

# Moral Education in Maltese Kindergarten state schools

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# Why study moral education in Maltese Kindergarten?

- Moral education is the formation of a child's behaviour according to societal moral standards and moral Inquiry. (Hand, 2017)
- Religious formation in Malta. (Baldacchino, 2017)
- Religious Education = Roman Catholic Beliefs in Malta. (Darmanin, 2013)
- Roman Catholic Religion & Compulsory Catholic education. (Constitution article 2 (1,3))
- Change in Demographics: Increase in Immigration & Migration

# WORLD POPULATION DAY 2022

Reference Period: 2021

## Total Population

422,509  
in 2012

520,971  
in 2021



## Natural Increase

232 being the lowest in the last decade

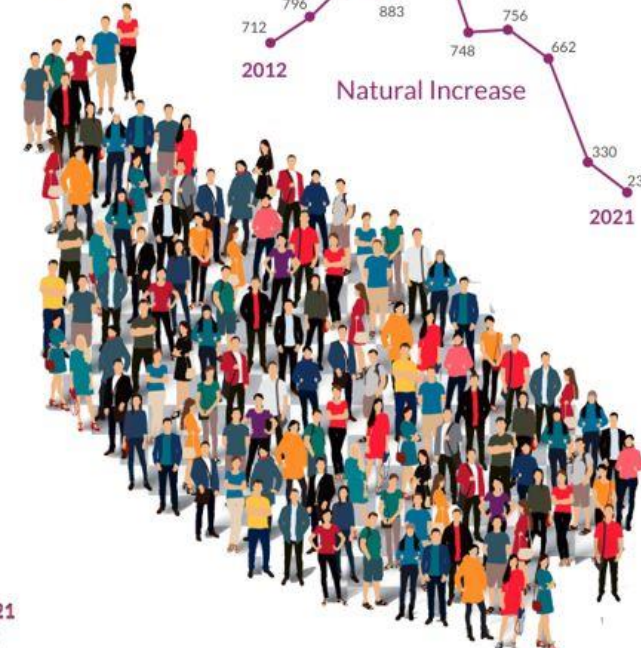
4,395 births   
4,163 deaths 

## Net Migration

4,639

18,148 entered the country +

13,509 emigrants left the country -



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- Roman Catholic Religion & Compulsory Catholic education. (Constitution article 2 (1,3))
- Change in Demographics: Increase in Immigration & Migration
- Change in values: only 40% attend Sunday mass (Archdiocese of Malta, 2018), divorce (2011), same-sex marriage (2017), abortion discussions (2022).
- Ambivalent Europeans. (Mitchell, 2002)
- Introduction of Ethics Education programme (2014) for Year 1- Form 5/Year 11
- A form of Ethical Violence based on Western Values (Mizzi & Mercieca, 2020)

# Effects on the child and on society

- Social Categorization
- Social Identity Theory, Social Identity Developmental Theory
- Group preference, Psychological Essentialism, Outgroup Prejudice
- Developmental Peacebuilding Model
- Schools: climate of trust, development of moral inquiry, collaborative learning, improve interpersonal understanding, culture of inclusion, social emotional learning, culturally sensitive professional's beliefs.

(Arthur, 2014; Battistich, 2008; CASEL, 2003; Connolly et al., 2002; Elias et al., 2018; Hand, 2017; Nesdale, 2004; Nesdale et al., 2005; Nucci & Turiel, 1993; Schroeder, 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Taylor, 2020; Taylor et al., 2020)

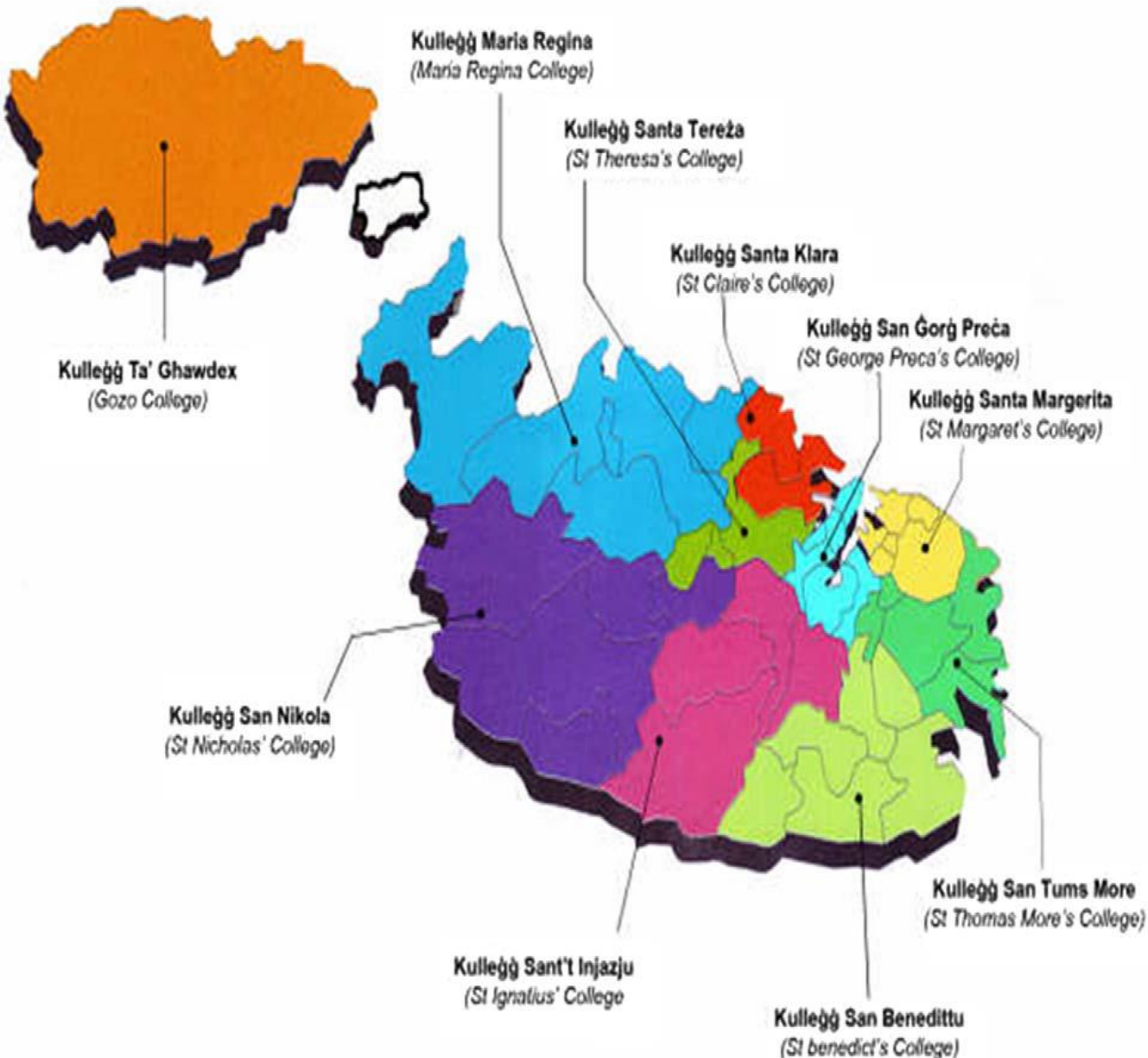
What impacts practices on moral education in kindergarten classes in Maltese state schools?

How are kindergarten educators teaching moral education in Maltese state schools?

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

# REGIONAL STATE COLLEGES ON THE MALTESE ISLANDS

through Applied Qualitative Research  
-25<sup>th</sup> Nov 2022



## Participant Sampling

1. Target clusters: 10 colleges
2. Asked Permission from 10 random Head of schools from the 10 colleges – zero recruitment
3. Voluntary sampling through a social media post + Snowball sampling
4. Exclusion based on cluster sampling or permission
5. Secured permission from heads of school and consent from participants
6. 3 participants did not turn up
7. 6 females, and 1 male; aged 30-60

Figure 1. The location of the 10 colleges formed by *The Education (Amendment) Act, 2006*.

# Focus Group



- 2, 2-hour online semi-structured focus groups
- Opportunity to ask questions, challenge, agree and disagree with each other (Braun & Clarke, 2013)
- Researcher as moderator
- Ease of transcription – transcribed through MAXQDA a verbatim.
- Thematic Analysis through MAXQDA (Braun & Clarke, 2012; 2019)
- MAXQDA – Visually organised codes into themes



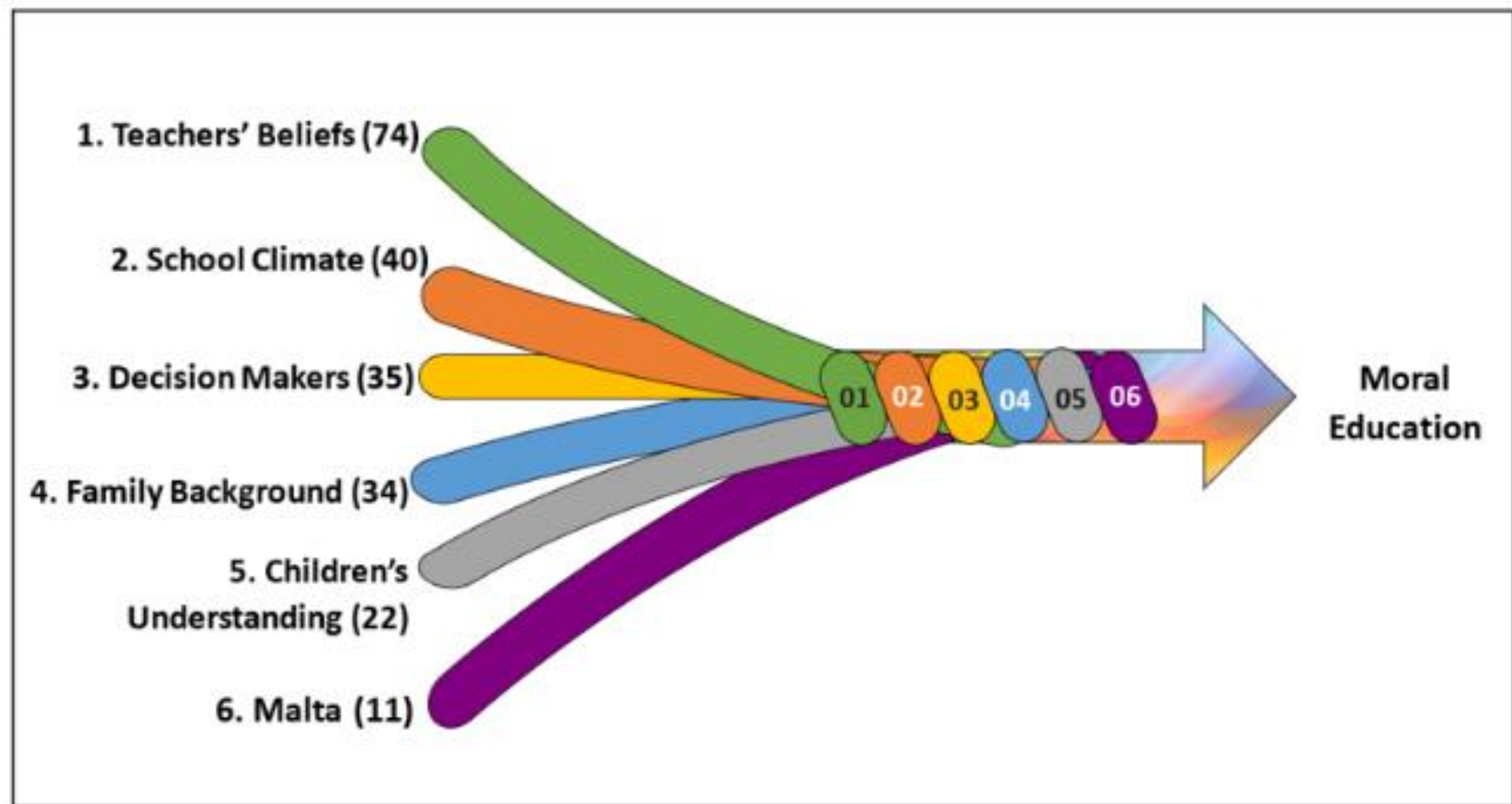
# Analysis:

- 2 Core deductive Themes
- Inductive & deductive sub-themes and codes
- Theme 2 is a result of Theme 1

Core Themes	Definition	Sub-themes/codes corresponding to the Themes
<b>1. Impact on Moral Education (223)</b>	Factors that impact how moral education is delivered in the kindergarten classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers' beliefs (74)</li> <li>• School Climate (47)</li> <li>• Decision Makers (35)</li> <li>• Family background (34)</li> <li>• Children's understanding (22)</li> <li>• Malta (11)</li> </ul>
<b>2. Moral Education Strategies (76)</b>	Strategies used by the KGEs to impart moral education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching moral norms (21)</li> <li>• Implementation of inclusion (12)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Practicing different beliefs (7)</li> <li>▪ No emphasis on different religions (5)</li> <li>▪ Respecting different beliefs (8)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Parental involvement (10)</li> <li>• Reference to religion to explain culture (4)</li> <li>• Hidden religious messages (3)</li> <li>• KGEs' sharing of practices (3)</li> <li>• Not catering for different needs (2)</li> <li>• Moral inquiry (1)</li> </ul>

*Table 1: Table of Main themes and sub-themes. Numbers in parenthesis show the frequency of use of the sub-themes/codes.*

# Factors impacting Moral Education in Kindergarten



**Figure 1:** Six factors (sub-themes) impacting Moral Education (Core-Theme 1). Numbers in parenthesis show the frequency of use of the sub-themes. For further details regarding the coded sub-themes refer to supplementary material.

Designed by PresentationGO

## 4 Implications for 4 stakeholders:

1. Training programs for **Heads of schools** to be Transformative Leaders
2. Training programs for **educators** promoting educator's adaptive metacognition
3. Schools working with **parents** through a positive school climate
4. **Children** exposed to moral inquiry from an early age



# Conclusion

*“Look how much we learned from each other. Sharing of practices, everyone recalling their experiences. This [the focus group] is something really positive because we are all learning from each other – from our hands-on, our experiences. This is the best feedback – this that we are doing now [the focus group] much better than a talk.”*