effectiveness) as very problematic because in that way, students were happy to absorb the information presented to them. Prof. Carmel Borg, who is an academic and expert in the education sector, tried to explain this situation. He argued that having information from lecturer with the highest score, in terms of how much it

is used at University and also in terms of how effective students perceive it, makes a lot of sense because students:

Have been socialised to receive information so for them this is exactly what they want – to sit down and write notes. It is their expectation and as I said, once I change that pedagogy at first what I get is generally silence. It is only after 2 or 3 lectures that they start engaging and it is only after a number of lectures that they start realising that they have to prepare for the lecture in order to engage because obviously dialogue takes a different outlook on education and requires that both sides are prepared. In order to dialogue means that students have to be prepared to engage in a dialogue so that is another responsibility. It is much easier to sit down and write notes and it is much more convenient than in engaging in a dialogue based not on the coverage of the content but on reading beforehand and engaging the lecturer on the material. So it is a totally different outlook, totally different educational framework. So for them, as you can see here, in general they still think that information giving, transmission of knowledge is a very effective way of learning. Why? As I said – they have been socialised at school into that model and unfortunately they know very little beyond that model. For them it is the one and only educational experience available.

As a result, such socialisation process seems to be making students believe that they prefer to adhere more to reductionist and mechanistic views of mainstream education (Miller, 2000) where education is a matter of how many qualifications one gets and education is simply transmission of information. In this way, students are socialised to fear and resist problem-posing education, in which they critically perceive the way they exist in the world through a process of reflection (Freire, 2009). “Problem-posing education affirms men as beings in the process of becoming. Education is

thus constantly remade in the praxis. In order to be, it must become” (Ibid., p. 59). Praxis is an on-going interaction of reflection, dialogue and action (Dardner et al., 2009). As explained, certain interviewees said that this was lacking because students are socialised from their early years to be only acquainted to the traditional, banking, reductionist type of education.

This seems to be leading UoM students who find it hard to be critical and to participate, because they are not used to it and they feel shy (Prof. Angela Xuereb). An example was given by Mandy who commented that:

So in the discussion that we would have in class, sometimes off topic, there would be someone who says Oh I disagree... you know it's interesting that when that happens, you almost feel the tension, all students say oh my God. And I mean that it's a good thing that he disagrees and the lecturer is very happy. But the fact that other students are surprised also shows you that we are not used to it... but the space was there.

Here Mandy is confirming that students were given the opportunity to have an active role, however it seemed surprising whenever someone participated. This shows that in this example, as well as others shared during the interviews, students feared participation, even though space was provided. On the other hand, those students who participated in Degree Plus, extra-curricular groups, ERASMUS experience and other activities

offered by the UoM had less fear to participate. In fact they said that they had an active role and that their generic competences were developed. Interviewees explained this by referring to the presence of smaller groups, where they felt safer to voice their opinions and beliefs.

As a result, the traditional academic approach to education still persists throughout the Maltese Education System in general, including the UoM. This is despite the opportunities (University Curriculum Framework - Figure 5.1, page 177; Section 6.2.3, page 250; Section 6.2.4, page 256) that students are given in order to participate in person-centred holistic education activities, based on generic competences. Accordingly, I discussed this contradiction with the interviewees, who argued that, at schools and at University, time is limited and the academic curriculum is too vast (Margot), hence restricting time for personal and social development. Some interviewees even blamed the large number of students per class. In spite of this, Prof. Carmel Borg argued that:

Numbers do tend to interfere but if you come to my lectures, my average class is around 100 and I still engage critically with the students. But obviously, I have changed my pedagogy from one which is content-driven, where I am obviously the typical traditional lecturer who would be obsessed with covering knowledge to a situation-driven where knowledge is secondary. I can give them the knowledge beforehand to read and then engage on that knowledge so basically that hour I spend with the students is not spent reading from an overhead projector, slides, not spent reading from a powerpoint. That is I share knowledge over a VLE or something else and I spend the whole lecture engaging with them critically so I had to change my pedagogy, in order to change, in order to conform with my vision.

This is related to the “flipped classroom” which is:

A new pedagogical method, which employs asynchronous video lectures and practice problems as homework, and active, group-based problem solving activities in the classroom. It represents a unique combination of learning theories once thought to be incompatible- active, problem-based learning activities founded upon a constructivist ideology and instructional lectures derived from direct instruction methods founded upon behaviorist principles (Bishop & Verleger, 2013, p. 2)

As explained by Prof. Borg, even though he has large number of students at University, he still engages students and makes them feel central to their own learning by involving them and giving them the power to critically analyse the knowledge that they should read at home. Even his assessment system is quite different since he uses the open-book system which helps students to practise higher order thinking skills like rational and critical thinking. As a result, his pedagogy, which is in line with the practice of the flipped classroom, puts the learner at a central role (Dimension B of the PSD Scale - Table 5.2 - page 192) and is followed by a challenging assessment that makes the student think and reflect rather than regurgitate what is learnt. However, he admitted that this was not easy to be done and he had to change his vision, his pedagogy and expectations. He confessed that “it was a personal change in order to accommodate a different view of how to deal with students so the limitations are still there”. In line with the argument by Prof. Borg, Dr Frank Fabri, from the Ministry for Education and Employment in Malta, contended that numbers do not necessarily

make a difference. Instead, it depends on the preparation of educators and in, at least, managing to create a balance between the traditional approach and the person-centred (hence the PSD practice) approach. He argued that as teachers and lecturers, they are “not very much prepared in order to balance and use these two different approaches”.

7.3 The Negative Approach of the Educators

Different interviewees complained about the negative approach of certain educators throughout the entire education system. A case in point is the feedback from different student UoM interviewees who were disappointed about the way the lecturer addressed them, when compared to foreign ones observed during their ERASMUS experience:

For example I have been for a lecture of 2 hours [during ERASMUS]. The professor comes in, very good relationship with the students and he notices when the students are a bit like losing concentration, in fact he tells them let's go for a coffee, concentrate more and then continue (Luca).

Abroad [during ERASMUS experience] it was more discussion, the teachers never assumed that they are on a pedestal. Sometimes students themselves put them on a pedestal. The teacher knows that I can make a mistake. Lecturers here cannot accept that (Alan).

When we compare Maltese lecturers with foreign lecturers, I think that the foreign lecturers try to involve us. This year we had a study unit. It was based on communication. They didn't just speak on communication and how we should communicate. They made us actively do it ... I think it did help us like we did mmm like a small activity. He tells a story to one of the students and I come inside the room and I tell it to another student. The other student goes out and says it to another student. And we see how the story changes until the final student. But it is an example of how they tried to make us participate. Everything they do, they try to involve us. Like they do teamwork, they divide us in groups. They don't just want us to work by ourselves. They always want us to develop our management, our teamworking. Some students always keep staying in the same group so they try to make them work with others because eventually we are all going to work together. So they try to get us work with everyone. They always keep in mind that they want to try and develop our character and our personality as much as possible and they always make us participate in everything (Jonathan).

When comparing lectures in Malta and abroad, students said that foreign lecturers are friendlier, more approachable and tended to involve them more (Jonathan). A student explained that this was because they seemed to have less pressure on content-coverage so they had the chance to be more flexible (Luca) and to tackle teamwork, management and involvement with the aim of character and personality building (Jonathan). In addition, interviewees commented that abroad, students have more discussions where the lecturer does not assume the role of the expert (Alan). These

students were very critical of the approach that some Maltese teachers in primary and secondary, as well as University lecturers adopted, when compared to foreign ones, because they did not implement PSD practice, hence they did not focus on their generic competences (Dimension A of the PSD Scale - Table 5.2 - page 192), did not place them at a central role for learning (Dimension B of the PSD Scale) and did not use different interactive methods (Dimension D of the PSD Scale). All interviewees argued that the traditional academic approach which is present at the UoM and throughout all the entire education system is causing educators to focus on information-giving, to be impersonal and sometimes to assume the role of the expert.

Some interviewees explained the predominant use of information-giving from lecturers by arguing that the University context seems to be presenting some constraints in using other methods for learning. In his paper, Sultana (1992b) confessed:

In my case as a university lecturer, it has meant for me a growing experience where, in a situation that differs from the lecture mode which my institution often constrains me into and which leads to the silencing of my audience, I am learning the art of practising conversation which returns the authority of speech to the speakers, and to listen to the real work and efforts of practising teachers rather than construct their contributions (p. 18).

Prof. Ronald Sultana and Prof. Carmel Borg both mentioned that in their lectures they engage in praxis and in an ongoing dialogue so as to make students critically think rather than accepting what is presented to them. However, both confessed that it was difficult to start practising this approach. Reasons were linked to the difficulty to resist the contextual challenges. Dr Frank Fabri (Ministry for Education and Employment) further explained that:

I think that the UoM still needs to shift from a heavily teacher-centred approach towards a student-centred approach. I can understand that it is not that easy because it depends on a number of other factors. Both sides, both on the lecturer himself and his or her preparation. We all know that lecturers at University are not trained to become lecturers. They are not trained as far as I know to lecture or to teach at higher level. Then again it depends on the students' background and culture itself. If students come from a heavily teacher-centred approach, at sixth form or at university level maybe they find it a little difficult to come forward, although there again it depends on the lecturer, particularly on the type of leadership like inspirational leadership.

In this excerpt, the interviewee linked the predominant use of information-giving to lack of pedagogical formation and the lack ongoing training.

Prof. Carmel Borg commented that sometimes, it is not even the fault of the student that they do not participate and do not engage in the PSD practice within the undergraduate experience, but instead he blamed educators who have lack of pedagogical formation. Such formation helps the educator to realise that there are different pedagogical worlds with which one can engage with. In his view, unfortunately, several educators

are inclined to the world of the traditional which he calls “pulpit pedagogy”. This in turn limits the amount of participation of students. As a result, it was argued that there is the need for lecturers to be pedagogically trained.

With us lecturers, unfortunately, there are very few of us, in general, who have a pedagogical formation so they have never been challenged pedagogically, they were never asked to sit down and reflect on their approach, on their engagement with the students so they keep reproducing what they know - the traditional approach (Prof. Carmel Borg).

In addition to what Prof. Borg said, Dr Maureen Cole also stressed the importance of training to lecturers, because there are those who were not trained in how to facilitate the generic competences.

In terms of how it can happen ... I think it would be useful if we, as academics, we have training in this. Many of us do it because we had training. We did them out of personal interest, personally-driven rather than because UoM offered them as training. I think as an academic, in my case when I started, no body sort of... now there is more training for academics, more preparation ... organized by the University. I know there was a course run for beginning lecturers. It is like learning different methods. It was run once for sure. There was someone from abroad to run it. The idea is for it to be run more regularly. I know there are plans to have something more ongoing. This has been going on since less than 2 years (Dr Maureen Cole)

When discussing this aspect with the Pro-Rector of the UoM, she commented that:

We are doing some experiment and we are trying to encourage lecturers to be more innovative. In fact we have organized courses for lecturers, so that they learn different methods for lecturing. This course is becoming a requirement for promotion, so in order for a visiting lecturer to become lecturer or senior lecturer, they must undergo this training.

This shows that the UoM is recognising the importance of having pedagogically trained lecturers. As a result, such training indicates the willingness to have a UoM experience in line with PSD practice.

7.4 Summative Assessment

The traditional academic education system, as well as the lack of trained professionals who can educate through a PSD practice, becomes more complicated when having a mode of assessment throughout all entire Maltese Education System, including the UoM, that is mostly summative. Figure 5.12 (page 220) shows that the most assessment methods being used at the UoM were exams (97.06%), assignment (96.32%) and presentation (79.41%), whereas experiment (18.38%), portfolio (27.21%), fieldwork (27.21%) and project (33.09%) scored much lower. In this aspect, students

were not fully given the chance to actively participate so as to be able to express themselves. Summative assessment put a lot of stress (Lucia and Marvic), assessed the students on one occasion only (Jonathan) and limited the amount of creativity and willingness to participate throughout the University experience whereas formative assessment encouraged students to really reflect on what they were learning and to focus less on regurgitation of knowledge. Claudia was against exams and instead she was in favour of formative and continuous assessment because she thought that:

Exams are completely unfair because you are examining everyone on the same level when not everyone learns on the same level. For me exams are more a memory test of what you actually know. For example, I prefer assignments to exams even though in an assignment they expect more from you. But in an assignment at least I have time to sort of give my own opinion not just regurgitate what the lecturer taught me. And also ideally it would be almost continuous assessment, not at the end because there is a lot of pressure at the end and in that way you can develop and learn. If they give feedback, then you can learn from it.

However, this seems to be still lacking at the UoM and even throughout the Maltese Education System in general. Marouska confirmed this argument by saying that: “We were taught in a very capitalist view. We were ... yes... we were taught you have to pass the exam”. In turn, this method seems to be limiting the development of higher-order cognitive skills. When asking about this, Prof. Carmel Borg commented that:

As far as I am concerned usually assessment or at times, let me put it that way, at times assessments are imposed. For example my course is generally 4 ECTS and I follow from other lecturers, I have to follow university regulations. When I come in the second semester I have to impose almost a test on them. The way I have gone around it is to give them an open book test. Now this year I am going to experiment with take home test so basically I give them an assignment – it is problem based and I will give them a week to finish the test but I am not interested in students giving back what I have given them. What I am interested in is for me to test or assess competences: competences of creative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving etc – the so called higher order cognitive skills. Now you cannot give a traditional exam and expect students to have higher order thinking skills. You have to change the nature of the assessment so it all starts with your vision, then it comes down to social relations with your students and ultimately yes a change in the way you assess your students. So there needs to be coherence between vision, pedagogy and assessment.

As a result, in order to have a proper PSD practice, the vision, the pedagogy and the assessment methods must follow each other.

Consequently, the interviewee suggested a review in programmes and self-reflection so as to question how the mode of assessment reflects the competences that go beyond the subject itself.

7.5 The room set-up

Data from the interviews revealed that the room set-up resulted as reinforcing the traditional, academic education approach. Mr Ian Mifsud and Dr Frank Fabri argued that our structures and school set up throughout the entire education system, comprising squarish classrooms, do not help

because they do not always provide the right climate and atmosphere for PSD practice in the Maltese Education System. At the UoM, the particular architecture of the UoM gives the indication that the mentality for the educator is to sit or stand up high so that students follow (Prof. Carmel Borg). The interviewee commented:

They are meant for the lecturer to dish out lectures, for the lecturer to transmit and for students to consume knowledge so even in the designers' mind, the idea of a real lecturer is one who comes up and transmits knowledge and not engage with students in a dialogical approach so this is the culture, this is the attitude and unfortunately in such a culture it is very difficult for students to emerge, to come out of the education process, ready to engage critically with democracy and to be innovative and risk-takers in the economy. We are not producing such people ... people who are critical thinkers or innovative or risk-takers or whatever ... I can tell you by and large, in spite of the system and not because of the system. That is my reading of the situation.

7.6 The School Provenance

An important argument linked to the traditional, academic education system is that of the school provenance, because even though in this chapter it was argued that the room set-up, the lack of training of educators in PSD practice and the summative assessment hinder the proper PSD practice, some interviewees said that school provenance made all the

difference. There were interviewees who maintained that there was a difference between students coming from State, Church and Independent schools. Certain University Deans argued that UoM students coming from the first type of school have less problem-solving and critical thinking competences and are less willing to participate. Prof. Angela Xuereb said that:

Like I said earlier I think that at UoM one would expect that students have these skills but they don't ... When you have students from private schools, the social skills, they are more outgoing, you can tell the difference. It comes from the schooling.

Prof. Xuereb is sustaining that students who attended private schools tend to have better social competences than those attending state schools.

Moreover, Mr Clyde Caruana, Chair of the Employment Training Corporation in Malta, said:

Well, perhaps over there, the problem may not be a cultural one but also a ... I hate to use this term... it is more of a class thing. I mean it's an open secret that children coming from middle or high income class ... they do send their children either to church schools or independent schools whereas public schools mainly cater for lower class or working class people so basically over there even the family background affects also how children communicate later on in life.

All this might be then reflected at the UoM. Different interviewees sustained that having students coming from state schools, and therefore

tending to come from the lower social class who may have less social capital in terms of generic competences, tends to be replicated at the UoM.

The link between school provenance, social class, generic competences and the students' active role was also discussed by Prof. Carmel Borg who gave an example from his own experience as a lecturer with prospective teachers. He mentioned that the profile of a typical teacher is one who is lacking most of the generic competences. Whilst trying to understand why this is happening, he explained the link between the social class of students and the pre-tertiary education. In his opinion, private schools generally draw from middle class who already have certain value system and attitude which is different from that of the typical child coming from a public school. He gives the example of prospective teachers who generally draw from working class background that might not help them to transcend what the education provides. As a result, when these arrive at University, the social capital might be lacking and they might be less willing to participate during lectures and in other experiences offered by the University, and might be less willing to have an active role and to practise generic competences.

In addition to this link, there seems to be also a relationship between school provenance, social class, generic competences, the active role of the students and speech patterns. Prof. Ronald Sultana observed that when the

lecturer speaks in English, the class tends to remain silent, whereas when he speaks in Maltese, students interact more. He further added that language in Malta seems to be an important distinguishing factor with regards to school provenance. In Maltese state schools, the language which is most spoken is Maltese whereas in Maltese Church and private schools, the predominant language used is English. As Prof. Carmel Borg mentioned in his interview, and as presented above, private schools generally draw from middle class and public schools generally draw from working class. As a result, one might argue that language is also a matter of social class. Accordingly, Prof. Sultana added:

If you are brought up in a context where they speak English all the time, then you are going to feel comfortable to ask questions in front of an audience. Otherwise you are going to shut up and feel awkward. Language which is traceable to also social class background...

Difference in speech patterns is largely discussed by Bernstein (1964) who distinguished between the elaborated and the restricted code. In general, Bernstein argues that members of the working class are limited to the use of restricted code, which comprises shorthand speech, unfinished sentences and limited range of alternatives. On the other hand, members of the middle class use both restricted and elaborated code. The latter explicitly verbalizes many of the meanings that are taken for-granted in a restricted code, hence elaborated codes are more detailed and provide the

speaker with more alternatives. Linked to the arguments presented above, the Maltese language, used mostly by students who come from low income families who tend to attend state schools, might be part of the restricted code, whereas the Maltese and English languages used by students coming from middle or high income families who tend to attend Church or private schools, might be part of the elaborated code. As a result, students coming from middle or high income families attending Church or a private school, trained in both English and Maltese languages tend to have a better social capital, thus helping students to enhance and work on their generic competences (Dimension A of the PSD Scale - Table 5.2 - page 192), to have an active role in their learning (Dimension B) and to engage in different learning methods (Dimension D). Accordingly, in this scenario these students tend to be advantaged because they tend to engage more in the PSD practice.

7.7 The need for change

Several interviewed students said that a change from the traditional and academic approach is very difficult. A particular student, Raelene, confirmed that in her primary and secondary school years and during the lectures at UoM she could not express her opinion if it was too critical, so she held back despite having a personality who likes to present constructive feedback and despite being trained, through student

organizations, to voice her beliefs and opinion. As a result, she confessed that this hindered her critical thinking competence. Other students, like Luca, Melvin and Alan, argued that the Education System in general and the UoM undergraduate experience helped them to be passive rather than to think critically because they knew that if they commented and presented feedback, it meant that it affected their results. Luca further said that the education system needs to be more flexible, less bureaucratic and less relying on the top-down approach, where everything is regulated by teachers, Heads of Schools, lecturers or Deans, instead of students, because this is hindering the actual practice of PSD.

This shows that in these experiences there was lack of PSD practice because education was passive. These interviewees, mentioned in this section, felt that they were not consulted enough when decisions were taken. They even expressed disappointment about the fact that when feedback was given, sometimes it was not appreciated or it was perceived negatively. In this context, interviewees commented that they tended to be restricted from giving their feedback and from voicing their opinions because there was a strict curriculum which needed to be covered and which could not be amended according to the students' pace and needs, since it was regulated from "people high in the educational hierarchy who do not know what is happening in the Maltese classes" (Margot).

Interviewees like Jonathan and Marlene argued that this system seems to be replicated at the UoM because they were not consulted about the decisions that affected them directly and because even though they commented on the fact that the University courses are knowledge-loaded, there still seems to be no change. In turn, this enhanced their passive attitude at the UoM since they felt that their opinion did not matter, given that the UoM is dominated by an elitist top-down approach, thus restricting all dimensions of the PSD practice (PSD Scale - Table 5.2 - page 192), despite the official aims of personal and social development as presented through the University website (Figure 5.1 - page 177).

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented an important theme named “The Traditional Academic Maltese Education System that hinders PSD Practice”. In discussing this theme, the summative assessment, the lack of pedagogical training of educators for the PSD practice, the school provenance and the room set-up were analysed. Finally, the need for change towards a PSD practice approach that moves away from a traditional approach was presented. However, as UoM student interviewees argued, this is not easy because throughout all the Education System, there is an elitist top-down approach, where feedback is not always taken into consideration, thus promoting a culture of silence and passivity.

Chapter 8: Analysis of Results - Opportunities for PSD Practice at the University of Malta

8.1 Introduction

The first two themes answered research question 1 about the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the Personal and Social Development (PSD) practice in Malta. It was noted that the Maltese context facilitates and, at the same time, hinders the PSD practice throughout the entire Maltese Education System, including the University of Malta (UoM). Through the data from the semi-structured interviews, it was noted that this context also affects the extent and the ways in which PSD practice within the undergraduate experience at the UoM is provided (Research Question 2). As indicated through the University Curriculum Framework (Figure 5.1 - page 177), derived from an online search of all credits and modes of learning at the UoM held in 2012, it seems that the UoM intends to provide the PSD practice through the academic content as well as the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. The PSD Scale (Table 5.2 - page 192) presented in the Results chapter defined the PSD practice in terms of four dimensions and items, all of which were elicited from the initial semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1) and the literature review (Chapters 2 and 3). In order to answer research question 2 about the way the PSD practice is included within the undergraduate experience, I checked whether the items for each dimension are present. As a result, as explained in the methodology section, I set up the questions in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews according to the PSD

scale. Questions included the items present in all dimensions of the PSD Scale. In this chapter, another important theme named “Opportunities for PSD Practice at the University of Malta” is presented, in which all the relevant results will be critically analysed and in which the previous two themes will be taken into consideration. This theme focuses on the presence or absence of Dimensions A (the development of generic competences), B (the active role) and D (the effectiveness of different learning methods). It will not present the link between Dimensions A, B and D and Dimension C (the holistic aims), because a separate theme will focus on the link between the PSD practice and holistic aims.

8.2 Dimension A of the PSD Scale - The development of generic competences

The University Curriculum Framework (Figure 5.1 - page 177) and the academic content of the undergraduate degrees (Table 5.1 - page 185) indicate that the UoM officially aims to provide the generic competences through the academic content as well as the co-curricular and the extra-curricular activities. The error bar graph in Figure 5.7 (page 212) and the information elicited from the interviews show that the UoM is preparing young undergraduate students to develop their generic competences. This is also evident from Figure 5.3 (page 198) that indicates a left skewed

curve, thus showing that the 3 and 4 scores (moderately/considerably developed) were the highest. In general, interviewees said that these generic competences were very important for holistic education, especially because young undergraduates are in a state of transition since “they come in as kids and go out as adults” (Prof. Dominic Fenech). From a humanistic perspective, such focus helps “actualizing the individual’s humanness and shaping the individual towards his essential nature and designation as a human being” (Aloni, 2007, p. 26). Similarly, from a positive perspective, this focus is necessary for improving everyday life (Maddux, 2009).

Results indicate that the generic competences mostly developed through the UoM undergraduate experience were communication, ability to empathise, decision-making, teamwork, adjustment and self-acceptance, whereas the least developed were dealing with feelings effectively, initiative and stress management (Figure 5.7). It seems that such generic competences are important because it is expected that “the student who goes through the system and comes out at the other end with a degree, should be able to have” (Prof. Dominic Fenech). They are so “foundational to everything we do, whether it is our relationships, personal relationships, at the place of work, in everything” (Prof. Angela Xuereb).

When presenting the results, shown in Figure 5.7 (page 212) about the development of generic competences, different interviewees were still not happy with scores, as they argued that numbers are still low, especially with regards to higher order thinking skills like leadership, stress management, critical thinking, conflict management and creativity. Dr Frank Fabri from the Ministry for Education and Employment said that:

Leadership, stress management, conflict management, creativity are ranked low. It's a pity because when students go abroad to further their studies, generally they comment about the difference between UoM and foreign Universities. We usually tend to put a lot of stress to focus heavily on the knowledge knowledge knowledge instead of skills skills skills. It is one of our challenges not only at the UoM. We consider it as a national challenge... We are giving a lot of knowledge. Today we know that knowledge is important but the application ... I gather them in higher order thinking skills, those are fundamental. We cannot miss that out.

Dr Frank Fabri and several interviewees related strongly the lack of certain generic competences at the UoM to the traditional academic Maltese Education System, which is based mainly on knowledge and information-giving (Theme B of the Analysis - Chapter 7).

Data from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews also shows that the development of generic competences was not consistent throughout all the undergraduate experiences of the respondents. It was

evident that courses which are more person-oriented within the Science and Social Sciences faculty clusters³⁰ (Table 5.5 - page 204) and students who participated at Degree Plus (Table 5.6 - page 207) and extra-curricular groups (Table 5.8 - page 210) had more focus on the development of generic competences. Student interviewees from the Humanities and Civil Sciences Cluster³¹ argued that generic competences were not specifically tackled because the course was more technical or oriented towards the academic. From an analysis of the academic content of the courses (presented in Table 5.1, page 185), the reader can note that the Science and Social Science Clusters present more space for tackling certain generic competences like self-esteem, empathy, self-acceptance, emotional literacy and stress management. Interviewees also said that the student organizations and the Degree Plus helped them to practise these generic competences.

In reality, when presenting such results to different interviewees, there were some who agreed, some who were quite sceptical and others who expressed dissatisfaction. In doing so, they tried to find reasons for the

³⁰ Sciences faculty cluster includes the Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, Faculty of Dental Surgery and Faculty of Science. Social Sciences faculty cluster includes the Faculty of Laws, Faculty for Social Well-Being, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy and Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences.

³¹ Humanities faculty cluster comprises the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Theology. Civil Sciences faculty cluster comprises the Faculty for the Built Environment, Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Information and Communication Technology.

results presented. In fact, they mentioned certain aspects which facilitated or hindered such dimension in PSD practice. Amongst the aspects which facilitated the PSD practice at the UoM, interviewees mentioned: the constructivist, progressive and humanistic pedagogy used by some lecturers, the use of different effective learning methods, the existence of small groups and circle time format, a focus on personal aspects and a focus on students' life and course challenges. On the other hand, the Maltese context (Theme A of the Analysis - Chapter 6) and the traditional academic education system that pervade the entire education system (Theme B of the Analysis - Chapter 7) hindered the PSD practice at the UoM.

8.3 Dimension B of the PSD Scale -

The active role of the students

Another important dimension (Dimension B - The active role of the students) that makes part of the PSD Scale, hence defines such practice, was analysed. Data from the questionnaire reveals that all items in this dimension had a score which is higher than 2.5 (Figure 5.8 - page 214). In fact as indicated in Figure 5.4 (page 199), the curve of the histogram describing the scores of this dimension, is left skewed, thus showing that in most cases students had a neutral position (neither agreed nor disagreed)

about their active role. When asked for an explanation, UoM student interviewees blamed the traditional, academic Maltese Education System which did not allow them to have an active role, and this seems to be persisting even at University level. As a result, many students said that they are not used to participate and to be involved during lessons or lectures. Others blamed the negative information-giving approach of the educators, the summative assessment and the lack of pedagogical training of teachers or lecturers. Deans and policy-makers blamed the school provenance, the students' sense of fear to leave their comfort zone and the reluctance to participate, whereas others referred to the socialisation process that makes students believe that the best approach is the traditional, banking education. All these aspects make part of Theme B and were analysed thoroughly in Chapter 7.

Nevertheless, data from interviews reveals that there were positive experiences where students felt involved and included in their learning. As similar to Dimension A (The development of generic competences), results from questionnaire also show that students from the Science and Social Sciences Cluster (Table 5.5 - page 204) and students who participated at Degree Plus (Table 5.6 - page 207) and extra-curricular groups (Table 5.8 - page 210) tended to believe more that the UoM experience enhanced their active role in learning. These were also confirmed by the interviewees Dr

Maureen Cole, Prof. Dominic Fenech and Prof. Alex Torpiano who said that the best approaches for the development of generic competences and the active role of the student are the constructivist, progressive and humanistic approaches, where there is the facilitation of learning, instead of indoctrination, and where there is space for discussion, thus keeping the student at a very central position for learning. Different interviewees sustained that a facilitative pedagogy based on student presentations, student led classes, tutorials, group teaching and seminars all help students to be active, by sharing their experiences and enhancing their competences. Jonathan said that tutorials and smaller settings encouraged him to voice his opinion and to have a more active role in learning. This is because there was ample chance for reflection, critical thinking and empowerment. Similarly, Prof. Alex Torpiano argued that during workshops, students are encouraged to present their ideas and to listen whilst the others are presenting their work. In addition to these, there were other practices which stressed the centrality of the learner. Prof. Angela Xuereb mentioned the clinical part of the course where students are mentored, allowing space for personal development. Martha and Margaret also argued that the experience made them feel central because it was self-empowering and gave them the opportunity to work on themselves, especially in credits that have to do with psychology. Similarly, Tony and Chloe both mentioned the fact that by questioning and by voicing their beliefs and opinions and by feeling accepted within the group, they felt that

they own their learning. Different student interviewees sustained that the type of pedagogy used, either engaged or hindered their active role. Data from interviews shows that there were students who preferred to have a pedagogy which really considers their holistic needs and their learning experiences, and that trains them for life rather than for examinations. Literature indicates that this eventually enhances their self-actualisation (Witmer, 2013) which is the “ongoing actualization of potentials, capacities, and talents, as fulfillment of mission, ... , as a fuller knowledge of, and acceptance of, the person’s own intrinsic nature, as an unceasing trend toward unity, integration or synergy within the person” (p. 29).

Data from interviews shows that the existence of small groups and circle time format encouraged students to develop their generic competences, to participate (Martha, Margot, Prof. Kevin Aquilina) and to have an active role. Lucia and Martha commented that being in a small group and having a safe environment were two factors conducive to the sharing of experiences, thus having an active role in learning. In addition, some students also said that having sessions in a circle format enabled them more to self-disclose their experiences, to have an education that is more directed towards their needs and to practise generic competences. As literature suggests, the geometric configuration of the circle facilitates the interaction between members (Tew, Read & Potter, 2007) and

connectedness (Roffey, 2006, Noble & McGrath, 2008). It also creates an empowering environment where students interact and learn from each other.

In addition to the existence of small groups and circle time format, the approach of the educator seems to be important in PSD practice. In the second theme (Chapter 7), it was noted that several educators throughout the entire education system had a negative approach because they reinforced what Prof. Carmel Borg referred to as “pulpit pedagogy”. In fact, different interviewees confirmed that the approach of the educator made a difference to their experience. The importance of an appropriate approach used by the educator was highly stressed by Margot who identified three types of educators whom she encountered during her University experience. She specifically mentioned three types and explained that:

You always get lecturers whom you are afraid of, so you would drop a hint or two and you will never talk about the subject again [Type 1], lecturers whom you respect and respect enough to talk to and who you know that they will keep everything confidential, so you would probably talk to [Type 2] and then you have lecturers who you just simply don't like or you don't click with and you wouldn't talk to them [Type 3].

Margot argued that the second type helped her more to self-disclose her feelings, to develop her generic competences and to have an active role in learning. This was also confirmed by Prof. Alex Torpiano who said that those lecturers who allowed students to interact, helped them to have a central role in learning. Several interviewees confirmed this and others said that they had lecturers who were mentors and had the role of helping them reflect on their generic competences. Such positive approach is outlined in literature about educators of holistic education. In order to be able to adopt such approach, educators must be well-equipped with different competences. In a research held locally by Agius (2009), it is revealed that the person-centred holistic educator, whom she refers to as the PSD teacher, must possess a caring, understanding and trustworthy attitude who values confidentiality. This attitude leads to an empowering context, whereby the educator can impact the learning process in six dimensions: Planning, Meaning, Confronting, Feeling, Structuring and Valuing (Heron, 1999). The educator can influence the ‘planning’ as well as the structure of sessions³² and the ‘meaning’ that is given to concepts and experiences. The educator can raise consciousness about alienation and oppression, hence influencing the ‘confronting’ dimension of learning. In addition, there can be an impact on the ‘feeling’ dimension, by addressing the identification and management of feelings, and the ‘valuing’ dimension through the

³² The objectives, programme, methods, resources, assessment, evaluation and the current learning activity of the group.

creation of a supportive climate that celebrates the diversity of students where they are valued. This creates pressure on the educator since one has to be competent in dealing with these six dimensions. In addition, the educator must be able to work in four different areas or so called villages (Weil & McGill, 1989). Village one relates learning that opens up access to training and employment opportunities whereas village two is focused on experiential learning for promoting change in education. Village three emphasizes learning for consciousness raising, social change and community action while village four relates learning to personal growth and development. The educator catering for PSD practice must be well skilled to facilitate such holistic type of education. All this puts pressure on educators, because in order to provide PSD practice, they must be well skilled. This justifies the need for all educators, comprising UoM staff, to be well-prepared for their role to adopt a positive, participative and holistic approach with their students.

8.4 Dimension D of the PSD Scale -

The effectiveness of the different methods

Dimension D is about the effectiveness of different learning methods used in PSD practice. Results from the questionnaire (Figure 5.11 - page 219) show that all items in this dimension had a score which is higher than

2.5. Figure 5.6 (page 201) indicates that the curve in the histogram describing the scores of this dimension, is left skewed, hence most students thought that the use of different methods were moderately or considerably effective. It is interesting to note that in Figure 5.11, which shows the effectiveness of methods used in PSD practice, besides ‘information from lecturer’, students also found discussions, sharing of experiences, case studies, brainstorming, online learning, energizers and role-plays effective. This indicates that even though ‘information from lecturer’ had the highest score in terms of use (Figure 5.10) and in terms of effectiveness (Figure 5.11), hence the University seems to be replicating the traditional model of the pre-tertiary education, some students experienced other methods as well and found them effective. Students from the Science and Social Science faculty clusters (Table 5.5 - page 204) and students who attended the extra-curricular groups (Table 5.8 - page 210) tended to find the different effective learning methods used within their UoM undergraduate experience as more effective. This might shed light on the fact that in these faculty clusters and within the extra-curricular groups there is more use of different methods. Such experience might have encouraged students to agree more that the use of different methods was effective. In fact, from the experiences of interviewees, it was noted that in the Science and Social Science faculty clusters, there is more use of different progressive, humanistic and constructivist methods. It is also worth noting that the previously mentioned faculty clusters and the extra-curricular groups

ranked also highest in the provision of generic competences (Dimension A of the PSD Scale) and in the provision of the active role of the student (Dimension B of the PSD Scale). As a result, there seems to be a positive relationship between the high degree of provision of generic competences and the active role of the student in the Science and Social Science faculty clusters as well as the extra-curricular groups and the result that students found different learning methods as effective. Interviewees from these faculty clusters and those who participated in extra-curricular groups said that they were exposed to different engaging methods and found them very effective because they had the space where they can develop their generic competences through an active role in learning. On the other hand, Table 5.6 (page 207) shows that those students who attended the Degree Plus programme for 4 years or more scored lowest in the belief that the different learning methods were effective, whereas those who attended for 1 year scored highest. Interviewed students explained that in the first year of the Degree Plus programme, there was more commitment towards Dimension D of the PSD Scale. In addition, other student interviewees sustained that after the first year of the Degree Plus programme, the courses chosen (within the Degree Plus) were more academically rather than PSD oriented. As a result, students reported that despite being aimed for holistic development, certain courses within the Degree Plus were knowledge based and did not make use of different experiential methods.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter focused on another important theme named “Opportunities for PSD practice at the University of Malta”, which answered research question 2 about the way PSD practice is included within the undergraduate degrees. It was seen that despite having a Maltese context which tends to hinder such a practice, even though in some aspects it facilitates it, and despite having a University Curriculum Framework that intends to include the academic, the co-curricular and the extra-curricular content, this practice that is defined by the four dimensions of PSD Scale was not present consistently throughout all faculties. In summary, respondents had differing opinions about the development of generic competences (Dimension A), their active role (Dimension B) and the effectiveness of different methods used (Dimension D). However, there seems to be a close link between Dimension A, B and D.

Chapter 9: Analysis of Results - PSD Practice at the University of Malta for Holistic Aims

9.1 Introduction

A key theme that was elicited from empirical data was that of “PSD Practice at the University of Malta for Holistic Aims”. Results from questionnaire (Figure 5.13 - page 222) show that the PSD practice at the UoM provided different holistic aims. As explained in Chapters 2 and 3, this is an important dimension in the PSD Scale that measures the PSD Practice. Research question 3 is about the contribution of this practice to the holistic development of young undergraduates. Results from questionnaire also indicate that students from the Science and Social Sciences Cluster (Table 5.5 - page 204), students who attended Degree Plus for more than four years (Table 5.6 - page 207) and students who participated in extra-curricular groups (Table 5.8 - page 210) tended to believe more that PSD practice within their UoM experience had holistic aims in terms of well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability. This can be explained by the results showing that the faculty clusters mentioned (Science and Social Sciences Cluster), the Degree Plus and the extra-curricular groups ranked top in the provision of generic competences and in emphasizing the active role of the student (Tables 5.5, 5.6 and 5.8). From the internet search, it was found that the above faculty clusters, also resulted as offering the most amount of generic competences (Table 5.1 - page 185 and Figure 5.1 - page 177). In addition,

holistic aims were mostly mentioned by students who followed a course in the faculties mentioned previously, and students who participated in the Degree Plus or extra-curricular groups. As a result, in general there was a close link between the development of generic competences (Dimension A), the active role of the student (Dimension B) and the effective learning methods (Dimension D) for the development of holistic aims (Dimension C). Different interviewees suggested that whenever there was a proper PSD practice, there were also holistic aims including employment, employability, well-being, quality of life and healthy lifestyle, thus having a fully formed individual who is capable to discuss, think critically and be mature. In explaining such link and results from questionnaire, interviewees mentioned different aspects.

9.2 PSD Practice for Well-being, Quality of Life, Healthy Lifestyle, Employment and Employability

Literature shows that local policies and foreign agencies emphasize the holistic aims of education. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) in England (2011) stresses the importance of learners who develop relevant knowledge, understanding and skills which contribute to their personal, social and economic well-being, increase their employability skills and progress to further learning.

A focus on holistic education is also necessary for sustainable development and social cohesion (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001). Since 2001, investing in generic competences has been the principal theme for the meeting between the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) representatives in Paris, because OECD sustains that high-level intellectual and social generic competences are the building blocks for a full engagement with society. Such education also provides the necessary tools for sustaining and enriching life and behavior based learning, needed for predictable developmental tasks (Schmidt, Brown & Waycott, 1988; Swann, 1981). In this way, it provides an interventional, preventive and developmental approach required to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life (Division of Mental Health World Health Organisation, 1993). As part of the generic competences necessary for social functioning, health and well-being, the Division of Mental Health lists decision making, problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relating, self-awareness, ability to empathize, coping with emotions and coping with stress. Similarly, the Mental Health Foundation (1999) published a document named: 'Bright futures: promoting children and young people's mental health', in which children and young people are described as mentally healthy when they develop psychologically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. In a reality where, as stated in the Maltese National Youth Policy 2010-2013, "all young people have the

right to education. Education is a fundamental layer in the life of a person thus affecting one's life" (Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth and Sport, 2013, p. 12), different interviewees sustained that all these aims mentioned must be tackled through an effective education process. In the following sub-sections, I present the way the PSD Practice at the UoM enhances the holistic development of the undergraduates.

9.2.1 PSD Practice that Helped in Transitions

Different interviewees confirmed the importance of having PSD practice for holistic aims. Marco said that a focus on PSD practice meant that he matured properly and was able to make effective transitions from one life stage to the other. By equipping students with the necessary generic competences, Lucia learnt how to deal with her ambivalent feelings of remaining a child and not facing adulthood, which brought further responsibilities. In turn, this enhanced her psychological, emotional and subjective well-being and health as well as quality of life. She said that this was difficult for her because she is very close to her parents, who try to give her everything, without allowing her to be responsible for her own self. Such closeness with the parents can be related to the previously mentioned phenomenon that tends to occur in Malta, which is the delayed transition to adulthood. It is evident that young people are affected by their

life transitions and that, in these cases, PSD practice within the undergraduate experience at the UoM helped them to deal with them. Empirical data from interviews reveals that coping well with life transitions seems to be essential because it affects all dimensions of well-being (emotional, physical, intellectual, social, spiritual), quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability. Different student interviewees mentioned that University life is a period of transitions, even in terms of relationships. Claudia confessed:

I would say how I was in first year and how I am now there is a difference. In first year I had a boyfriend and now I am happily single. So there was a breaking point when my relationship ended and I said let me take a different approach to life so if before it was sort of I graduate, do a Masters, get a job, have a family. Now I would say graduate from University, get a job maybe, travel a bit, live life, enjoy. So I have definitely gone through a transition phase. The organisations definitely helped me. The reason I joined is that I was bored and I had nothing to do after breaking up and I decided to join. From extra-curricular groups you learn competences. Your social cycle opens a lot.

Claudia is a student who likes to attend extra-curricular groups since they helped her to overcome her relationship challenges which are a common feature of late adolescents and early adults. This is a developmental task in Erikson's psychosocial life-span stages (Stage 6 - Intimacy versus isolation), whereby individuals may experience a time of termination or modification in meaningful relationships. Such transitions in meaningful relations may lead to growth and development as well as separation or loss, creating ambivalent feelings (Egan, 1984). The importance of interpersonal

relationships is one of the seven vectors describing psychosocial development for young people (Chickering, 1969). Margaret argued that for her, making friends and starting to form healthy relationships was very important. Her University experience, which was based on PSD practice, tackled this aspect and found it very useful for her life since she could tackle her relationship challenges easily. Chloe also said that before the University experience, she used to be shy and quiet but the PSD practice helped her in overcoming her difficult situations, in making new friends, in feeling confident, in modifying her meaningful relationships, thus facilitating her psychological, social and emotional well-being and health as well as quality of life. Similarly, Mandy sustained that:

Definitely a lot, as a child I was a very shy person. An extreme. That changed before I came to University but it is coming to University that helped me boost my self-esteem, being able to sit down and talk to somebody I don't know. I got to an extent that because I was shy, I was left out. My course is very ... the people there, are very friendly as well. You have a lot of group assignments, communication, talks and it definitely increases my social competences.

9.2.2 PSD Practice for Health

A University experience based on PSD practice also seemed meaningful in preserving the physical health and well-being of the students (Lucia). Health was directly tackled in specific courses. In fact, Jonathan

argued that it was easier for him to understand the importance of being healthy because the course was directly related to it. Results also show that courses within the Science and Social Science faculty clusters that tackled more health issues, the self, the community and the society (Table 5.1- page 185), scored higher in the provision of generic competences, the active role of the student and the holistic aims, including health. Evidence from interviews indicates that a focus on personal aspects, a focus on the students' life challenges and a focus on the students' course challenges, which were identified as factors which facilitated PSD practice at the UoM, and which seemed to be dominant in courses which are more oriented towards the self and the society, were conducive to physical health and well-being.

Unfortunately, a course challenge which was mentioned by most interviewees, and which affected the physical health and well-being of students, was stress. Results from questionnaire (Figure 5.7 - page 212) show that the related generic competence of stress management was not tackled adequately at the UoM. As a result, students diverted to other activities which helped them distract themselves. In fact, Marco said that during his University experience, he had friends from other faculties, who could not cope with their transitions related to their social, personal and vocational development, thus causing stress. He also said that in these

cases, they did not find anyone who helped them throughout the course and “having a dry course” (Marco), without PSD practice, meant that there was no focus on their life and course challenges. Marco explained that his friends started to smoke and take drugs so as to try to feel better. From the study about UoM students, Cefai and Camilleri (2009) found out that respondents tended to link stress with smoking, alcohol intake and illicit substance abuse. This does not mean that stress might always lead to such effects. However, the study shows that stress might be a contributing factor. The research held by Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ (2012) with the aim of assessing self-perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of 400 young people, between the ages of 13 and 30, on different life issues, indicates that 8.5% felt under stress. In addition, 5.8% of the young people said that they smoke a lot, 3.3% claimed that they drink a lot and 57.6% said that they eat healthy food. As Marco explained in my research, some of his friends did not find support in their life, so they reverted to other dangerous solutions so as to tackle their life and course challenges, which caused stress. This highlights the importance of having a University experience that is personal and that focuses on the students’ course and life challenges as well. In relation to this argument, Mandy argued that the University experience made her feel the most stressed person in her life. However, in the last two years, she got involved in AIESEC and sports activities to feel better. Another student, Julia, confessed that since she was stressed she started to attend boxing lessons, offered by the UoM. As a result, these

students reverted to extra-curricular groups in order to control their stress and to enhance their physical well-being, health and quality of life.

However others engaged in dangerous activity. Consequently, taking care of one's health, well-being and quality of life was deemed as being very important and a content which was based on PSD practice, rather than a "dry course" (Marco) helped them to maintain their physical well-being, health and quality of life.

Taking care of the physical health meant less risk for psychosomatic symptoms for students. Different interviewees confirmed that some of the late adolescents and early adults have psychiatric issues, mental health problems and psychosomatic symptoms because they have unresolved life and course challenges. From the study of Cefai and Camilleri (2009), it emerged that 77.5% of their UoM respondents who experienced psychosomatic symptoms said that they regularly feel tiredness and exhaustion and 62.7% state that they feel nervousness. In my research, interviewees said that whenever they were exposed to a proper PSD practice, which addressed their well-being, quality of life and healthy lifestyle, such problems and related stress were tackled through one-to-one support, counselling or a specific content which equips students to deal with a variety of personal issues and needs.

9.2.3 PSD Practice with a Focus on Personal Aspects

Results from interviews indicate that there were positive experiences which highlighted the focus on personal aspects throughout the undergraduate experience. Interviewees said that whenever this was present, it resulted as being conducive to PSD practice because students addressed their specific needs, enhanced their active role in learning and focused on generic competences which are required in the daily life. This is important because late adolescents and early adults have a complex self-conception since they can distinguish between the actual self, hence the self conception, and the possible self, hence the way one imagines to be in the future (Arnett, 2011). A focus on personal aspects is also important because this is also a time when individuals start making choices about their self and their future, as Claudia, Chloe, Marco and Carmen said. This is closely related to Levinson's novice phase of development. Through interviews with men at midlife, who were asked to describe their earlier years, Levinson (1978) developed a life-stage theory that included development in the late teens and the twenties. Late adolescents and early adults are in stage 1 named: 'Early adult transition' (at 17-22years) in which they start making preliminary choices for adult life or stage 2 named: 'Entering the adult world' (at 22-28 years) in which they make initial choices in lifestyle, values, occupation and relationships. The author argues that during the process, the young people experience several

changes and instability in love and work. This was experienced by Alexia, Raelene and Marouska who confessed that throughout their undergraduate experience they had several emotional problems, due to life changes and instability in different aspects. They also said that the undergraduate experience was effective in dealing with such personal issues because it targeted their needs.

The concept of novice phase is linked to Erikson's role experimentation (Ibid.). This happens because late adolescence and early adulthood are a time of questioning about the world and the place of individuals within it, making them challenge their values and the ways they put them into practice. Such questioning leads to a time of experimentation of new behaviours, roles and different ways of doing things. New patterns of commitment start to emerge shaping one's life structure (Egan, 1984). Role experimentation maybe coupled with identity confusion. This was an issue that was mentioned by different interviewees like Mario, Tony and Margaret who said that PSD practice within the University experience helped them to explore themselves and to settle the different emerging roles that they had. This might be also related to the fifth stage of the psychosocial theory named 'identity versus identity confusion' (10 to 20 years), which is one of Erikson's eight life span stages. In the fifth stage, individuals must establish a coherent identity, so

they must overcome the stage of identity confusion. As a result, they experiment and explore, thus engaging in a process known as psychosocial moratorium (Erikson, 1963). Alan and Luca mentioned the phase when they wanted to experiment with friends, get to know new people, as well as explore themselves more. They argued that their involvement in one of the extra-curricular groups helped them a lot to overcome these challenges. The importance of the peers was mentioned as paramount to identity establishment and self-exploration. In fact, literature shows that identity as a psychosocial construct maybe explored through self-appraisal and the reflected appraisals of others. The need to form a personal identity is crucial at such age, hence forming the emergent self as termed by McConville (1995), in which individuals strive to integrate various aspects of one's identity whilst individuating. In relation to the formation of a personal identity, the Johari window, developed by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in 1955 in the United States, is inspirational (Sitwell, 2007). The Johari window has four areas: the Open self, which includes aspects of the self that are known to self and to others; the Blind self, making up those elements which are known by others and unknown to one self; the Hidden self, which embraces aspects that are known to one self but unknown to others and the Unknown self, including elements that are unknown both to self and to others. It is interesting to note that the area of the Open self is increased when individuals self-disclose details about themselves, thus decreasing the area of the Hidden Self, and when individuals give feedback

to each other about things that maybe the person is not aware of, thus decreasing the area of the Blind Self. This explains better the argument put forward by Alan and Luca, who both said that through meeting new people at the extra-curricular group, they got to know themselves more. In Erikson's theory, if identity establishment is done successfully, a positive identity is achieved whereas if the individual does not explore different roles or if the parents or carers impose their expectations on the identity of the individual, then there is identity confusion (Santrock, 2003).

In summary, students mentioned the fact that when the undergraduate experience tackled their personal aspects and issues, especially whenever the content of the course was about the self and the community, PSD practice was enhanced. From an online search of all the content of undergraduate degrees, it was noted that in courses provided within the Science and Social Science faculty clusters there is more focus on personal aspects (Table 5.1, page 185). Empirical evidence shows that these are also the same faculty clusters which mostly provide generic competences and emphasize the active role of the students (Table 5.5 - page 204). Students from these faculty clusters were also highly positive in noting that PSD practice within their UoM experience had holistic aims.

9.2.4 PSD Practice with a Focus on the Students' Life Challenges

Different interviewees confirmed that late adolescents and early adults have life challenges comprising relationship and sexuality issues, stress issues, family problems, peer pressure, psychiatric issues and mental health problems (Prof. Angela Xuereb, Prof. Charles Betts). Sometimes certain cases even led to extreme circumstances like suicidal attempts. Literature shows that late adolescents and early adults have their sexual, social and personal development which may result in a challenge. Through different experiences and opportunities at University, certain interviewees felt that their personal issues, mentioned above, and life challenges were addressed. For example Marco said:

During my first year I entered in a relationship with my now fiancé who has experienced legal problems due to citizenship and it [the undergraduate experience] helped me in that regard, giving support and I have learnt to be put into perspective. I think my course, have given different viewpoints from different areas. It helped me to understand certain aspects of people's life and develop a sense of empathy.

In difficult cases, Prof. Alex Torpiano said that students were followed by staff members. Prof. Charles Betts said that he encountered several students with life challenges and in such cases they were tackled

individually. In fact, he admitted that as a faculty they are quite attentive to their students. In some courses, there were lecturers who acted as mentors to help students in their life challenges.

From interviews, it was noted that in general the Humanities and Civil Sciences Clusters tended to tackle the student life challenges through mentors and one to one support. In addition to these techniques, the content of the Science and the Social Science faculty clusters enabled students to tackle their life challenges through specific credits, placements or an embedded system of generic competences that help them to come into terms with their developmental and life hurdles. This is very important because:

of the greater popularisation of tertiary education ... We have now the more average type of student who actually make it to University. These people need more assistance. They need more support than people of my age back then. Nowadays it is very different. They are more pampered ... It is not just here in Malta. So I think that PSD practice is very important at University, even more than it was before. And we have to see how we can provide that, given the fact that we have a University with 12,000 students (Prof. Charles Sammut).

Prof. Charles Sammut made reference to students who need more assistance and stressed the point that, as a result, PSD practice at the UoM is very important. He also mentioned the fact that students are more pampered nowadays. Such claim can be related to first theme (Chapter 6),

which included the phenomenon of Maltese young people having a delayed transition to independent living and tending to be more pampered as well as less independent. As a result, a PSD practice that provides generic competences that equip an individual to be independent and to tackle life challenges was deemed as necessary (Chloe and Tony).

Different student interviewees argued that whenever there was a focus on life challenges, PSD practice was facilitated because they felt that the UoM stakeholders were interested in their well-being, they felt central to the development of their potential and they saw a benefit from investing in their generic competences through a series of learning methods.

9.2.5 PSD Practice with a Focus on the Students' Course Challenges

Besides a focus on life challenges, the PSD practice at the UoM helped some students to tackle their course challenges. Different interviewees confessed that at University they were starting to make plans for their career and explore different possibilities. Some interviewees argued that there were lecturers who really showed interest in assisting them to explore and evaluate the career possibilities. This is very important when considering the development stage of young undergraduates. These arguments are closely linked to the theory put forward by Super (1990)

who relates the development of the self-concept with vocational development, by generating a life-span vocational choice theory including five life and career development stages ranging from growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement or decline (Super, 1980). The majority of late adolescents and early adults, aged 17 to 25 years old, tend to experience stage 2 of this model, named exploration. In stage 2, the major vocational tasks consist of developing a realistic self-concept and implementing a vocational preference through role tryouts and exploration. Between 18 and 22 years, young people would be dealing with specification, where individuals are required to specify their preferences so that they may find an employer or an appropriate graduate school for specialized education. At age range 21 to 24, young adults tend to experience the task of implementation, in which they make plans to fulfill their career objectives (Super, 1957; Super, 1980; Santrock, 2003).

Besides making plans for their career and examining different possibilities, interviewees sustained that other course challenges consisted of stress due to exams (Marco), uncertainty about the selected course (Prof. Angela Xuereb) and time management issues to manage work and study (Prof. Charles Betts). In certain cases, the University experience helped students in dealing with such course challenges by providing the necessary generic competences and by providing one to one support from lecturers,

counsellors (Prof. Angela Xuereb), staff mentors (Prof. Ernest Cachia) or other educators (Prof. Alex Torpiano and Prof. Charles Sammut). In this way, interviewees said that a focus on these course challenges and assistance to make plans for their career possibilities, enhanced the University PSD practice by equipping them with the necessary generic competences that are required for the accomplishment of their course and for future employment and employability.

9.2.6 PSD practice for employment and employability

Besides well-being, health and quality of life, different interviewees sustained that PSD practice within the undergraduate experience was going to help them in gaining employment and in being employable (Melvin, Alexia and Tony). Melvin said that the course made him feel satisfied in relation to the choice of career, thus contributing to his occupational well-being, health and quality of life. Being equipped for employment and employability resulted as being an important task for student interviewees who said that even though they were interested in their well-being, ultimately they were also looking for the right job, where they can feel fulfilled. PSD practice for employment and employability is also important when considering research held by Gatt and Gatt (2006), the Malta Qualifications Council (2011) and the National Team of Bologna Experts

Malta 2009-2011 and EUPA 2011 (2011) which indicate that Maltese employees lack certain generic competences. Despite such importance, generally interviewees were critical of strict focus on employment and employability. Prof. Carmel Borg argued:

Not just myself, a group of us are very critical of the strict relationship between education and employability. We are very very critical of that, intimately linked. We know that we are advocates, so to speak – there is a group of us. We are advocates of education for citizenship which obviously includes employability as a sub-set and not as the main set, so it is much more than employability. It is citizenship, engaging society as critical persons... There is nothing wrong with that because employment is a big issue but to restrict and to limit education to employability, I think it is a grave ethical and moral mistake.

Similarly, Prof. Ronald Sultana said:

Now obviously there is nothing wrong intrinsically in having education to prepare kids for the world of work ... and it is important to contribute to the economy. One needs to ask: Is it an economy that is fair, just and is respectful of the environment? So being schooled for work, one needs to ask a lot of questions about that. In fact I prefer to say we educate about work rather than for work. But there is the other additional problem that when we overstress the vocational and utilitarian aspect of education, we tend loose sight of the other aspect of education, which is the humanistic, which is the self-development one.

Both interviewees are against utilitarian education and in favour of holistic aims. Prof. Alex Torpiano also believes that PSD practice should have holistic aims. Dr Maureen Cole confirmed that the University should help students grow as persons first and then academically. She added:

The academic is secondary because the academic you will gain, you will learn it. I mean... but if you do not develop as a whole person, it affects all your life, it affects all spheres of your life. So ultimately if you are more integrated as a person, you are a better team worker, you have better personal relationships, you have a happier life. I think it also leads to a happier life, more satisfaction in your life, so it is a chain. There is a lot of connection.

Similarly, Prof. Ernest Cachia argued that education for employment and employability and education for well-being, quality of life and healthy lifestyle are both important because students have to be taught how to find jobs and also how to live a happy life. Dr Frank Fabri (Ministry for Education and Employment) confirmed this argument by saying that:

If a person is not employable, his well-being is affected. Although if he is employable, his well-being might be affected as well. It depends ... I prefer a person who is employable and able to balance the work and home realities, which is very much difficult today. We all know that the world of work took most of our time. Unfortunately I say because I think that we are not heading towards the right direction. And you can see it. I can see a number of colleagues who are depressed, very much stressed.

Dr Vincent Cassar further stressed the importance of PSD practice for holistic aims comprising well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability. He sustained:

It should be aimed for life. I don't believe you can create something for employment. I think we should prepare students for life. Preparing students for life means preparing these ingredients and to prepare these ingredients we need to revisit, that is why I said we need to do radical changes. We need to look at our study-units or programme and challenge the way they are being taught and what's being taught. So I think the aim should be for life. Work is part of life and today it's more part of life. We are living in a society where work has become a very strong source of identity: what you do, with whom you work, what your career aspirations are – those are very important part of the self. So I think PSD practice should focus on life, of which work is part of life.

Notwithstanding the positive experiences of PSD Practice for holistic development, derived from interview results, data from questionnaires also indicates that most students neither agreed nor disagreed about the holistic aims of PSD practice (Figure 5.5 - page 200). Interviewees sustained that whenever there was a proper PSD practice, there was also the space to develop holistically. However, they explained the result of the questionnaire (Figure 5.5) by saying that there were hindering factors which influenced the contribution of PSD practice to such holistic development.

9.3 Hindering PSD Practice for Holistic Aims

Even though both literature and evidence from interviews present the importance of PSD practice for holistic aims, preparing students for life

seemed to be quite a challenging task. Margot even compared the University to a lab since she was aware that what she tackled at University might not be exactly transferred to the real world. As a result, she argued that it was important that the University focused on lifelong learning and holistic aims, instead of academic aims only, and equipped her with the adequate tools to learn how to learn. The argument of transfer of competences was discussed by Canning (2007) who argues that there is little convincing evidence to support the argument that they can be transported across contexts. As a result, the point made by Margot makes sense because the transfer of competences to other contexts might be really challenging. Consequently, Margot further added that it was important for her that the educators gave examples from different case scenarios, hence the importance of interactive methods, like case studies, throughout the University experience, which helped to apply what she learnt to her course and her life, and which gave her the tools to learn how to learn.

From the previous sub-sections above, it is easily noted that there is a clear link between the provision of PSD practice and the holistic aims. From interviews, it was also noted that whenever students said that PSD practice was absent within their undergraduate experience, due to strict focus on exams, there was not the development of holistic aims (Luca and Alan). The term holistic here is very much important because specific

interviewees were against aims that are linked only to employment and employability.

Despite the positive experiences and the importance of the link between PSD practice and holistic aims, there seems to be aspects which hindered such link and which made young undergraduates neither agree nor disagree about the holistic aims of PSD practice. Nearly all interviewees sustained that the pre-tertiary education which is very oriented towards the academic and summative assessment were factors that hindered PSD practice in general, and which, as a result, hindered the holistic aims. The European Union (EU) also seems to be hindering such link because it associates education to economical purposes rather than holistic aims. In fact, in his interview Prof. Ronald Sultana said that the EU as a supranational actor can have an impact on education in a number of ways. He stated that if one looks at the discourse as it emerges from DG Education and Culture, which is the General Directorate in charge of education in the European Commission, there is a link between schooling and the economy. Mifsud (1997) also comments that in Malta, “education has become more utilitarian and favouring the demands of market imperatives” (p.139), which in this case tends to be influenced by the economic agenda of the EU. This diminishes education to strict utilitarian economic purposes so as to be competitive with other countries. From the

first theme (Chapter 6) of the analysis, it was noted that for a small country like Malta, being competitive is essential.

As explained earlier, the fact that the EU is in favour of the economic agenda can be related to neo-liberalism and globalization which tend to focus on economical competitiveness. In a context where Maltese citizens are living in a globalized world which promotes performativity to fulfill the needs of the new social and economic conditions (Ball, 2011) and where "...universities are among the most permeable to the influence of globalisation" (Sultana, 1999a, p. 14), PSD practice for holistic aims at the UoM might be threatened. Mr Ian Mifsud, from the Ministry for Education and Employment mentioned the argument of economical competitiveness and globalisation and further added that:

Capitalism has taken off and you have to realise that what you are actually doing is acting as one of the arms of capitalism to make itself richer but in doing so you also know that should you not be doing that, a balance that has been achieved will be lost. What I always try to do is that whilst I am yes helping the capitalist to become richer as well, because that is what we are doing, I at least instill in the learners the ability to think and reflect and realise that he is at times being exploited so as to at least learn how to build a symbiotic relationship. If you are exploiting me as a capitalist, let me take advantage of what you are offering. You start instilling the sort of critical thinking... Be aware of that. Know what you are doing. That's when the citizenship part becomes important because whilst you are preparing for employability, you are also instilling in that person to think independently and to start making his own decisions and if he wants to go against all of this current and set up his own way of living.

Different Deans mentioned that capitalism hinders PSD practice for holistic aims. In this neo-liberal, globalized and capitalist reality, where employment and employability are given more importance, different interviewees argued that educators should equip students with adequate critical thinking competences to be able to reflect on possible exploitation.

In summary, whenever students observed that the University experience was focused only on the academic, on the attainment of a formal qualification and on employment as well as employability purposes, hence the lack of PSD practice, the interviewees also said the undergraduate experience did not tackle holistic aims. In other cases, students experienced holistic aims because they were exposed to PSD practice, however this was linked to employment and employability and not to well-being, quality of life and healthy lifestyle. Interviewed Deans and policy makers explained that this is the result of a repeated and prevalent discourse from the EU for education for utilitarian aims and the economic agenda; neo-liberalism which is pervading the educational landscape; globalization which promotes performativity and capitalism which encourages competition and employability purposes. As a result, it seems that some educators engaged in a proper PSD practice (Sections 9.2.1, 9.2.2, 9.2.3, 9.2.4, 9.2.5 and 9.2.6), whereas others directed it towards utilitarian purposes rather than genuine holistic aims. This tended

to confuse the students about the link between PSD practice and holistic aims, thus explaining the result from the questionnaire that shows that students neither agreed nor disagreed about the holistic aims of PSD practice (Figure 5.5).

9.4 Conclusion

Data from interviews shows that there is a close link between PSD practice and the development of holistic aims in terms of well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability, even though students neither agreed nor disagreed that PSD practice developed them holistically. The latter was specified in results obtained from the questionnaire as illustrated in Figure 5.5 (page 200) and Figure 5.9 (page 216). The fact that data from questionnaires revealed that they neither agreed nor disagreed shows that there were facilitating and hindering factors that enhanced or limited the contribution of PSD practice to the holistic development. The development of holistic aims was facilitated through one-to-one support, positive experiences and course content based on PSD practice that enabled students to develop holistically, to make effective transitions, to deal with ambivalent feelings, to form healthy relationships, to preserve physical health and to enhance employment and employability. Aspects which hindered the development of holistic aims

were the traditional pre-tertiary education; the EU with utilitarian aims and economic agenda and a neo-liberal and globalized, capitalist society that glorifies competition, performativity and market demands. In conclusion, even though the mission statement of the UoM (Section 5.2, page 176) stresses both the humanistic and the utilitarian purposes and even though the UoM intends to provide a proper PSD practice for holistic aims through the academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular content (Section 5.2.1 - page 178, Section 5.2.2 - page 186, Section 5.2.3 - page 187), there were both positive experiences as well negative ones. As a result, holistic development was not consistent throughout the UoM undergraduate experiences.

Chapter 10:

Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

The final chapter provides a reflection on the overall study. It reviews each preceding chapter, synthesizes the research findings whilst explaining their significance, describes the contribution of the study to existent knowledge, and evaluates the research in terms of a set of externally-imposed criteria. After these sub-sections, there is reference to the limitations of the study, the implications of the research area and recommendations for future research.

10.2 Review of Preceding Chapters

The study employed a grounded theory methodology in order to explore both quantitatively and qualitatively the perceptions of University of Malta (UoM) stakeholders about Personal and Social Development (PSD) practice in Malta, the extent to which this is included within the undergraduate UoM experience and its contribution to well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability of young undergraduates.

Chapter 1 introduced the research by defining the concept of PSD practice, presenting the research gap and the research aims and presenting the research process following a grounded theory methodology. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 (Literature Review) explained the definition of PSD practice by referring to its dimensions. Chapter 4 (Methodology) dealt with my position in the research study, personal background, philosophical background, use of different methods, piloting phases, research in general, recruitment of participants, reliability and validity issues, ethical considerations and data presentation. Chapter 5 presented the results obtained from the research tools. It was organized in three parts: ‘Initial mapping’, ‘The Personal and Social Development (PSD) scale and the quantitative questionnaire’ and ‘The Qualitative Interviews’. Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9, which are the Analysis chapters, presented four main themes: ‘The Maltese context for PSD practice’, ‘The traditional, academic Maltese Education System that hinders PSD practice’, ‘Opportunities for PSD practice in Malta and at the University of Malta’ and ‘PSD practice at the University of Malta for holistic aims’.

10.3 Significance of Results

In this section, the significance of the different results is presented and discussed in relation to the three research questions that guided the research study.

1. What is the perception of University of Malta stakeholders with regards to PSD practice in Malta?

Data elicited from the research tools (questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and internet search) used in this study has revealed that the smallness of the islands, the lack of natural resources and the reliance on human capabilities make it important for Malta to have a holistic education, hence PSD practice, especially because having the right employees with the necessary generic competences enhances the Maltese economy by making it competitive with larger countries. Interviewees stressed the fact that a focus on PSD practice is also important because Malta relies on the service industries, for example tourism, which requires employees with skills, knowledge, attitudes and values. Education for employment and employability was stressed in several studies and reports (European Commission, 2005; Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, 2011; Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012; Commission of the European Communities, 2007; European Commission, 2010 a, b, c; Knight & Yorke, 2002; Birdwell, Grist & Margo, 2011a,b.). Nevertheless, results from the research tools show that despite the link between the provision of these competences in Malta and economic purposes, interviewees commented that PSD practice in Malta must aim to develop students holistically, and not only serve such economical purposes, to make up for the lack of natural resources and the need for competitiveness. This was also stressed in the National Curriculum

Framework (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012) that warns that “in the event that the education system is subservient to the economy then the education system might succumb to displaced priorities and the valuation of utilitarian benefits above the human person” (p. 6). In fact, interviewees and questionnaire respondents argued that PSD practice matters for the holistic well-being of the individuals in general (as revealed through answers for research question 3) and not for strict employment and employability purposes. This finding puts pressure on policy makers to really care about the aims of PSD practice, as it is conducive to positive results, which it is hoped will enable Maltese society to flourish.

Interviewees suggested that the fact that young people tend to live longer with their parents and the fact that they tend to have a delayed transition to adulthood and independent living, may imply that young people may work less hard and rely upon their families for the key skills of independent living (e.g. cooking, cleaning, shopping, paying rent). Results from interviews also show that this delayed transition and this dependence on the family as well as the overprotection by parents, are making young people feel that they are entitled to everything, like for example free education, employment and well-being, without real hard work. In this way, they may be reluctant to focus on their holistic development, as they do not recognise its importance. In addition, the Maltese protective and

insular environment in general seem to be hindering young people to make changes in their life, to resist the traditional type of education and to actively participate within the PSD practice.

These evidence-based findings are significant because they indicate that the provision of PSD practice in Malta is not a straight-forward process and that there are aspects which encourage and others which hinder this provision. As a result, policy-makers need to consider the Maltese context when planning PSD practice. This is because the latter requires a shift in the Maltese mentality, hence it can be difficult for some students to engage in it unless the other spheres of life (like the family, the community and the society in general) are also considered. This was stressed by different interviewees. Prof. Carmel Borg argued that “Education is no panacea to the problems that we have out there” and the Minister for Education and Employment pointed out that: “Education is a system. It is a systems approach. You cannot just take one factor. All the factors interact on each other.” Such evidence makes it important to education policy makers to liaise with others who are involved in different sectors of the society, like for instance those responsible for the family and the community, so as to address the Maltese mentality which seems to be hindering PSD practice.

In addition to the particular Maltese context, when exploring perceptions about PSD practice in Malta, the research revealed a series of factors that facilitated or hindered such practice in Malta. The existent educational policies that revolve around the importance of PSD practice in Malta (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012; 2014a,c), the existent compulsory Personal and Social Development subject in primary and secondary schools and the different opportunities for PSD practice at different levels of the education, facilitated PSD practice in Malta by emphasizing or providing space for it. Different interviewees were in favour of these opportunities and suggested that these should continue to be offered. On the other hand, this research showed that these opportunities were not enough and that a traditional academic oriented system; a focus on marks and attainment; the large number of students in each room; the negative approach from educators; the inadequate classroom set-up; the students' sense of fear and lack of confidence in leaving the comfort zone; reluctance from students to engage in the PSD practice, a socialisation process that promotes the banking education; summative assessment and particular school provenance all hindered the proper practice of PSD in Malta at all education levels.

These findings are significant because they provide evidence that shows that even though there are positive opportunities for PSD practice,

the Maltese education policy makers may critically analyse such opportunities and consider whether in reality PSD practice at all levels is being given its due importance, whether it is being properly achieved and whether educators are truly equipped with the necessary competences to facilitate this practice.

2. To what extent and in what ways is PSD practice applied to the undergraduate experience as offered by the University of Malta?

The University Curriculum Framework (Figure 5.1, page 177) indicates that the UoM intends to provide the PSD practice within the undergraduate experience through the academic content, and the co-curricular as well as the extra-curricular activities (Chapter 5 - Part 1). In addition, the mission statement of the UoM also highlights the PSD practice by referring to the intended humanistic and utilitarian aims of education. As explained in Chapters 2 and 3 (Literature Review) and Chapter 5 (Results), the PSD Scale was developed to define the PSD practice. The Scale was established through this research, and can be used to assess PSD practices locally and abroad. After validating this scale, it was used to set up the questions in the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaire. The PSD Scale is made up of four dimensions, which were identified, piloted and approved through statistical tests. These are Dimension A- The development of generic competences, Dimension B- The active role of the student, Dimension C- The holistic aims and Dimension D- The effectiveness of

different methods. This research assessed the extent to which these dimensions were provided through the UoM undergraduate experience, thus exploring the extent to which PSD practice was enhanced and assessing whether the mission statement of the UoM and the intended holistic outcomes of the academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular content are attained. Figure 10.1 is a summary diagram, derived from all the results of this research, which indicates how the PSD Practice at the UoM is provided.

It was evident that courses which are more person-oriented (as offered by the Science faculty cluster and Social Sciences faculty cluster) tended to focus more on the development of generic competences, to enhance the active role of the student, to provide effective methods for learning and to have holistic aims. Students who participated in Degree Plus and extra-curricular groups also had similar positive experiences. This evidence indicates that the UoM undergraduate experience is in reality providing PSD practice. It also suggests that experiences like Degree Plus and extra-curricular groups should be reinforced and that in all courses, and not only person-oriented ones, there should be a genuine PSD focus because, as revealed from results that answered research question 3, there is evidence which supports the link between PSD practice and holistic aims including well-being, healthy lifestyle, quality of life, employment and employability.

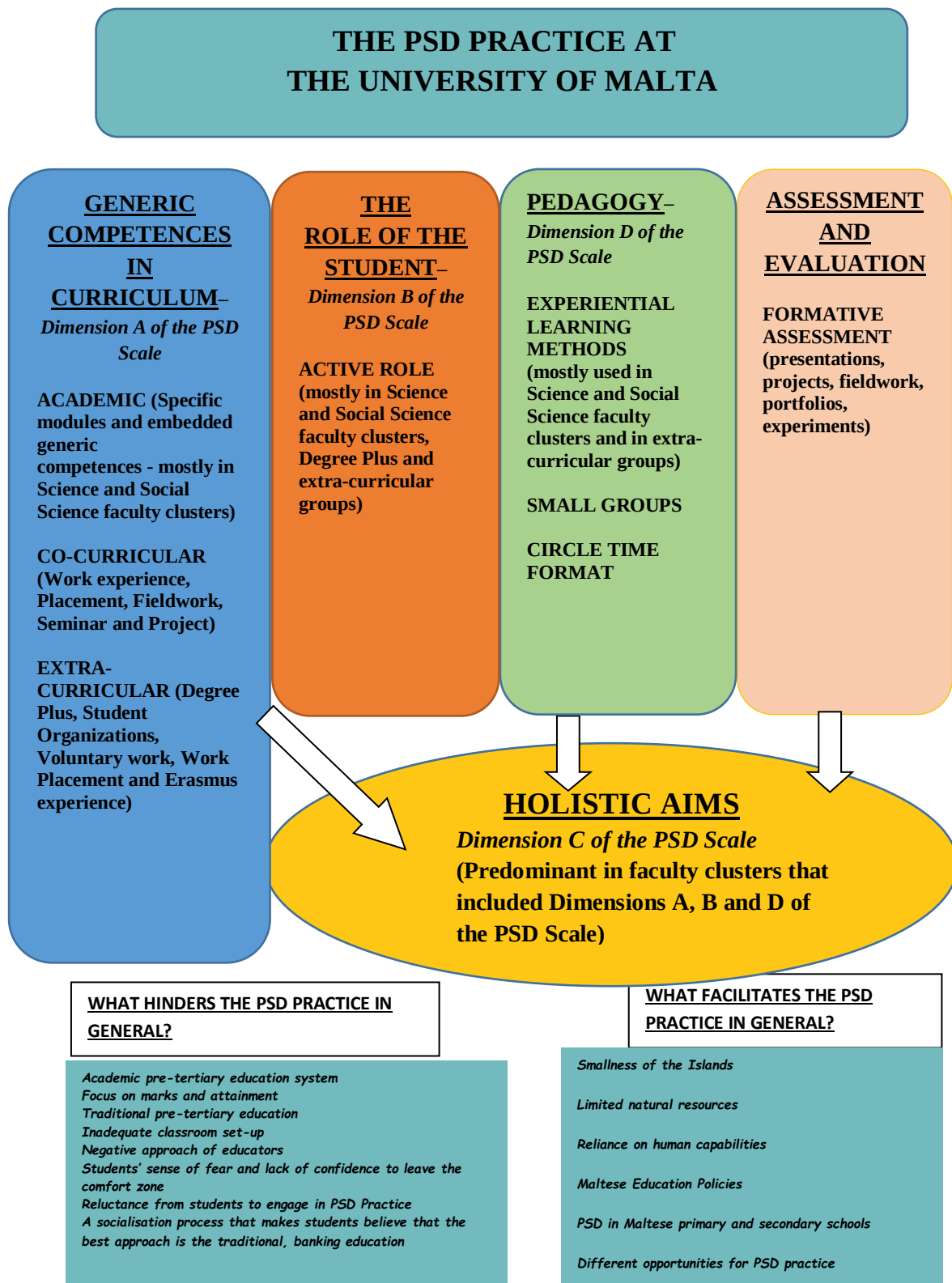


Figure 10.1: The PSD Practice at the University of Malta

When exploring the extent to which PSD practice is included within the undergraduate experience, respondents mentioned different aspects which facilitated or hindered such practice. Amongst the former, there were the positive approach of the educators; a constructivist, progressive and humanistic pedagogy; the use of different effective learning methods; the existence of small groups and circle time format and a formative assessment. On the other hand, aspects which hindered were: a traditional pre-tertiary education; the negative approach of the educators; the students' sense of fear and lack of confidence in leaving the comfort zone; reluctance from students to engage in PSD practice; a socialisation process that makes students believe that the best approach is the traditional, banking education; the predominant use of information-giving; lack of pedagogical training of lecturers; the school provenance; University courses which are knowledge-loaded and summative assessment.

These findings are very revealing to policy makers and UoM stakeholders because they are indicative of the fact that even though the UoM is already engaging in good practice, it also warns all faculties that they should enhance the aspects, mentioned above, which facilitated PSD practice, so as to adhere to the mission statement of the UoM and the intended holistic outcomes of the academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular content. From this research, it was often observed that there is no

particular standard in the provision of PSD practice. As a result, different departments and faculties provided such practice, depending on whether their Heads really believed in it, whether the curriculum content allowed space for the holistic dimension of education, whether the nature of the subject is person-oriented and whether the educators took the personal initiative to explore different methods and ways for learning. In fact, interviewees had different experiences of PSD practice. This might be resulting in different outcomes of education. As it will be shown in the next section, students coming from those faculties (Science and Social Science) which invested more in PSD practice could mention and explain better the contribution of PSD practice to their holistic development. Others who came from other faculty clusters and who did not attend Degree Plus and extra-curricular groups were more doubtful about the presence of PSD practice and its related holistic aims because some of them did not experience it at all. It appears to be a weakness of the UoM that there is no consistency in the provision of opportunities for PSD practice. To increase consistency, the UoM might ensure that all faculties engage in this practice. It would certainly be of interest to the UoM to bring together all Deans, so as to present how PSD practice is offered and to discuss how it can be beneficial. A common argument put forward by interviewed Deans was that: finding space for PSD practice within the curriculum is quite challenging. In reality, this research showed that there are actually different ways how this practice can be implemented, namely:

extra-curricular groups, voluntary work, an embedded mode or a modular mode.

In addition to such evaluation, as indicated in the aspects which hindered PSD practice, the way the Maltese Education System in general is structured is posing a problem to PSD practice at the UoM. It is an eye-opener to the Maltese education providers to revise and critically evaluate the entire Maltese Education System so as to ensure that PSD practice is properly implemented in actual practice and that the education is not based on the traditional, didactic approach instead of the facilitative, person-centred approach. Besides an evaluation of the Maltese Education System, amongst the factors which hindered PSD practice at the UoM, there was reference to the passivity of students and the sense of fear to engage in this practice, which demands active participation and courage to try new experiences. Such attitude and feelings were related to the Maltese culture and mentality of having an insular as well as protective environment which resists change and new challenges. It was also linked to the persistent priority given to academic accomplishment instead of holistic development. Both aspects related to the Maltese Education System in general and the Maltese mentality appear to be hindering PSD practice at the UoM (according to my interviewees), showing that “University is a reflection of society” (Dr Vincent Cassar). In addition, there were also

other factors which hindered such practice and which were directly related to the UoM. These were the knowledge-based courses, summative assessment and predominant use of information-giving. Such results might act as feedback to UoM educators and policy makers so as to evaluate their practices and to consider the factors which facilitated PSD practice, whilst trying to avoid the ones that hindered. They are also an eye-opener to UoM policy-makers to equip students with the necessary support structures in order to be able to interact within PSD practice, thus going against the Maltese mentality. As Prof. Charles Sammut argued, with greater popularisation of tertiary education, the UoM is attracting different students, including those with lack of social capital and who need more assistance. This urges the UoM stakeholders to provide these support structures. Through this research, it was revealed that certain departments within faculties use the buddy system and the mentor system. These were positively received by students, although it also appeared that greater student awareness of the support systems that were available to them, was required. In summary, the research was indicative of the ways PSD practice is included within the undergraduate experience and the ways such practice may be improved. For policy-makers, the evidence of this research would suggest that they might usefully consider the aspects related to Maltese mentality and culture, those linked to the Maltese education system in general and those related to the UoM.

3. To what extent does PSD practice, offered through the University of Malta undergraduate experience, help young undergraduates to enhance their well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability?

This research question relates to Dimension C (the holistic aims) of PSD practice. The link between holistic approaches, which in this thesis is referred to as 'PSD practice' and the development of holistic aims was highlighted in different studies and reports (Ofsted, 2011; OECD, 2001; Division of Mental Health WHO, 1993; Schmidt, Brown & Waycott, 1988; Swann, 1981). Different interviewees in this research also stressed this link. In fact, results from questionnaire show that students from the Science and Social Sciences Cluster, students who attended Degree Plus for more than four years and students who participated in extra-curricular groups ranked highest the provision of generic competences and the emphasis of their active role (which are two main dimensions in PSD practice) and ranked also top the belief that PSD practice within their UoM experience had holistic aims in terms of well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability. As a result, this encourages the UoM policy-makers to invest in this practice and not to rely on sporadic events or personal initiatives. There were interviewed participants who recognised the holistic aims of PSD practice and therefore, in support of this, it would be beneficial to increase student exposure to PSD practice as

it supports holistic development and it is in line with the mission statement of the UoM.

Even though interviewees recognised such link, data from questionnaires also revealed that students neither agreed nor disagreed about the holistic aims of PSD practice. Even if there were students who received help to focus on personal and social aspects as well as challenges through PSD practice, the traditional pre-tertiary education, the influence of the European Union with the economic agenda, a neo-liberal discourse, globalization and capitalism, all impeded the link between PSD practice and holistic aims. This was because some educators who engaged in PSD practice directed it towards utilitarian purposes, influenced by current discourse, rather than genuine holistic aims. Empirical data from this research suggests that despite the positive practices, the holistic aims focused more on employment and employability, hence some students were sceptical about the link between PSD practice and holistic aims, because in reality such aims served the purpose of the economy rather than their personal flourishing. This goes against the humanistic (besides utilitarian) purposes mentioned in the mission statement of the UoM. As a result, even though there were experiences where PSD supported holistic development, such aims could be genuinely targeted towards personal life. Given that different respondents had conflicting signals about the value of

PSD practice, since it differed from being instrumental towards economic purposes to being conducive to holistic development, it is hardly surprising that the results from the questionnaire did not show a majority of respondents who linked PSD practice to holistic aims. Whilst encouraging positive PSD practice, this research suggests that educators could engage in a reflective and critical process so as to evaluate whether the empirically confirmed link between PSD practice and holistic aims is being diluted by an instrumental focus upon economic outcomes.

10.4 Study Evaluation

For this thesis, the grounded theory version of Charmaz (2006) was followed for data collection and data analysis. Charmaz also adopts the evaluative criteria of credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness. In order to evaluate the outcomes of the study, these four criteria are discussed.

The study's credibility in this research was achieved since data was collected from different sources, namely UoM stakeholders (Deans and students), policy-makers, education academics, the Minister for Education and Employment and the Pro-Rector of the UoM. This facilitated the corroboration of data, thus constantly comparing different experiences.

Such comparisons formed an integral component of data analysis. All interview questions, the questionnaire and the list of interviewees are presented in Appendix 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8. Throughout the analysis, there was constant reference to excerpts from semi-structured interviews. The step by step process was explained in detail. Moreover, the breadth and depth of the results show an immersion in data and in-depth engagement in the research process about PSD practice.

From the start of the study, research about PSD practice at the UoM was identified as a research gap, because no one researched the way it is provided by the UoM and its contribution to the holistic development of the students. Consequently, this research provided rich data about an original topic, which was never explored in Malta. By identifying four specific dimensions and the related items, PSD practice at the UoM was analysed in detail. These dimensions and items can be used to develop questions that assess PSD practice in other areas like the primary, secondary and post-secondary schools. In terms of resonance, which is the ability of the research to elicit meanings and analytic interpretations, the different themes are indicative of a broad understanding of the research area. Different research methods were used so as to have a holistic understanding of the research area. Using different methods helped me to compare results and to ask for in-depth explanations. In terms of the

usefulness of the study, since it is a new area for exploration, this research helped to initiate exploration. Certainly, there is the potential for further research about the research area.

10.5 Limitations of the Study

Consistent with grounded theory methodology, the emergent substantive theory was not aimed at producing generalizations. In an effort to enhance the theory, different research participants were included in the research. However, the study cannot generalize about UoM and PSD practice in Malta. In addition to issues of generalizability, as Charmaz (2005) argues, no researcher is completely objective. Since I am a Lifeskills/PSE/PSD/PSCD teacher and strongly believes in PSD practice and since I had the role of an interpretive bricoleur (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), I had to be extra cautious not to impose my thoughts. However, this might have still influenced the research. The process of constant comparison and the process of reflexivity, coupled with discussions with supervisors, helped me to minimise my bias and the methodological limitations. In addition to such limitations, since there is a research gap about the study, there were different research questions that could have also been tackled. As a result, sometimes I wanted to delve deeper in other related areas like the transferability of generic competences, the impact of

formative assessment, the effect of the circle format, the impact of school provenance on the social capital and the nature-nurture dichotomy about generic competences. All these are directly linked to the research area, however I had to limit my research area to three research questions because I felt that they were extremely important to analyse and they are also linked to each other.

10.6 Implications from the Research Study

From the evidence presented, it seems that at UoM there were positive and negative experiences of PSD practice. Different respondents presented a series of suggestions that were discussed during the interviews. Other suggestions were elicited from results of questionnaire (Figure 5.14 - page 224). All suggestions are grouped in three clusters: 'Moving away from traditional education and utilitarian aims', 'Facilitative educators at the UoM' and 'Education is no panacea to the problems that we have out there'.

10.6.1 Moving away from Traditional Education and Utilitarian Aims

All interviewees argued that a change is required at pre-tertiary education level. They blamed the Maltese Education System in general for

the problems in PSD practice at the UoM. Empirical evidence indicates that the current education system adheres more to the traditional, banking education, where there is knowledge that is delivered to students (Freire, 1970). As a result, the interviewees noted that there must be an improvement in pre-tertiary education. However, a change can be implemented if it is directed towards different aspects in education, including the methodology, the programme and the assessment. This was confirmed by different interviewees. The Minister for Education and Employment commented that:

We are still examination obsessed and test driven. Now, one is hoping that this changes with the learning outcomes framework and the type of assessment that will replace tests and exams. Then, what methodology and programmes are used because these have to reinforce each other. If you change the method of assessment, but you do not change the pedagogy, there is the chance that you keep teaching to the test. As a result, changes have to be done in all these factors. You cannot change one thing only.

The Minister is suggesting a change in the education system in general. He also mentioned that in order to enhance PSD practice, the Ministry is working on a learning outcomes framework. Mr Ian Mifsud, explained that this is being introduced slowly within the pre-tertiary education levels, with the hope of making education less focused on the academic and more in line with the students' needs. He further explained that when one speaks

about knowledge, attitudes and skills based outcomes, one is already setting a different scenario that is placing the learner at the heart of the education process.

Since the empirical evidence from this research suggests that the traditional pre-tertiary education is hindering PSD practice at all levels of the education, the active role of the student and the holistic aims of PSD practice, and since this research, as well as literature (Maybury, 2013; Clark et al., 2003; Goldfinch & Hughes, 2007; Carroll et al., 2012; Brewster et al., 2012; Rogers, 1989; Million+, 2012), indicates that PSD³³ matters in the holistic development of the students, respondents argued that it is important that such practice is taken seriously. The learning outcomes framework might be a good solution, however it needs to be assessed continuously so that policy-makers ensure that PSD practice is not implemented for purposes which serve the economy but for the student's entire life. The latter was also a factor which hindered the link between PSD practice and holistic aims. This research stressed the fact that holistic aims include well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability. As a result holistic aims are not bound to employment and employability only. These research findings are an eye-opener to education policy-makers in general to genuinely believe in PSD practice and its

³³ Or holistic approaches to education

holistic aims. An education that is more person-centred and holistic would better equip students for their entire life, including their higher education.

10.6.2 Facilitative Educators at the University of Malta

One suggestion that emerged from this research was that educators at tertiary education level may require upskilling so that they have a better pedagogical formation and ongoing reflection on their pedagogy (Prof. Carmel Borg). One of the suggestions put forward by the students was to have lecturers who are more skilled in facilitating PSD practice, and not in the academic content only. Maria argued:

Teachers who are teaching me at University are boring as hell. They try to tell me to be creative and engaging and then they make it boring themselves. Teach by example. Teachers seem not to know how to do the lecture otherwise.

As highlighted in literature, the PSD educator must be well equipped with generic competences and must be able to achieve different aims, using different methods (Agius, 2009; Heron, 1999; Weil & McGill, 1989). Prof. Carmel Borg said that lecturers might be trained by having a Continuous Professional Development course which is based on the notion that engagement with students is very important. Even though the Pro-Rector

of the UoM maintained that lecturers are being given pedagogical training, policy makers may ensure that this opportunity is being taken by all educators, so as to be better equipped in providing PSD practice. Having the necessary pedagogical training still seems not to be enough because University is not a community of educators working together but a collection of individuals (Prof. Carmel Borg). It seems that at the UoM, educators tend to work on their own, instead of meeting to share good practice as well as to evaluate their work. In turn, this hinders change. He argued:

We are here like a convent rather than a community so I come in, I sit here, I produce research but most of the time on an individual basis so the community spirit is lacking. That makes change very very difficult on an institutional level. There are changes happening but most of those changes are on an individual basis. There are differences between faculties, there is a difference in terms of ethos, expectations, attitude, culture so obviously my comments are general in nature so I know that there are pockets of home within University where things are done differently.

The lack of community aspect is in itself lack of PSD practice because the latter is based on communication, feedback and teamwork. Since most of the work carried out by educators is held on an individual basis, such three aspects tend to be hindered. One suggestion made during this research was that the University should continue to provide Professional Development to educators and that it should find ways of enhancing teamwork between staff within the same department and faculties as well as between different faculties. This links to the research findings about the provision of PSD

practice on a sporadic basis, hence not guaranteeing every student to have PSD practice: “There are differences between faculties, there is a difference in terms of ethos, expectations, attitude, culture.” (Prof. Carmel Borg). If there is more communication and teamwork between faculties, these issues may be discussed more, good practices might be shared and there might be a more interdisciplinary approach used by the educators.

10.6.3 “Education is no panacea to the problems that we have out there”

Education is “no panacea to the problems that we have out there” (Prof. Carmel Borg). Evidence from this research shows that the education is one aspect of the system. This research revealed that even if PSD practice is provided, it does not necessarily translate into having a different society because education is only one aspect of it. As a result, one must address other issues, rather than blaming only the Maltese Education System, which might not always solve the other existent problems. Two of these might be the home background and the community. In fact in his interview, the Minister for Education and Employment, commented that:

Education is a complex process. To try to understand it, you need to adopt the systems approach. It means that you identify the different factors that are part of the system. Those factors include factors beyond school. You have factors within school and factors beyond school.

As a result, besides addressing both pre-tertiary and University education to be more in line with PSD practice, it is suggested that policy makers from different areas discuss genuinely the existent problems within the education system in general, so that they are tackled at grassroots level.

10.7 Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on PSD practice in Malta with a specific focus on the UoM undergraduate experiences and the contribution of PSD practice to the students' holistic development. Certainly, this was a new area that was explored. As a result, there are further possibilities for future research which delves into the way PSD practice is implemented at the primary, secondary and post-secondary education levels. Even though research question 1 revealed the ways PSD practice is included at all education levels, a research on this area would provide a more in depth analysis. This research focused specifically on the UoM, hence the focus on PSD practice at all levels can be further explored. Another key area, which requires analysis, is the difference in state, Church and private schools in Malta when providing PSD practice. Even though school provenance was linked to the facilitation or hindrance of this practice, it would be very interesting to explore further reasons for this. In relation to it, this research showed that the home background and the social capital were linked to the

provision of PSD practice. This is also an area which might need more consideration so as to provide more explanations.

10.8 Conclusion

The thesis was aimed at understanding how PSD operates within the Maltese Education System, with a specific focus on the UoM and at providing research that can be used by policy-makers to inform developments. The research is significant because it shows that there are positive and negative experiences of PSD practice within the education system and at the UoM. It also reveals that such practice makes a difference in the life of an individual in terms of holistic development and that having an education system which focuses on generic competences, places the student at a central role for learning and makes use of different effective learning methods, enhances the holistic aims of education. Nevertheless, this was hindered by different factors, some of which were: lack of proper provision, reluctance attributed to the Maltese mentality or culture, traditional education, lack of social capital from the home background and lack of genuine link between PSD practice and holistic aims. I hope that the systems approach is considered and that each stakeholder responsible for students' education works in collaboration to elicit the potential and the beauty found within, so as to contribute to well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability.

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**Appendix 1 – A list of Semi-Structured Interviews held from
October 2011 to October 2012**

Number of semi-structured interview	Date when interview was held	Name of interviewee	Position of the interviewee
Semi-structured Interview 1:	21 st December 2011	Mr Adrian Mamo	Executive Director of the Institute of Tourism Studies
Semi-structured Interview 2:	24 th October 2011	Mr John Bartolo	Director of Information and Student Support Services at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
Semi-structured Interview 3:	20 th December 2011	Dr Dione Mifsud	Head of Department Counselling, Senior Lecturer, Faculty for Social Well-Being at the University of Malta
		Dr Ruth Falzon	Coordinator of PSD Training, Department of Counselling, Faculty for Social Well-Being at the University of Malta
		Mr Gottfried Catania	Lecturer Department of Psychology, Faculty for Social Well-Being at the University of Malta
Semi-structured Interview 4:	18 th November 2011	Mr Matthew Agius	Commission Officer at the Malta Qualifications Council
		Mr Richard Curmi	Senior Manager at the Malta Qualifications Council

Semi-structured Interview 5	18 th April 2012	Ms Maude Muscat	PSD lecturer at the University of Malta
Semi-structured Interview 6	18 th May 2012	Ms Myriam Peresso	PSD teacher at a secondary state school in Malta
Semi-structured Interview 7	22 nd May 2012	Ms Annalise Attard	Teacher and Lecturer at St Aloysius' Sixth Form College
Semi-structured Interview 8	24 th May 2012	Dr Maureen Cole	Senior Lecturer, Head of Department and Dean of the Department of Social Policy and Social Work within the Faculty for Social Well-Being at the University of Malta
Semi-structured Interview 9	12 th June 2012	Prof. Ronald Sultana	Professor Education Studies within the Faculty of Education and Institute Director of the Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research within the University of Malta
Semi-structured Interview 10	28 th June 2012	Fr Joseph Calleja	Lecturer in Personal Awareness Lifeskills at De La Salle College
Semi-structured Interview 11	14 th August 2012	Mr Ray Zammit	Education Officer for the Non State Sector at Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education who was involved in the introduction of PSD in state schools
Semi-structured Interview 12	13 th September 2012	Mr Lawrence Muscat	First PSD Educational Officer

Semi-structured Interview 13	13 th September 2012	Fr Dr Alfred Darmanin	Lecturer at the University of Malta who started a form a PSD in Malta
Semi-structured Interview 14	2 nd October 2012	Mr Joe Sammut	Educational Officer Guidance and Counselling in 1980's when PSE started in government schools.

Appendix 2 – A list of Semi-Structured Interviews held from

March 2014 to January 2015

Final year undergraduate University of Malta late adolescents and early adults

Fictitious name	Date	Faculty Cluster	Participation in Degree Plus or ERASMUS	UOM extra-curricular groups that students attended
Martha	13 th March 2014	Social Sciences	NO	NO
Lucia	14 th March 2014	Social Sciences	NO	NO
Therese	27 th March 2014	Social Sciences	Spanish and Photography	University Sports Complex and ASCS
Margot	1 st April 2014	Social Sciences	Music and Drama	NO
Claudia	2 nd April 2014	Humanities	Boxing	One of the executive members of the Youth for the Environment, going up for KSU elections, KSU culture sub-committee, helps out in activities on campus.
Marco	27 th March 2014	Social Sciences	Vocal Studies	NO
Chloe	11 th April 2014	Social Sciences	NO	NO
Jonathan	14 th April	Science	MHSA ERASMUS	NO
Marlene	15 th April 2014	Science	NO ERASMUS	NO
Mandy	16 th April	Social	AIESEC	NO

	2014	Sciences	ASCS	
Mario	11 th April 2014	Social Sciences	AIESEC Counseling	NO
Luca	2014	Civil Sciences	SACES ERASMUS	NO
Tony	21 st April 2014	Social Sciences	SDM	NO
Carmen	29 th April 2014	Science	NO	NO
Alexia	29 th April 2014	Social Sciences	NO	NO
Melvin	28 th April 2014	Humanities	NO	NO
Alan	15 th April 2014	Civil Sciences	NO	NO
Raelene	15 th April 2014	Social Sciences	University Lesbian, Gay, Trans Organisation	YES
Margaret	21 st April 2014	Social Sciences	NO	Basic Italian
Marvic	29 th April 2014	Social Sciences	NO	NO
Marcella	21 st April 2014	Civil Sciences	AIESEC DESA	Latin
Maria	10 th April 2014	Social Sciences	ERASMUS	NO
Marouska	10 th April 2014	Social Sciences	NO	NO

Faculty Deans

Date	Name	Faculty Cluster
2 nd April 2014	Prof Angela Xuereb	Science
2 nd April 2014	Prof Kevin Aquilina	Civil Sciences
3 rd April 2014	Prof Dominic Fenech	Humanities
8 th April 2014	Prof Alex Torpiano	Civil Sciences
28 th April 2014	Dr Maureen Cole	Social Sciences

2 nd May 2014	Prof Charles Betts	Civil Sciences
21st April 2014	Prof Charles Sammut	Science
28th April 2014	Prof Ernest Cachia	Civil Sciences

Education academics

Date	Name	Faculty
16 th April 2014	Prof. Carmel Borg	Faculty of Education
29 th April 2014	Prof. Ronald Sultana	Faculty of Education
2 nd June 2014	Dr Vincent Cassar	Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy

Policy makers

Date	Name	Role within the institution
17 th May 2014	Mr Joseph Farrugia	Director General Malta Employers Association
26 th May 2014	Mr Ian Mifsud	Director General Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education
30 th May 2014	Mr Clyde Caruana	Chair Employment Training Corporation and ex-director of Jobs Plus
4 th June 2014	Dr Frank Fabri	Director Research and Development Ministry for Education and Employment
25 th June 2014	Mr George Borg	Director Directorate for Educational Services

Interviewees who are responsible for decisions held within the education at the University of Malta

1 st December 2014	Hon. Dr Evarist Bartolo	Minister for Education and Employment
8 th January 2015	Prof MaryAnne Lauri	Pro-Rector University of Malta

Appendix 3: The Questionnaire

Learning at the University of Malta

This research is assessing the type of education that is provided at the University of Malta. It is also aimed to investigate whether learning at University of Malta helps your personal growth.

1. Gender (kindly tick where applicable):

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

2. Age (kindly tick where applicable)

- ☐ 17-25
- ☐ 26-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51-60
- ☐ 61+

3. Place of residence:



4. Faculty I am enrolled to (kindly tick one answer):

- ☐ Faculty of Education
- ☐ Faculty of Arts
- ☐ Faculty of Health Sciences
- ☐ Faculty of Medicine and Surgery
- ☐ Faculty of Dental Surgery
- ☐ Faculty for Social Well-Being
- ☐ Faculty for the Built Environment
- ☐ Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy
- ☐ Faculty of Engineering
- ☐ Faculty of Information and Communication Technology
- ☐ Faculty of Laws
- ☐ Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences
- ☐ Faculty of Science
- ☐ Faculty of Theology

5. Undergraduate degree that I follow at the University of Malta:

6. I attended the Degree Plus Programme (kindly tick one option):

- ☐ For 1 year
- ☐ For 2 years
- ☐ For 3 years
- ☐ For 4 years
- ☐ For 5 years
- ☐ For more than 5 years
- ☐ Never

Other (please specify)

7. I was involved in these extra-curricular groups, as offered by the University of Malta, during my experience as an undergraduate (you can tick more than one option):

☐ Association des Etats Généraux des

☐ Malta Medical Students Association (MMSA)

Etudiants de l'Europe (AEGEE)

☐ Association International des Etudiants de Science, Economie et Commerce (AIESEC)

☐ Arts Student Association (ASA)

☐ Association of Student of Commercial Studies (ASCS)

☐ BetaPsi (BPsi)

☐ Communication Association (Comm. A.)

☐ Department of English Students Association (DESA)

☐ European Law Student Association (ELSA)

☐ European Studies Organisation (ESO)

☐ Għaqda tal-Malti - Università

☐ Għaqda Studenti tal-Kriminologija (GħSK)

☐ Għaqda Studenti tal-Ligi (GħSL)

☐ Għaqda Studenti tat-Teologija (GħST)

☐ Green House

☐ Grupp Universitarji Ghawdxin (GUG)

☐ International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE)

☐ Independent Collective Realta' (ICR)

☐ Move Studenti

☐ Moviment Graffiti

☐ Moviment Kattoliku Studenti Universitarji (MKSU)

☐ The Malta Pharmaceutical Students Association (MPSA)

☐ The Malta University Film Club (MUFC)

☐ The Malta University Sports Club (MUSC)

☐ Organizzazzjoni Studenti Qwiebel (OSQ)

☐ Pulse

☐ Science Students' Society (S3)

☐ Society of Architecture and Civil Engineering Students (SACES)

☐ Studenti Demokristjani Maltin (SDM)

☐ Students for Healthy Living (SFHL)

☐ Studenti Harsien Socjali (SHS)

☐ Students Philosophical Society

☐ Students Sociology Association (SSA)

☐ Terra di Mezzo Malta (TDM 2000 Malta)

☐ University Bible Group

☐ Università tat-Terza Età (U3E)

☐ Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (IEEE)	☐ University Engineering Student Association (UESA)
☐ Insite (INSITE)	☐ University of Malta Debating Society (UMDS)
☐ ICT Student Association (ICTSA)	☐ University of Malta Geographical Society (UMGS)
☐ Young European Federalists (JEF)	☐ University of Malta Racing (UoMR)
☐ Kunsill Studenti Universitarji (KSU)	☐ We Are – The University of Malta LGBTQQI Organisation (We Are)
☐ Malta Association for Dental Students (MADS)	☐ Youth for the Environment (Y4TE)
☐ Malta Health Students' Association (MHSA)	
☐ Malta International Relations Students Society (MIRSA)	
Other (please specify)	

8. Competences developed through my experience as an undergraduate at the University of Malta:

	Not developed	Weakly developed	Moderately developed	Considerably developed	Strongly developed
Teamwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Stress Management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Self-esteem	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dealing with my feelings effectively	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Problem-solving	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Decision-making	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Resilience (the ability to become strong after something bad happens)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Time management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Self-acceptance (accepting yourself)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Initiative	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creativity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Critical thinking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ability to empathise (ability to understand the condition of	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

others)

Conflict management (dealing effectively with your conflict)

☐☐☐☐☐

Adjustment to new situations

☐☐☐☐☐

Comments

9. Techniques or pedagogy used during my experience as an undergraduate at the University of Malta (you can tick more than one option):

☐ Online learning

☐ Brainstorming

☐ Role-plays

☐ Discussions

☐ Energizers (activities which require physical movement around the lecture room)

☐ Case studies

☐ Sharing of experiences

☐ Information from lecturer

Other (please specify)

10. Effectiveness of techniques for my learning (you can tick more than one option):

	Not effective	Weakly effective	Moderately effective	Considerably effective	Strongly effective
Online learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Brainstorming	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Role-plays	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discussions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Energizers (activities which require physical movement around the lecture room)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Case studies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sharing of experiences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Information from lecturer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Comments					

11. During the degree, I was assessed through (you can tick more than one answer):

☐ Exam	☐ Experiment
☐ Portfolio	☐ Fieldwork
☐ Project	☐ Assignment
☐ Presentation	

Other (please specify)

12. Lecturers and coordinators (kindly tick one for each answer):

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral (neither disagree nor agree)	Agree	Strongly agree
Encouraged me to ask questions so as to reflect critically	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Centered education around the development of my potential	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Focused on the necessary generic competences that I require to deal with	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

my course challenges					
Focused on the necessary generic competences that I require to deal with my life challenges	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helped me to open and self-disclose my feelings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Focused and developed my character qualities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Made reference to my interests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Elicited my knowledge and experiences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify)					

13. My experience as an undergraduate at the University of Malta (you can tick more than one option):

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral (neither disagree nor agree)	Agree	Strongly agree
Focused on my needs as a person	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Focused on my capacity and my talents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Made me feel central to my own learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helped me to become a strong person	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Encouraged me to participate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Considered my background	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Focused on personal aspects, not only academically	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify)					

14. If you think that the undergraduate experience was person-centred (focuses on your needs and considers your valuable experiences) and holistic (focuses on different aspects of development rather than academic only) kindly answer question 14.

Since the undergraduate experience was person-centred and holistic, it:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral (neither disagree nor agree)	Agree	Strongly agree
Made me feel happy about my life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helped me to develop my intellectual	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provided the necessary competences to obtain an employment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helped me to feel physically healthy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trained me in how to cope well in the place of work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Facilitated the way I recognise and manage my emotions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Contributed to my personal satisfaction in relation to my career	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

path

Helped me to have a meaning and a purpose in life

☐☐☐☐☐

Helped me to develop as an individual

☐☐☐☐☐

Helped me to deal with others effectively

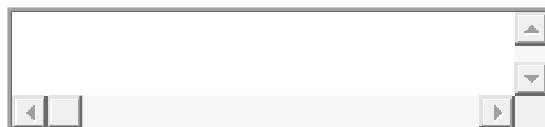
☐☐☐☐☐

Other (please specify)

15. In what ways did the experience as an undergraduate at the University of Malta help you in your life?

16. What would you wish to improve about your experience as an undergraduate at the University of Malta?

17. Whilst thanking you for your contribution, if you would like to be contacted for an interview about the research area, kindly write your name and surname as well as your mobile number. Your help is greatly appreciated.

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Appendix 4: List of questions used during the initial semi-structured interviews

1. What is Personal and Social Development (PSD)?
2. Which are the aspects that makes up PSD practice?
3. Which are the generic competences integrated within the curriculum of PSD practice?
4. How did the issue of introducing this type of education arise? Was this “bottom-up” (from staff) or “top-down” (from him)? If the latter, what was the staff response?
5. What about the content of the courses?
6. Who influences the content of the courses?
7. How are the generic competences mentioned in your prospectus delivered within the different courses?
8. Do all students have person-centred holistic education, based on generic competences in their curriculum?
9. Which is its function in the educational process of the students?
10. How can PSD practice contribute to the well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability of the students?
11. How do you ensure the holistic development of your students?
12. What are your plans for the future with regards to PSD practice?

Appendix 5: Interview Questions to Young Undergraduate UOM students

AIM 1- To answer research question 1 about the education system in general –

What is the perception of University of Malta stakeholders with regards to PSD practice in Malta?

AIM 2- To answer research question 2 about the education system at the University of Malta–

To what extent and in what ways is PSD practice applied to the undergraduate experience as offered by the University of Malta?

AIM 3- To answer research question 3 about the education system at the University of Malta–

To what extent does PSD practice, offered through the University of Malta undergraduate experience, help young undergraduates to enhance their well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability?

IMPORTANT- THIS INTERVIEW FOCUSES ON GENERIC COMPETENCES (WHICH ARE TRANSFERABLE) RATHER THAN DOMAIN SPECIFIC COMPETENCES

Set of question 1: Perceptions about PSD practice in Malta.

- In which faculty are you studying? For how many years have you been studying in this faculty?
- In which extra-curricular groups are you involved in?
- Why do you attend (or not) the Degree Plus Programme?
- What is your perception of PSD practice in the Maltese system (primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary)?
- In your experience, how is PSD practice implemented in the Maltese Education System (primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary)?
- I am considering the UOM undergraduate experience as that which consists of the credits (including fieldwork or visits), the Degree Plus programme and the extra-curricular groups. In reality do you think that the undergraduate UOM experience is person-centred, holistic and based on generic competences? Why?
- Do you think that the UOM should provide PSD practice? Why? How?

- Do you think the rise in the number of students is affecting the provision of PSD practice at the UOM?

Set of question 2: Perceptions about the development of generic competences in PSD practice as implemented through the undergraduate University of Malta experience.

- Do you think that the role of the UOM is to develop the generic competences rather than the academic competences only? Why?
- How much emphasis is being given to the development of generic competences throughout the UOM undergraduate experience?
- From this list of generic competences, which are the one which are the most and least developed through your UOM undergraduate experience:

Teamwork, Leadership, Stress management, Self-esteem, Dealing with my feelings effectively, Problem-solving, Communication, Decision-making, Resilience, Time management, Self-acceptance, Initiative, Creativity, Critical thinking, Ability to emphasise, Conflict management, Adjustment to new situations

- What do you think about this result?

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED – THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENERIC COMPETENCES

- How are these generic competences developed through the UOM undergraduate experience (with regards to your UOM undergraduate experience)?
- *Here I will show the list of credits, with the generic competences which were aimed to be developed, as described by the online course description. Can you comment about these?*
- In your experience, how should you develop the generic competences:

Through a specific credit, Through participation in an extra-curricular groups, Through participation in the Degree Plus Programme, Through work experience organised by the University of Malta, as part of the curriculum, Through work experience not organised by the University of Malta, Others??

Set 3: Perceptions about the active role of the students in PSD practice, as implemented through the University of Malta undergraduate experience.

- Did your undergraduate UOM experience (For each item explain how?)–
 - a. Encourage you to participate?
 - b. Make you feel central to your own learning?

- c. Help you to open and self-disclose your feelings?
- d. Encourage you to ask questions so as to reflect critically?
- e. Elicit your knowledge and experience?
- f. Make reference to your background?
- g. Focus on personal aspects, not only academic?
- h. Focus on your capacity and talents?
- i. Focus on necessary generic competences that you require to tackle the life challenges?
- j. Focus on necessary generic competences that you require to tackle the course challenges?
- k. Help students to develop your potential?

- What do you think about this result?

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED – THE ACTIVE ROLE OF THE STUDENT

Set 4: Perceptions about the effectiveness of different methods of learning and assessment in PSD practice, as implemented through the University of Malta education experience.

- Results from questionnaires show that the methods which were mostly used were:

Information from lecturer, Discussions and Online learning

Whereas the least were

Role plays, Energizers and Sharing of experiences

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED – TECHNIQUES OR PEDAGOGY USED

AND

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED - THE EFFECTIVENESS OF METHODS USED

What do you think about these results? In your case which are the most methods used? Which of these do you find mostly effective? Do you think that the UOM should use different methods for education?

- What do you think about this result? In your faculty, how are you assessed? How should students be assessed at the UOM?

SEE BAR GRAPH NAMED – ASSESSMENT METHODS USED

Set 5: Perceptions about the aims in PSD practice as implemented through the University of Malta undergraduate experience (HERE FOCUS ON THIS SECTION IN MORE DEPTH SO AS TO ASSESS THE CONTRIBUTION OF PSD PRACTICE)

- Do you think that your faculty is providing PSD practice, based on generic competences? If no discuss why, if yes, answer these questions.
- In your opinion, which should be the aims of PSD practice, based on generic competences at the UOM (utilitarian versus holistic)?
- In reality, which are the aims of PSD practice, based on generic competences at the UOM?
- What do you think about this result?

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED - THE HOLISTIC AIMS

- How is the PSD practice, based on generic competences (ENCOURAGE RESPONDENT TO GIVE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES AND TO ANALYSE IN DEPTH):
 - a. Helping you to feel physically healthy?
 - b. Helping you to develop your intellectual?
 - c. Helping you to deal with others effectively?
 - d. Contributing to your personal satisfaction in relation to your career path?
 - e. Helping you to have a meaning and a purpose in life?
 - f. Facilitating the way you recognise and manage your emotions?
 - g. Making you feel happy about your life?
 - h. Helping you to develop as an individual?
 - i. Providing the necessary competences to obtain an employment?
 - j. Training you in how to cope well in the place of work?
- Throughout the course, which were your life challenges (developmental and course)? How did the person-centred holistic UOM undergraduate experience, based on generic competences assist you?
- Present these developmental challenges and discuss whether they feel these challenges or developmental aspects and whether this type of education helped them in tackling them and took them in consideration-
- Cognitive development – abstract, idealistic and logical thinking; greater complexity of thinking; mature thinking relying on subjective experiences; the ability to deal with uncertainty compromise, inconsistency, imperfection and contradiction; awareness that problems may have different causes and solutions and the ability to choose one solution.

- Emotional development – experience of emotional changes (eg. Moodiness, anxiety and tension); there are a lot of transitions which may cause different feelings; even due to the concept of the hurried child/miniature adult.
- Personal development – complex self-concept - they can distinguish between actual and possible self; a time when individual make choices; they start making choices for adult life and choices in lifestyle, values, occupation and relationships; they experience instability in love and work; there is role experimentation of new behaviours, roles and different ways of doing things; there is also identity confusion; there is the need to form an identity; they try to integrate various aspects of one's identity from appraisals of others and individuating; they may have diffused identity (give up commitments they grew up with but do not find viable alternatives), foreclosed identity (reluctant to challenge the commitments they grew up with), identity moratorium (explore and experiment) and achieved identity (strong sense of identity), there is a process of differentiation and integration or substitution (replacing child like set of beliefs, attitudes and commitments as one's own).
- Vocational development – develop a realistic self-concept and implementing a vocational preference through role tryouts and exploration; they are required to specify their preferences so that they may find an employer or appropriate school for specialized education; they also tend to make plans to fulfil their career objectives; they have an idea of the occupations accepted by them and are influenced by how others view them; they evaluate their career possibilities and see how available they are; they identify occupations of interest.
- Social development – start forming healthy friendships and intimate relationships; may experience a time of termination or modification in meaningful relationships.

Set 6: General feedback about the University of Malta undergraduate courses.

- What do you think about this result? Which are your comments? What is your perception?

SEE BAR GRAPH NAMED – WAYS IN WHICH THE UNDERGRADUATE UOM EXPERIENCE HELPED THE STUDENT IN ONE'S LIFE

Appendix 6: Interview Questions to Deans

AIM 1- To answer research question 1 about the education system in general –

What is the perception of University of Malta stakeholders with regards to PSD practice in Malta?

AIM 2- To answer research question 2 about the education system at the University of Malta–

To what extent and in what ways is PSD practice applied to the undergraduate experience as offered by the University of Malta?

AIM 3- To answer research question 3 about the education system at the University of Malta–

To what extent does PSD practice, offered through the University of Malta undergraduate experience, help young undergraduates to enhance their well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability?

IMPORTANT- THIS INTERVIEW FOCUSES ON GENERIC COMPETENCES (WHICH ARE TRANSFERABLE) RATHER THAN DOMAIN SPECIFIC COMPETENCES

Set of question 1: Perceptions about PSD practice in Malta

- GENERAL INFORMATION – Can you briefly explain your background? For how many years have you been working in this faculty?
- What is your perception of PSD practice in the Maltese system (primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary)? (aims, methods, development of generic competences, and the active role of the student)
- How is PSD practice implemented in the Maltese Education System (primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary)?
- I am considering the UOM undergraduate experience as that which consists of the credits (including fieldwork or visits), the Degree Plus programme and the extra-curricular groups. In reality do you think that the undergraduate UOM experience is person-centred, holistic and based on generic competences? Why?
- Do you think that the UOM should provide PSD practice? How? Why?
- Do you think the rise in the number of students is affecting the provision of PSD practice at the UOM? Why?

Set of question 2: Perceptions about the development of generic competences in PSD practice, as implemented through the undergraduate University of Malta experience

- In your faculty, how much emphasis is being given to the development of generic competences (throughout the UOM undergraduate experience)?
- Do you think that the role of the UOM is to develop the generic competences rather than the academic competences only? Why?
- What do you think about this result?

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED – THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENERIC COMPETENCES

- How are these generic competences developed through the UOM undergraduate experience (with regards to your faculty)?
- *Here I will show the list of credits, with the generic skills which were aimed to be developed, as described by the online course description. Can you comment about these?*
- How should the students develop the generic competences:

Through a specific credit, Through participation in an extra-curricular groups, Through participation in the Degree Plus Programme, Through work experience organised by the University of Malta, as part of the curriculum, Through work experience not organised by the University of Malta, Others??

Set 3: Perceptions about the active role of the students in PSD practice as implemented through the University of Malta undergraduate experience

- What do you think about this result?

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED – THE ACTIVE ROLE OF THE STUDENT

- How is your faculty –
 - a. Encouraging students to participate?
 - b. Making students feel central to their own learning?
 - c. Helping them to open and self-disclose their feelings?
 - d. Encouraging them to ask questions so as to reflect critically?
 - e. Eliciting their knowledge and experiences?
 - f. Making reference to the students' background?
 - g. Focusing on personal aspects, not only academic?

- h. Focusing on their capacity and talents?
- i. Focusing on necessary generic competences that students require to tackle the life challenges?
- j. Focusing on necessary generic competences that students require to tackle the course challenges?
- k. Helping students to develop their potential?

Set 4: Perceptions about the effectiveness of different methods of learning and assessment in PSD practice, as implemented through the University of Malta education experience

- Results from questionnaires show that the methods which were mostly used were:

Information from lecturer, Discussions and Online learning

Whereas the least were

Role plays, Energizers and Sharing of experiences

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED – TECHNIQUES OR PEDAGOGY USED

AND

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED - THE EFFECTIVENESS OF METHODS

What do you think about these results? In your faculty which are the most methods used? Do you think that the UOM should use different methods for education?

- What do you think about this result? In your faculty, how are students assessed? How should students be assessed at the UOM?

SEE BAR GRAPH NAMED – ASSESSMENT METHODS USED

Set 5: Perceptions about the holistic aims in PSD practice, as implemented through the University of Malta undergraduate experience

- Do you think that your faculty is providing PSD practice? If no discuss why, if yes, answer these questions.
- In your opinion, which should be the aims of PSD practice at the UOM?

- In reality, which are the aims of PSD practice at the UOM?
- What do you think about this result?

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED - THE HOLISTIC AIMS

- How is PSD practice at your faculty:
 - a. Helping students to feel physically healthy?
 - b. Helping students to develop their intellectual?
 - c. Helping students to deal with others effectively?
 - d. Contributing to their personal satisfaction in relation to their career path?
 - e. Helping them to have a meaning and a purpose in life?
 - f. Facilitating the way they recognise and manage their emotions?
 - g. Making them feel happy about their life?
 - h. Helping them to develop as an individual?
 - i. Providing the necessary competences to obtain an employment?
 - j. Training them in how to cope well in the place of work?

Set 6: Results from the questionnaire

- From results elicited from the questionnaire, it seems that students from the Science cluster (faculty of health sciences, faculty of medicine and surgery, faculty of dental surgery and faculty of science) were the most who think that UOM undergraduate experience developed their generic competences and put them in a central role for learning. These were followed by:
 - a. the students from the Social Science cluster (faculty of laws, faculty for social well-being, faculty of education, faculty of economics, management and accountancy, faculty of media and knowledge sciences)
 - b. the students from the Civil Science cluster (faculty for the built environment, faculty of engineering and faculty of information and communication technology)
 - c. the students from Humanities cluster (faculty of arts and faculty of theology)

What do you think about these results?

- From results elicited from the questionnaire, it seems that students from the Science cluster (faculty of health sciences, faculty of medicine and surgery, faculty of dental surgery and faculty of science) were the most who think that different methods used within the UOM undergraduate experience were effective and that the UOM undergraduate experience had aims which tackle different aspects required for the life of the individual. These were followed by:

- a. the students from the Social Science cluster (faculty of laws, faculty for social well-being, faculty of education, faculty of economics, management and accountancy, faculty of media and knowledge sciences)
- b. the students from Humanities cluster (faculty of arts and faculty of theology)
- c. the students from the Civil Science cluster (faculty for the built environment, faculty of engineering and faculty of information and communication technology)

What do you think about these results?

- From the questionnaires, results showed that those students who attended the Degree Plus Programme for 4 years or more (except for point c – highest score for that obtained by students who attended Degree Plus for at least 1 year) and those who participated in extra-curricular groups, were the most who think that UOM undergraduate experience
 - a. developed their generic competences,
 - b. put them in a central role for learning,
 - c. found the use of different methods as effective and
 - d. had aims which tackle different aspects required for the life of the individual

What do you think about these results?

Set 7: General feedback about the University of Malta undergraduate courses.

- What do you think about this result? Which are your comments? What is your perception?

SEE BAR GRAPH NAMED – WAYS IN WHICH THE UNDERGRADUATE UOM EXPERIENCE HELPED THE STUDENT IN ONE'S LIFE

- What do you think about this result? Which are your comments? What is your perception?

SEE BAR GRAPH NAMED – SUGGESTED ITEMS WHICH MAY IMPROVE THE UNDERGRADUATE UOM EXPERIENCE

- Any concluding comments?

Appendix 7: Interview Questions to Education Academics and Policy Makers

IMPORTANT- THIS INTERVIEW FOCUSES ON GENERIC COMPETENCES (WHICH ARE TRANSFERABLE) RATHER THAN DOMAIN SPECIFIC COMPETENCES

AIM 1- To answer research question 1 about the education system in general –

What is the perception of University of Malta stakeholders with regards to PSD practice in Malta?

AIM 2- To answer research question 2 about the education system at the University of Malta–

To what extent and in what ways is PSD practice applied to the undergraduate experience as offered by the University of Malta?

AIM 3- To answer research question 3 about the education system at the University of Malta–

To what extent does PSD practice, offered through the University of Malta undergraduate experience, help young undergraduates to enhance their well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability?

Set of question 1: Perceptions about PSD practice in Malta

- GENERAL INFORMATION – Can you briefly explain your background?
- What is your perception of PSD practice in the Maltese system (primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary)? (aims, methods, development of generic competences, and the active role of the student)
- How is PSD practice implemented in the Maltese Education System (primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary)?
- Do you think that the UOM should provide PSD practice? How? Why?
- Do you think the rise in the number of students is affecting the provision of PSD practice at the UOM? Why?

Set of question 2: Perceptions about the development of generic competences in PSD practice

- How much emphasis is being given to the development of generic competences (throughout the primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary education stages)?
- Do you think that the role of the education system is to develop the generic competences rather than the academic competences only? Why?
- What do you think about this result?

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED – THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENERIC COMPETENCES

- How are these generic competences developed?
- *Here I will show the list of credits, with the generic skills which were aimed to be developed at the University of Malta, as described by the online course description. Can you comment about these?*
- How should students develop the generic competences:

Through a specific credit, Through an embedded system, Through participation in an extra-curricular groups, Through work experience, Others??

Set 3: Perceptions about the active role of the students in PSD practice

- What do you think about this result?

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED – THE ACTIVE ROLE OF THE STUDENT

- How is the education system –
 - a. Encouraging students to participate?
 - b. Making students feel central to their own learning?
 - c. Helping them to open and self-disclose their feelings?
 - d. Encouraging them to ask questions so as to reflect critically?
 - e. Eliciting their knowledge and experiences?
 - f. Making reference to the students' background?
 - g. Focusing on personal aspects, not only academic?
 - h. Focusing on their capacity and talents?
 - i. Focusing on necessary generic competences that students require to tackle the life challenges?

- j. Focusing on necessary generic competences that students require to tackle the course challenges?
- k. Helping students to develop their potential?

Set 4: Perceptions about the effectiveness of different methods of learning and assessment in PSD practice

- Results from questionnaires show that the methods which were mostly used were:

Information giving, Discussions and Online learning

Whereas the least were

Role plays, Energizers and Sharing of experiences

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED – TECHNIQUES OR PEDAGOGY

AND

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED - THE EFFECTIVENESS OF METHODS

- What do you think about this result? How are students generally assessed? How should students be assessed?

SEE BAR GRAPH NAMED – ASSESSMENT METHODS USED

Set 5: Perceptions about the holistic aims of PSD practice

- Do you think that the education system is providing person-centred holistic education, based on generic competences? If no discuss why, if yes, answer these questions.
- In your opinion, which should be the aims of person-centred holistic education, based on generic competences?
- In reality, which are the aims of person-centred holistic education?
- What do you think about this result?

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED - THE HOLISTIC AIMS

- How is PSD practice

- a. Helping students to feel physically healthy?
- b. Helping students to develop their intellectual?
- c. Helping students to deal with others effectively?
- d. Contributing to their personal satisfaction in relation to their career path?
- e. Helping them to have a meaning and a purpose in life?
- f. Facilitating the way they recognise and manage their emotions?
- g. Making them feel happy about their life?
- h. Helping them to develop as an individual?
- i. Providing the necessary competences to obtain an employment?
- j. Training them in how to cope well in the place of work?

Set 6: Results from the questionnaire

- From results elicited from the questionnaire, it seems that students from the Science cluster (faculty of health sciences, faculty of medicine and surgery, faculty of dental surgery and faculty of science) were the most who think that UOM undergraduate experience developed their generic competences and put them in a central role for learning. These were followed by:
 - a. the students from the Social Science cluster (faculty of laws, faculty for social well-being, faculty of education, faculty of economics, management and accountancy, faculty of media and knowledge sciences)
 - b. the students from the Civil Science cluster (faculty for the built environment, faculty of engineering and faculty of information and communication technology)
 - c. the students from Humanities cluster (faculty of arts and faculty of theology)

What do you think about these results?

- From results elicited from the questionnaire, it seems that students from the Science cluster (faculty of health sciences, faculty of medicine and surgery, faculty of dental surgery and faculty of science) were the most who think that different methods used within the UOM undergraduate experience were effective and that the UOM undergraduate experience had aims which tackle different aspects required for the life of the individual. These were followed by:
 - a. the students from the Social Science cluster (faculty of laws, faculty for social well-being, faculty of education, faculty of economics, management and accountancy, faculty of media and knowledge sciences)
 - b. the students from Humanities cluster (faculty of arts and faculty of theology)

- c. the students from the Civil Science cluster (faculty for the built environment, faculty of engineering and faculty of information and communication technology)

What do you think about these results?

- From the questionnaires, results showed that those students who attended the Degree Plus Programme for 4 years or more (except for point c – highest score for that obtained by students who attended Degree Plus for at least 1 year) and those who participated in extra-curricular groups, were the most who think that UOM undergraduate experience
 - a. developed their generic competences,
 - b. put them in a central role for learning,
 - c. found the use of different methods as effective and
 - d. had aims which tackle different aspects required for the life of the individual

What do you think about these results?

Appendix 8: Interview Questions to the Minister for Education and Employment and the Pro-Rector of the University of Malta

IMPORTANT- THIS INTERVIEW FOCUSES ON GENERIC COMPETENCES (WHICH ARE TRANSFERABLE) RATHER THAN DOMAIN SPECIFIC COMPETENCES

AIM 1- To answer research question 1 about the education system in general –

What is the perception of University of Malta stakeholders with regards to PSD practice in Malta?

AIM 2- To answer research question 2 about the education system at the University of Malta–

To what extent and in what ways is PSD practice applied to the undergraduate experience as offered by the University of Malta?

AIM 3- To answer research question 3 about the education system at the University of Malta–

To what extent does PSD practice, offered through the University of Malta undergraduate experience, help young undergraduates to enhance their well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability?

Set of question 1: Perceptions about PSD practice in Malta

- What is your perception of PSD practice in the Maltese system (primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary)? (aims, methods, development of generic competences, and the active role of the student)
- How is PSD practice implemented in the Maltese Education System (primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary)?
- Do you think that the UOM should provide PSD practice? How? Why?
- Do you think the rise in the number of students is affecting the provision of PSD practice at the UOM? Why?

Set of question 2: Perceptions about the development of generic competences in PSD practice

- How much emphasis is being given to the development of generic competences (throughout the primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary education stages)?
- Do you think that the role of the education system is to develop the generic competences rather than the academic competences only? Why?
- What do you think about this result?

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED – THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENERIC COMPETENCES

- How are these generic competences developed?
- *Here I will show the list of credits, with the generic skills which were aimed to be developed at the University of Malta, as described by the online course description. Can you comment about these?*
- How should students develop the generic competences:

Through a specific credit, Through an embedded system, Through participation in an extra-curricular groups, Through work experience, Others??

- Interviewees from the University of Malta claimed that there is a difference in terms of generic competences, between students who come from private and public schools and students who are foreigners and Maltese citizens. What are your comments?
- Results from PIRLS, TIMMS and PISA show that Maltese students are at the bottom of the league (Refer to page 48- National Employment Policy). Why is this happening? Does this relate to the specific Maltese culture, structure of Maltese Education System or lack of generic competences?
- Which are the competences required at post-secondary and tertiary level (Refer to National Employment Strategy 2015, p. 16- figure 5)?
- In the National Employment Policy, it is stated that: “despite the rise in the volume of the Maltese workforce, there remains a deficit in the skills base of the Malta as opposed to the EU28” (p.10). Which are the skills that are lacking in our students?

Set 3: Perceptions about the active role of the students in person-centred holistic education based on generic competences

- What do you think about this result?

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED – THE ACTIVE ROLE OF THE STUDENT

- How is the education system –
 - a. Encouraging students to participate?
 - b. Making students feel central to their own learning?
 - c. Helping them to open and self-disclose their feelings?
 - d. Encouraging them to ask questions so as to reflect critically?
 - e. Eliciting their knowledge and experiences?
 - f. Making reference to the students' background?
 - g. Focusing on personal aspects, not only academic?
 - h. Focusing on their capacity and talents?
 - i. Focusing on necessary generic competences that students require to tackle the life challenges?
 - j. Focusing on necessary generic competences that students require to tackle the course challenges?
 - k. Helping students to develop their potential?
- Interviewees at the University of Malta said that the level of interaction during lectures and the competences they have depend on their social class. In the Framework for Education Strategy, it is stated that “young people and adults have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society. This should not be hindered by differences in socio-economic, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual status” (p. 3). How can this be achieved?

Set 4: Perceptions about the effectiveness of different methods of learning and assessment in the PSD practice

- Results from questionnaires show that the methods which were mostly used were:

Information giving, Discussions and Online learning

Whereas the least were

Role plays, Energizers and Sharing of experiences

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED – TECHNIQUES OR PEDAGOGY

AND

SEE ERROR BAR GRAPH NAMED - THE EFFECTIVENESS OF METHODS

- What do you think about this result? How are students generally assessed? How should students be assessed?

SEE BAR GRAPH NAMED – ASSESSMENT METHODS

Set 5: Perceptions about the holistic aims in PSD practice

- Do you think that the education system is providing PSD practice? If no discuss why, if yes, answer these questions.
- In your opinion, which should be the aims of PSD practice?
- In reality, which are the aims of PSD practice?
- In the NCF (p.6) it is stated that “in the event that the education system is subservient to the economy then the education system might succumb to displaced priorities and the valuation of utilitarian benefits above the human person”. Should education be aimed for employability or for the well-being?
- What do young people need to be more employable? (Refer to National Employment Strategy 2015, p. 12).
- In the Framework for the Education Strategy (p.1), it is stated: “The Ministry positions itself at the forefront to provide present and future generations with the necessary skills and talents for employability and citizenship in the 21st century”. Which skills are being targeted? Why should education be aimed for employability and citizenship?
- In the National Employment Policy, it is stated that a country’s human capital can be measured in 3 ways- the output approach, the income approach and the cost approach. The document uses the output approach i.e. the number of students coming out of education system (p. 46). Do you think that this is reducing the aims of the education to pure utilitarianism?
- The National Employment Policy presents Fig 4.2 (p. 46) representing the workforce distribution by level of education. It seems that Malta has one of the highest rates of workers with a low level of education attainment. With regards to tertiary educated workers, Malta ranks in the seventh place from the last. Which are your comments?

- The ILO (2013) points the global employment trends for youth. It claims that: It is not easy to be young in the labour market today (ILO, 2013, p.1) and skills mismatch is adding to the youth employment crisis (ILO, 2013, p.1). Why is this happening?
- The McKinsey report (p.117) shows that “Governments can put in place education initiatives to increase the pipeline of graduates with the right skills”. What is the government doing?
- The New Economics Foundation (2004) claims that “An education system that promotes flourishing is likely to lead to higher productivity, a more entrepreneurial society, and greater active citizenship, as well as less anti-social behaviour and fewer mental health problems”. Which are your comments, when considering the aims of the Maltese education system?

Set 6: Results from the questionnaire

- From results elicited from the questionnaire, it seems that students from the Science cluster (faculty of health sciences, faculty of medicine and surgery, faculty of dental surgery and faculty of science) were the most who think that UOM undergraduate experience developed their generic competences and put them in a central role for learning. These were followed by:
 - a. the students from the Social Science cluster (faculty of laws, faculty for social well-being, faculty of education, faculty of economics, management and accountancy, faculty of media and knowledge sciences)
 - b. the students from the Civil Science cluster (faculty for the built environment, faculty of engineering and faculty of information and communication technology)
 - c. the students from Humanities cluster (faculty of arts and faculty of theology)

What do you think about these results?

- From results elicited from the questionnaire, it seems that students from the Science cluster (faculty of health sciences, faculty of medicine and surgery, faculty of dental surgery and faculty of science) were the most who think that different methods used within the UOM undergraduate experience were effective and that the UOM undergraduate experience had aims which tackle different aspects required for the life of the individual. These were followed by:

- a. the students from the Social Science cluster (faculty of laws, faculty for social well-being, faculty of education, faculty of economics, management and accountancy, faculty of media and knowledge sciences)
- b. the students from Humanities cluster (faculty of arts and faculty of theology)
- c. the students from the Civil Science cluster (faculty for the built environment, faculty of engineering and faculty of information and communication technology)

What do you think about these results?

- From the questionnaires, results showed that those students who attended the Degree Plus Programme for 4 years or more (except for point c – highest score for that obtained by students who attended Degree Plus for at least 1 year) and those who participated in extra-curricular groups, were the most who think that UOM undergraduate experience
 - a. developed their generic competences,
 - b. put them in a central role for learning,
 - c. found the use of different methods as effective and
 - d. had aims which tackle different aspects required for the life of the individual

What do you think about these results?

Appendix 9: Information Sheet

Ms. Amanda Caruana is a student at the University of Nottingham following a Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Education and specialising in the study of person-centred holistic education. Ms Caruana is at the moment writing a thesis under the supervision of Dr. Sarah Speight and Prof. John Holford.

The research includes semi-structured interviews with lecturers and Deans working at the University of Malta, Maltese policy-makers and education academics. It also comprises questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with undergraduate late adolescents and early adults. Additionally, she will do an online and literature search of person-centred holistic education at the University of Malta.

The participants can stop their participation at any point s/he wants without the need to justify her/his choice. The name of students will never be revealed to third parties, and a fictitious name will be used instead. In this way, students are ensured that confidentiality will be maintained and there will be security of information. For the purpose of the research, lecturers, Deans, policy makers and education academics are advised that their name is going to be used. If there is any objection, their name will remain fictitious.

Participants will be asked to fill in a consent form, and permission from their parents/carers, in case they are under 18 years. From this research, participants will not be subject to any harm or risk.

The research questions are aimed at exploring the perception of Maltese policy makers, education academics and University of Malta stakeholders with regards to person-centred holistic education. These will also give data that reveal the extent and the ways in which person-centred holistic education is applied to undergraduate courses as offered by the University of Malta. Finally,

research questions will assess the students' view about the extent to which person-centred holistic education helps students to enhance their well-being, quality of life, healthy lifestyle, employment and employability.

Participants and their parents/carers can contact Ms. Caruana by telephone on 21654563 or 79255070, by e-mail on caruanamanda@gmail.com or by post on 'Rampikanti', Triq il-Fossili, Birżebbuġia, BBĠ1143.

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____A.Caruana____

Amanda Caruana
Researcher

____Dr Sarah Speight____

Dr Sarah Speight
Supervisor

____Prof John Holford____

Prof John Holford
Supervisor

Appendix 10: Consent form for students

I, _____ am signing so as to express my wish to participate in the study by Ms Amanda Caruana regarding the type of education that is offered at the University of Malta and its contribution to my life. Ms Caruana explained what this research involves and what is expected of my participation.

I understand that I will be interviewed and that my name will not be identified before, during and after the research.

I also understand that I may resign at any moment without the need to provide an explanation.

I understand that my parents/guardians and I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signature of participant

Date

Details:

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Appendix 11: Generic Participant Consent Form

Project title : Personal and Social Development practice at the University of Malta: its presence and positive contribution – A reality or a mirage?

Researcher's name Ms Amanda Caruana

Supervisor's name Dr Sarah Speight and Prof John Holford

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that information gained during the study may be published, I may be identified and my personal results may not remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped / videotaped during the interview.
- I understand that data will be stored on an audiotape and will then be transcribed. Excerpts from transcripts will be included in the thesis to reveal perceptions about person-centred holistic education and how it is included at the University of Malta undergraduate degrees.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed (research participant)

Print name **Date**

Contact details

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