



Student Engagement in School Life and Learning



The student engagement project -**Presentation of research findings**

Malta

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AFFILIATE OF



- What is student engagement?
- Why is student engagement important?
- How did this project approach the subject?
- Different perspectives of student engagement
- Recommendations

- Impact on the cognitive, affective and behavioural level of the individual resulting in student motivation and energy
- Aim of student engagement contested:
 - Academic achievement
 - Personal interest
 - Critical democratic perspective

Perspectives of student engagement

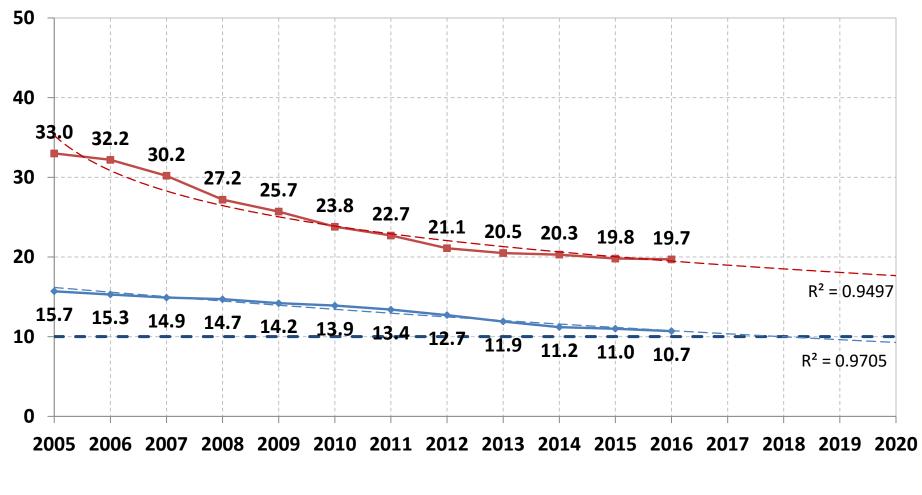
- Behavioural: Effective teaching / student behaviour
- Psychological: Emotional factors leading to engagement / disengagement or its impact
- Socio-cultural: Contextual factors in education (academic culture, disciplinary code, focus on performativity)
- Holistic: student motivation, student-teacher relationship, teacher professionalism, institutional support

Factors influencing student engagement

- Student agency and motivation
- Environmental and socio-economic factors
- Pedagogy and student-teacher relationship
- Institutional support

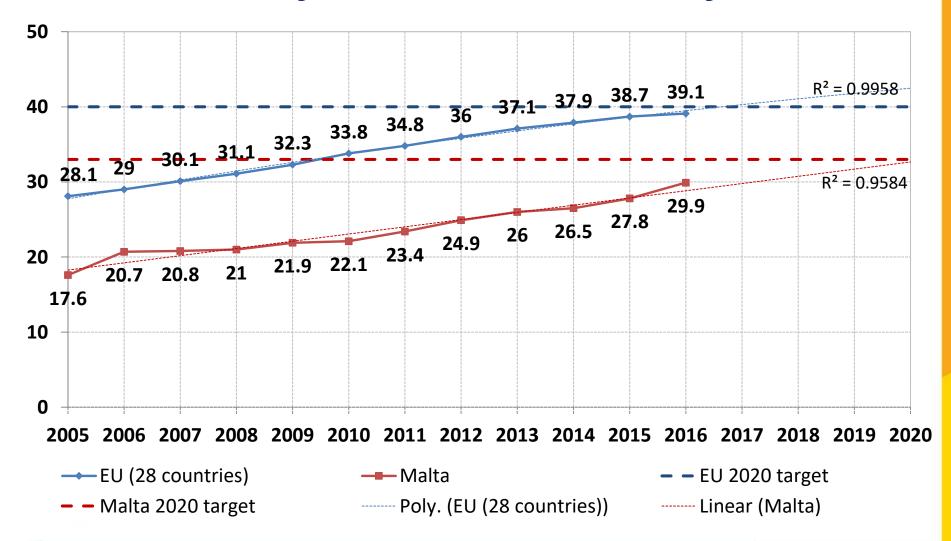
important?

Reduce early school-leaving of 18-24 year olds to 10% by 2020

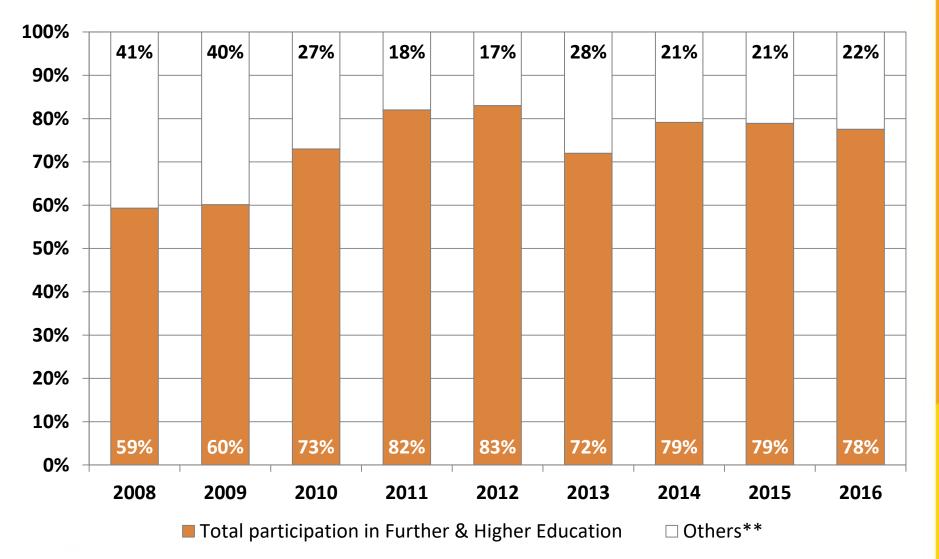


--- EU (28 countries) --- Malta - - Target --- Expon. (EU (28 countries)) --- Log. (Malta)

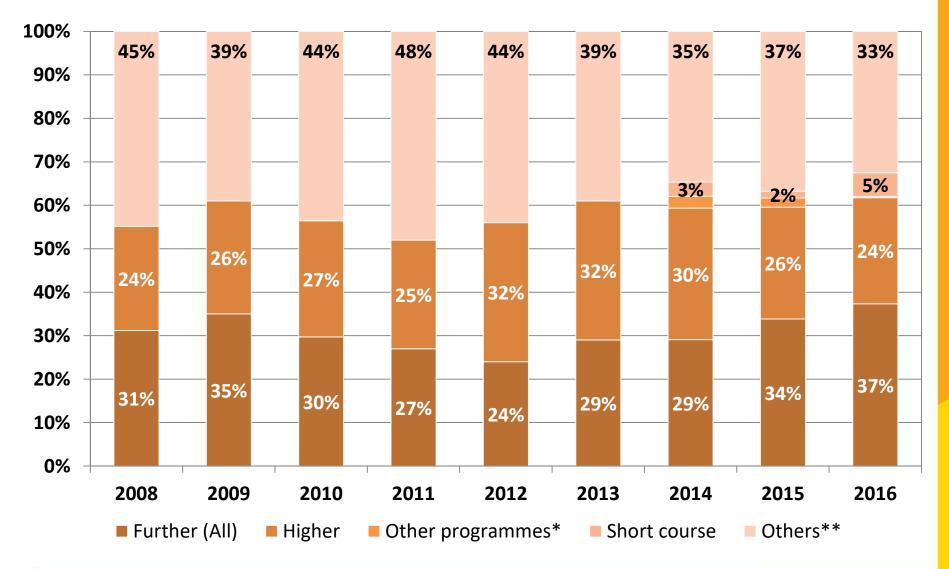
Increase higher education attainment of 30-34 year olds to 40% by 2020



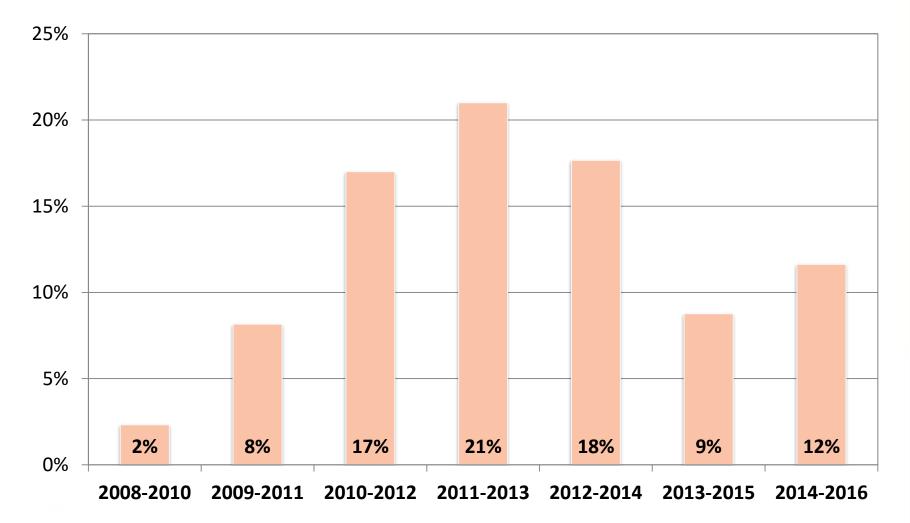
Participation rate at age 17



Participation rate at age 19



Difference in the participation rate at age 17 and 19



Research focus and

methodology

Research focus

- Views of administrators, teachers and students on student engagement
- Different forms of student engagement
- Conditions enhancing or hindering student engagement
- The link between student engagement, academic achievement and further studies

Research methodology

- Online survey and semi-structured interviews
- Former students (2012/2013 and 2013/2014), teachers and administrators
- Public and private Sixth Forms Junior College De La Salle College

Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School

Sir M.A. Refalo Sixth Form

St. Aloysius College

St. Martin's College

Verdala International School

Research methodology

• Online survey: April-October 2015

Stakeholder	Number of valid responses to the online survey
Former students	516
Teachers	147
Administrators	31

• **Interviews:** May – July 2015

Stakeholder	Number of semi-structured interviews
Former students	30
Teachers	17
Administrators	14

Perspectives on student

engagement -

Findings from the research

- Education as a means for personal and professional development as well as for active citizenship
- Student engagement ensures that students are motivated and interested in their own learning and can link it to their everyday life outside the classroom

- Students associate with student engagement being considered as independent and responsible learners
- Teachers highlighted perseverance and active participation in class as a sign of student engagement

"... as a student, you'd be taking charge of your path

(...) Not coming here for the sake of showing up,

listening to what the teacher has to say and going

home to do my own thing sort of connecting the two

..." (Student_16).

Why is it important?

"Without student engagement, a student is [like] a

robot. Studying gets harder, because he will have to

learn, try to remember, reproduce, the problem is

that sometimes he gets a grade one by doing that."

(Teacher_31)

Why is it important?

- Makes learning more motivating and interesting
- Going beyond memorizing supporting learning to learn
- Supporting academic achievement and retention
- Facilitates student wellbeing and personal development
- Preparing students for further studies and employment

• Importance of the teacher!

• Good relationship between teachers and students

• Teachers providing guidance and support

"... the teacher used to try to be in our position and

give us examples from our situation (...) we were

engaged because the[y] were something we could

relate to ..." (Student 31).

• An active and inclusive pedagogy

• Student-centered teaching and learning

"... some students are engaged in one way, so students respond to notes and just listening to a lecture... Some students need to see something tangible. Some students need to hear it from someone different. So we're always trying to encourage different methodologies as well when teaching in our classrooms." (Ad_10)

• Formative assessment using various assessment

methods

• Importance of the syllabus!

"We have to have an environment that fosters" inquiry, right? Where students are not being told 'This is what you're going to reproduce on the exam. We're going to use the exact same standard for every student and success is going to look the same for everyone.' That's not an environment where a student can engage." (Ad_2)

"... it might not even be the school's fault that lessons aren't so engaging and people aren't participating so much. It might even be because of the syllabus. There is too much and the teachers just cannot let the students do the lesson on their own. They just have to keep going because there is too much content". (Student_31)

• A positive school environment

Activities outside the classroom

"If they are in an environment where they know that failure is okay and that it is part of the learning process, you have to fail sometimes. I think when that's transmitted very strongly, the students feel more confident to try and participate on a wider scale." (Student_32)

"Extracurricular activities not only define your character and help you build your character, but sort of give you that edge over people with those qualifications, especially when it comes to jobs." (Student_23)

• Commitment from students, teachers,

administrative staff and parents

• External factors

"The students need to be appreciated, we need to be appreciated as teachers, the administration needs to be appreciated by the teachers and the student. We have to work together and that's the only time when you can succeed in doing something, working as a team, not leaving anybody out." (Teacher_11)

"...it's not just what happens in the classroom. What happens at home, I think, has a much greater effect on what happens in the classroom than what happens in the classroom has an effect on learning." (Teacher_1)

• Transition between secondary education and Sixth

Form

• Students' level of maturity / responsibility

"I mean you still need a certain amount of guidance from your lecture/ teacher because I mean you are fresh out of Secondary school you have no idea about anything, a limited idea of critical thinking, of personal research. I mean in Secondary school you are basically spoon-fed everything." (Student_49)

The impact on further studies

- Mismatch between teaching and learning style
- Academic performance
- Disenchantment with the education system
- Financial push and pull factors
- Personal motivation / ambition
- Financial incentives (stipend)

The impact on further studies

- "I had friends who were going to continue their postsecondary education, but stopped to get a job. But there is nothing in their future, it wasn't their dream job" (Student_62)
- "I wanted to [continue my studies] but I wasn't able to for (...) financial reasons. But hopefully one day I will ..." (Student_15)

- Stronger focus on giving students a voice and empowering them <u>from an early age</u>, e.g. through student feedback and involvement in decisionmaking
- Stronger focus on key competences , such as leadership, teamwork, time management and independent learning is needed <u>from an early age</u>

- Transparent expectations for all actors in Sixth Forms
- Review syllabi in consultation with teachers and other stakeholders
- Continuous professional development with a focus on student-centred learning

- Reconsider class sizes to provide a more studentcentered learning experience
- Strengthen career guidance with a focus of making transparent different pathways and subject choices
- Review school environment to ensure sufficient space for learning and to spend free-time
- Review timetables



National Commission for Further and Higher Education Malta

Thank You

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