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ta' Malta

The evolution of pre- registration education in Malta

Prof. Roberta Sammut

Dr. Michelle Camilleri



History of nursing in Malta¹

- Malta a vassal state of the Kingdom of Sicily: given to The Kingdoms of Aragon (1283) and Castille (1412)
- First hospital established was the 'Santo Spirito' hospital in Rabat, in 1372 under the rectorship of a Franciscan, Nicollo Papalla' appointed by the King of Sicily .
- Record of 2 female nurses (then called assistants) caring for 6-8 patients.
- They were the ones who interacted with the Bishop of Malta, Mons. Gargallo during an inspection in January of 1599.

- Charles the V of Spain gives Malta to the Knights of St. John in 1532
- Records of the hospital established by the Knights of Malta in 1532 in Birgu, make reference to male 'servants' as this was a hospital reserved for males.
- We have no information on the qualifications of these attendants

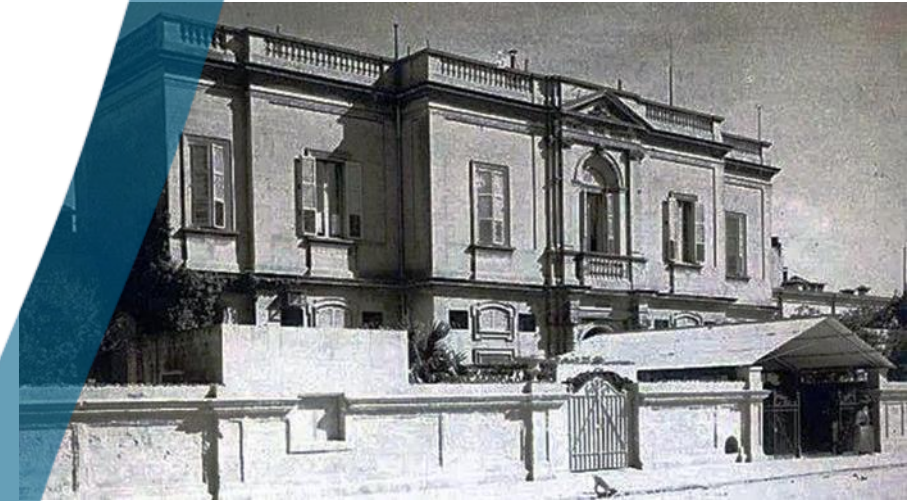
- Sacra Infermeria in Valletta built by the Knights of Malta in 1574 for between 350-400 male patients.
- The knights and novices were obliged under sufferance to serve the sick in the morning and the afternoons.
- Sunday: Provence; Monday: Auvergne; Tuesday: France; Wednesday: Italy; Thursday: Aragon; Friday: Germany; Saturday: Castille and Portugal.
- 14 'servants' or 'guards', 2 of whom were specifically dedicated to caring for sick knights
- Assisted by 44 Muslim and Christian slaves who did not have any qualifications.

The nursing of the sick by the Knights of St John at the Sacra Infermeria in Valletta (Malta). An engraving by Philippe Thomassin (1562-1622)



History of Nursing in Malta¹

- Malta became a **British Crown colony in 1813**
- The **title of 'nurse' was first used in 1860**
- It was introduced by the controller for charitable institutions: Mr. (later Sir) F.V. Inglott
- Nurses were recruited from the illiterate social classes
- Standards of care were very poor, as was the behavior of the nurses



The Central Hospital, Floriana

Nurse education in Malta¹

Dr. T. Bonnici, Resident Surgeon at the Central Hospital, suggested the introduction of **nurse training in April, 1882.**

- This was approved by the Controller for Charitable Institutions and the First Secretary.
- The programme of studies started, but the expected positive outcomes were not apparent
- The nurses continued to be illiterate and had to be educated by the Sisters of Charity.

In **1895** a decision was taken to increase the salary to attract more qualified persons.

There was a **restructuring of the training for nurses, including development of a curriculum** which covered:

- bedmaking,
- medical and surgical assistance,
- the use of the clinical thermometer,
- massage,
- pre-operative preparation,
- catheter use and
- first aid in the case of imminent death from the use of chloroform

12 students started the programme; 11 completed it.

In January **1898** title of 'nurse' was reserved for those who had completed the training programme.



Group photo of patients and nurses from the Mtarfa Hospital, with Mdina in the background.

Nurse education in Malta pre-1964¹

No educational progression for many decades.
Entry qualifications included good moral background and the ability to read Maltese or some other language
Course lasted **1 year**, including theory and practice.

In **1934** the administration of Connaught hospital condemned the course as being too simple and the clinical training inadequate.

Local system of registration was introduced to make it possible for Maltese nurses to enter the British Nurses' Association.

This led to the introduction of a **3 year course and certification as a general nurse**



Nurse education in Malta 1930s to 1980s^{1,2}

1936

Promulgation of **Ordinance Number VIII:**

- Establishment of a nurses' register,
- Setting of standards for registration
- The foundation of a nursing school
- Legal tools for the mutual recognition of registration of nurses between Malta, other commonwealth countries and the British Empire.
- 12 young women were sent to England for training

1938

Opening of nursing school at St. Luke's Hospital: English trained sister tutor Ms. M.L. Doherty led this school

First students were 6 young nuns of the Order of St. Vincent de Paule

Course disrupted by World War II

Started again in late **1942**

1947 course brought up to standard of that in nursing schools in the United Kingdom; led by Sr. Aldegonda Farrugia, Sister of Charity and nurse tutor. First 23 locally trained State Registered Nurses completed in 1953.

1952 received **recognition by the General Nursing Council of England and Wales**, nurses registered in Malta were automatically recognized in England and Wales.

Automatic registration also in Queensland and Victoria, Australia

- Apprenticeship training model
- Lecturing by nurse tutors and medical consultants

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Building of St. Luke's hospital nearing completion, late 1930s

Nurse education in Malta 1987-present³

Prior to the **1987** elections Prof. John Rizzo Naudi, Consultant physician and member of parliament for the opposition, proposed that nurse education be set in a tertiary setting

A change of government occurred in 1987; Prof. Rizzo Naudi was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly, with a special portfolio for tertiary education.

Led delegation to the England and Scotland to identify how courses were run and recruit lecturers to set up an undergraduate programme in nursing in Malta.

Dame Prof. Betty Kershaw from the University of Manchester, was asked by the Chief Nursing Officer in the UK, Anne Poole, to carry out an assessment.

She recommended:

- The need for all nurses to understand the principles of the nursing process and individualised care
- The need to examine assessment methods for competencies of nursing students
- A change in the curriculum model from a medicalized one to a nursing approach



Nurse education in Malta 1988-2001³

Link with University of Liverpool recommended by Prof. Herbert Gillies, , of Maltese descent and professor of its School of Tropical Medicine

Discussion held with Profesor Kate Morle, Head of the Nursing Department of the University of Liverpool.

The Institute of Health Care was set up within the University of Malta in 1988, offering a certificate, diploma and degree in nursing.

B.Sc. Nursing course was purchased from the University of Liverpool;

- Concerns were expressed with regards to its lack of adaptation to the Maltese context;
- Main opposition to level 6 programme within the University of Malta was from nurses themselves
- Shift from apprenticeship model to extra-numerary model
- Shift from medical model to nursing model

Led by Ms. Barbara Burkey from the University of Liverpool.

- 1st group joining in 1988 were registered nurses
- 2nd group were mostly undergraduate students (13)



Nurse education in Malta 1987-2000³

At the time the UK nurse education field was dominated by the Project 2000 model

There was consequently the development of a diploma in nursing which led to registration. This was equally long to the B.Sc. in Nursing (4 years), but entry requirements were lower and the salary scale upon completion was also lower.

The courses were run mostly by British lecturers and two US Fulbright Scholars as well as 2 South African lecturers.

Input from Maltese lecturers was restricted to existent academics of the University of Malta, mostly from Psychology, Medicine and Pharmacy, Management and Sociology departments.

Ms. Isabelle Avallone became the **first Maltese head of department in 1996.**

Agreement with the University of Liverpool phased out in 2001.

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Nurse education in Malta 2001-present

Creating a Vision and Strategy for Nurse Education

The Vision was for nurse education in Malta to move to an all graduate profession, with post-graduate education offered at local level to enhance access to higher education to all nurses.

Strategy:

- Increasing recruitment to the B.Sc. (Hons.) in Nursing programme
- Capacity building in relation to:
 - academic staff
 - clinical placements
 - laboratory and clinical educators
- Phasing out of the Diploma in Nursing
- Upgrading of existing diplomates to a B.Sc. in Nursing
- Launch of Masters and doctorate programmes
- Collaboration with other faculties and universities to maintain awareness of evolution in higher education, in particular nurse education
- Increasing research portfolio



Nurse education in Malta 2001-present

Work commenced to develop the curriculum in line with the EC Directive 452/77 of the EU in anticipation of Malta's eventual accession to the EU

In February 2002, TAIEX of the European Commission visiting Malta to evaluate the nursing programmes in relation to the EU sectoral directives.

The programmes were found to be of comparable quality.

In **October 2003** the curriculum was developed and changed due to a shift within the University of Malta to the **European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)**.

The department of nursing was actively involved in the **Leonardo and Erasmus programmes** even pre-accession; several opportunities were made available to students.

Malta joined the EU in 2004.



Nurse education in Malta 2001-present

A dissertation by Cassar (2001) outlined the need for development of the clinical practice aspect of the course programme⁴.

The curriculum was reformed in **2004** with a view of fortifying its three main pillars:

- The theoretical aspect: **integrated approach, multicultural care**
- The use of **simulation** in laboratories led by academics
- Clinical practice which included a **tripartite mentorship system**:
 - the students acting as active learners
 - clinicians overseeing learning and continuous assessment in practice
 - link lecturers providing (academics) support and following student progress

Participation in the **TUNING project** since its inception:

- Allowed continued interface with developments in nurse education at level 6 and beyond in other countries

Nurse education in Malta 2001-present

The number of students recruited to the diploma/higher diploma and degree in nursing increased steadily over the years.

Increase in the number of graduates per 100,000 inhabitants; equivalent to that in Ireland, Estonia and Lithuania in last few years⁵.

This required a shift to include:

- The expansion of agreements with different service providers, including private entities
- The increased involvement of clinicians in simulation and clinical practice
- The concomitant introduction of a mentorship programme for potential mentors, official contracts and pay packages.
- The introduction of increased use of higher fidelity simulation
- The use of digital learning and assessment tools including the introduction of ePortfolios⁶
- Increased workload of nurse academics to continue providing a personal experience of University education to students

Nurse education in Malta 2001-present

Number of graduates remained insufficient due to:

- an exponential increase in the Maltese population⁷ and the increase in the need for health services.
 - 419,746 inhabitants in 2013; 552,734 in 2023 (an increase of 32%)
 - 147,843 of whom are foreign
 - due to political strategy for economic growth through population expansion
- increased diversity in health service provision
- graduates entering medicine after graduation

Nurse education in Malta 2001-present

- Major milestone: the Institute of Health Care became a Faculty in **2010**; this had its benefits and difficulties
- The momentum to move towards an all graduate profession started to increase:
 - Political **resistance** was present to the removal of the Diploma in Nursing due to the shortage of nurses and fear of a drop in nurse graduates
 - Launch of a **top-up online programme** from Diploma to B.Sc. for practicing registered nurses
 - The diploma in nursing was upgraded to a **Higher Diploma in Nursing in 2015**

Nurse education in Malta 2001-present

- A public vocational institution started to show interest in launching a level 6 program in nursing; main reason provided was that of increasing student numbers.
- A memorandum of understanding was signed between the University of Malta and this institution to prevent the duplication of courses
- The main concerns at the time were in relation to
 - duplication in resources required at public state level
 - competition for clinical placements, particularly in areas where these were limited i.e. maternity, child care, mental health
 - move of nursing out of a university context
- An entry pathway was created to allow level 4 applicants from this programme to enter the Higher Diploma in Nursing programme or the B.Sc. in Nursing programme in 2015
- Notwithstanding, a level 6 course was launched in collaboration with Northumbria University in 2017.

Nurse education in Malta 2001-present

- In view of this development work commenced to discontinue the Higher Diploma in Nursing whilst maintaining student numbers.
- This was achieved through the:
 - Introduction of a **preparatory programme** for applicants who did not have the necessary entry requirement e.g. mature applicants, applicants with not enough points on their sixth form college certificate
- All level 6 graduate profession achieved in **2022**

The impact of the move of nursing education to a University setting

- Nurse educators expected and supported to continue their studies; PhD level of education required within the University of Malta.
- Participation in decision making at University level: involvement of nurse educators at Senate level, senate sub-committees including important subcommittees such as quality assurance.
- The increased appreciation of academics by other Faculties in relation to innovation in higher education e.g. use of digital learning, simulation, electronic portfolios etc.
- Inter-faculty research and teaching and learning at postgraduate level.
- The development of postgraduate programmes up to doctoral level
- The ingrained system of internal and external quality assessment of programmes of studies.



Main take away points

- The **evolution of nurse education** is an **ongoing and necessary** process
- There is frequently a **lag** in the introduction of new concepts of education **in small countries** such as Malta
- In the past innovation has been driven from 'without' nursing; nurses and nurse educators have **become the driving force** in nurse education and higher education, although with limitations.
- The evolution of nurse education is **influenced by several factors** including:
 - cultural and societal changes,
 - local and international political climates
 - developments in medical knowledge,
 - public health emergencies
 - changes in the role of the nurse,
 - technological, including digital advancements
 - financial constraints
 - collaboration with service providers



Photo of Maltese nurses chosen by WHO for midwives and nurses day, 2020

Main take away points

- **Change has become very rapid**, requiring an agile nurse education system
 - respond promptly to the use of innovative technology in teaching and learning e.g. AI and
 - societal evolution and concomitant changes in the healthcare system
- Nurse educators must be not only competent in pedagogy and their area of nursing expertise and research, but also be able to
 - read the ‘signs of the times’,
 - be open to collaborate in the development of nurse education on a multinational scale
 - seek to work with educators in other health care professions.
 - participate in university governance









Photo of Maltese nurses chosen by WHO for midwives and nurses day, 2020

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Thank you for your attention.

If you have any questions, now is the right time to ask!
Contact us on the details below for further info:

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|---|--------------------|---|--|
|  | Roberta Sammut |  | (+356) 2340 1831 |
| | |  | roberta.sammut@um.edu.mt |
|  | Michelle Camilleri |  | (+356) 2340 |
| | |  | michelle.camilleri@um.edu.mt |

