KA2 - Intergenerational Learning Partnership Over 55

Output 3 – Focus Group Malta

Date: Friday, 26th June 2015

Venue: IFS Conference Room

Participating institutions and their respective representatives	
MCAST	Ramon Mangion, Albert Agius
MCAST	Dorianne Saliba (Lecturer + Coordinator Financial Services)
MCAST	Malcolm Bray (Lecturer Financial Services)
MCAST	Martin Borg (Director Curriculum Development)
IFS MALTA	Annemarie Damato, Josette Cremona
IFS MALTA / MFSA	Joseph J. Agius
BOV VFM	Clayton Scicluna
MUBE	William Portelli, Joanna Wallbank
MUBE	Jonathan Bruno (Permanent Secretary)

Salient Points of the Meeting

1. Ramon Mangion welcomed the partners and thanked them for their presence. He invited everyone to present themselves.

1.1. Ramon introduced the project, its history and its aims:

− The most important being the intergenerational gaps and relationships within the financial services sector

1.1.1. Ramon invited attendees to visit the ILPO55 website for more information.

2. Ramon described the aim of the Focus Group:

- He described the process followed for the distribution of questionnaires and the gathering of information related to Intergenerational matters (what can younger gain from the older and vice versa) within FSS from stakeholders. He explained that we sent 3 questionnaires for 3 different age groups:
  - Under 35
  - 35 – 55
  - Over 55
- He then read the conclusions from the Questionnaire Report which read:

The 'Older' Employee

It is evident from the responses that those surveyed thought older workers had invaluable career experience .Older employees have serious commitment to work, are loyal, reliable and have a strong work ethic. Many times, they have established, long-term networks and this is outlined in the survey results. Older employees are viewed as having strong organizational skills and strategic goals.
These positive indications in Malta are not surprising in lieu of the fact that older employees have been loyal to their workplace (possibly still in their first place of employment) . Hence, in the local context an older employee is someone who has verifiable history.

The 'Younger' Employee

With regards to the younger generation, it is evident that they are regarded as being more savvy with technology hence are viewed as mentors for the older generation. Besides the fact that they can teach IT skills and give an insight to new marketing developments via the net, it is important to consider other factors that can greatly benefit the older employee- As a result of being constantly plugged into technology and the internet, younger people are very knowledgeable in knowing where to look for information. Businesses can use the skills that youth bring with regard to technology to implement cost saving technological changes.
Furthermore the openness of the 'younger' employee towards learning from the older generation may indicate that the younger generation are better advantaged to embrace change and are open to coaching and mentoring from others. This opportunity will ensure that they thrive on being able to apply their creativity and adapt quickly to meet new challenges.

- Ramon invited partners to express their opinion on these conclusions and whether they are aware of any practices of age management within the industry, and their opinions on what can one generation gain from the other.

3. At this point William Portelli took over the meeting and acted as a moderator for the discussions. He invited participants to speak and raise any points.

The first point raised was **early retirement.**

3.1. Joseph J Agius shared his experience of early retirement and explained that there are banks who are still promoting these schemes. He added that he knows of ex-bank employees who were led to early retirement, making them feel useless and kicked out. He added that although these employees manage to find employment elsewhere they are still bound by retirement obligations which do not allow them to join the competition. Mr Agius continued saying that such initiatives also have the negative effect of discouraging ex employees who abandon the sector and the world of work altogether. He said that this is a pity and that the Banking industry is losing a lot of experienced staff through such initiatives.

Typical Generation Qualities

4. Martin Borg referred to the introduction made by Ramon Mangion and the conclusions of the questionnaires. He asked participant's opinion on whether the activities identified as typical for each age group are sector dependent or whether they are common to other sectors.
He said that in his opinion this is not the case and gave the example of a Farmer who was collaborating on an MCAST project who presented similar qualities.

4.1. Malcolm Bray added that the results of the survey are not surprising and that it is to be expected that younger would excel on IT and technological skills and more adaptable to change whilst older would be more rigid and capable of transferring experience and soft skills.

Early Retirement Continuation

5. Clayton Scicluna said that not all Over 55 employees are the same in terms of skills and productivity. There are persons for whom the early retirement clauses are a benefit.

5.1. Josette Cremona asked MUBE why as a Union they do not abolish the clause.

5.2. William Portelli explained the reason behind it. He said that they date back to past changes in the Banking sector to which certain individuals couldn't accept/ adapt to. He said that the option to retire was good back then. He added that times change and now we are speaking more in favour of retention of the older generation.

5.3. Clayton Scicluna said that the prime motive for early retirement is commercial and is tied to the wages the bank has to pay.

5.4. Joseph Agius referred to a report on vacant posts and employment within FSS institutions. He said that institutions are finding it harder to employ the ideal candidate which most of the time should be over 55.

5.5 William Portelli said that there are also situations in which older employees retire due to stress and look for more comfortable, less demanding jobs.

Qualities of Over 55 and Under 35 employees

6. Participants discussed the qualities pertaining to specific age groups. They agreed that Over 55 employees tend to have:

- maturity
- a sense of discipline
- experience

They said that these cannot be gained if not through experience and the best way for transmitting these would be through direct contact between O55 and U35 through mentoring, coaching etc.

6.1 Similarly participants also discussed that the younger generation are more technologically competent especially with regards to IT skills.

6.2 Clayton Scicluna said that in a team one needs to have a mix and interaction between competent technical employees and analytical employees. Having only technical employees would mean that employees will only focus on their tasks without any cross fertilisation and bridging between tasks which can be done by analytic personnel. In addition analytical personnel have the ability to identify flaws in the system as they are not strictly focused on one task/ process but have a broader view.

6.2.1. William Portelli agreed and said that there should be training on this and on how to implement such a system and converge both qualities.

6.3 Joseph Agius shared his experience saying that he has team of highly competent staff academically. He said that they what they lack is experience on the field. He added that he tries to tackle this by inviting them on visits and meeting to enable them to obtain skills which cannot be achieved through the books – learning by doing. This was a good example of O55 transfer of skills between o55 and u35.

6.3.1 Martin Borg tied Mr Agius' comment to WBL (he referred CEDEFOP briefing note) which says that academic students need WBL experiences in order to progress further on the job. He said that this is common for all sectors not just FSS.

Barriers and Bridges

7. Partners discussed whether local culture – that an employee stays with an institution for a number of years – is a barrier for transferability of skills.

7.1. Malcolm Bray said that there is a difference between banks and other financial services institutions and what is common for one might not be for the other

7.2. Josette Cremona asked whether the fact that an employee stays with an institution for a number of years is in fact strength. She said that having new employees filling specific posts especially higher ones might cause problems in terms of continuity.

Partners discussed that in Malta multi-skilling is very prominent.

7.3. Joseph Agius said that there should be an emphasis on networking skills when mentoring younger generations. He said that technical excellence on its own is not enough to progress in the Banking and FSS

7.4 Malcolm Bray asked what is the average entry point age for FSS employees?

7.4.1 William Portelli replied that it depends on the post:

> a) general employees – generally from the younger generation
>
> b) specific head hunting and posts targeted at setting up teams – Generally from the middle to the older generation

7.5 Partners discussed the transfer of ICT skills. They said that it is common that these are transferred from the younger generation to the older. This is the same for mobile and pc applications. This is common to various sectors not just FSS.

7.6 On the topic of Intergenerational Transfer Dorianne Saliba mentioned an example she experiences as a lecturer at MCAST. She said that there should be communication between the older and the younger generations. She said that her students appreciate when they are invited to seminars or when talks are organised. She said that students realise the importance of the older generation and that the knowledge gained through such experiences cannot be gained from the school desks.

Training

8. Partners also discussed training and said that

8.1. Training can be both bridge and a wall. They said that training is a bridge when training is structured and well delivered but a wall when this is not done properly and done without prior planning.

8.2. Partners discussed that distribution of training should be across the board within an institution and not just focused on a few employees.

8.3. What could be a bridge in terms of training would be the development of ad hoc courses to target specific needs.

8.4. In house training could be more important as it costs less, and therefore companies would be in a better position to guarantee every employee a certain amount of training each year. This could also be mentoring and coaching.

8.5. Training should be needs based – Institutions (and employees) alike should invest in identifying the needs and developing training according to the outcomes. Some commented that this is not always straightforward as not everyone may be able to identify their needs. As an example Malcolm bray said that a person who complains about having too much work may in fact lack prioritisation skills, but s/he would not necessarily be aware of this.

8.6 Discussions proceeded and mentoring was discussed. Participants said that not all companies have mentoring programmes.

8.7. William Portelli then asked partners whether they are aware of any intergenerational activities being held within companies.

8.8. Participants were hesitant and it appeared that difficult to identify actual Intergenerational strategies currently held in FSS companies and Banks.

8.9. The meeting came to an end. Ramon and William thanked participants for their attendance and closed the meeting.