

## **Francesca Theuma – MA Education (Educational Leadership & Management)**

I recently accomplished a Masters Degree in Educational Leadership and Management from the University of Bath. This journey lasted 5 years and it was possible with a great support system and the Tertiary Education Scholarship Scheme (TESS) funding.

My journey in education started around 11 years ago, when I had the opportunity to teach at an International School in Barcelona. Having lived there for 5 years, I then returned to Malta and continued in the international environment as I started working at Verdala International School in Pembroke. The Masters programme worked hand-in-hand with my job. Throughout my seven years working at Verdala, my professional life evolved from a teacher to a curriculum coordinator to an Assistant Principal in the Elementary School. When I was a curriculum coordinator one of my jobs was to roll out a new international curriculum in the Early Year's department and leading a distance learning programme through an unexpected pandemic. The latter brought various challenges in our Early Years' department as we had to find a balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning. Looking at what other Early Years' departments were doing for online learning in other international schools and having different discussions brought to the table with senior leadership and the board of directors, the *Seesaw* app was the tool that could balance out the formal learning for our Early Years' students. At the time, being the coordinator as well as a teacher, I had the opportunity to experiment with the app and had various conversations with my team who were also using *Seesaw*. We started observing that the *Seesaw* app is a great tool to demonstrate evidence of learning, as students were more involved in their daily learning. We also saw a great possibility of using it as an assessment tool. As this was evolving, I started to witness my contribution to leadership in connection to pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment to enhance student learning.

After completing five modules, two of which were dedicated to leadership and management, I was intrigued to explore a new leadership role, my new Assistant Principal role, through the implementation of the *Seesaw* app as an alternative assessment tool in our Early Years' department. Action research was adopted as a research design, which included a two-week intervention period where participants were hands-on uploading assessment artifacts on *Seesaw* app. Data was collected through a focus group and visual methods. Data evaluation suggested that to make *Seesaw* a successful assessment tool, leadership needs to provide planned teacher collaboration time, clarity of assessment guidelines and technological support. Data also suggested that the new Assistant Principal's role had a positive impact on the Early Years' Department by initiating a culture of team collaboration through action research, being present in classrooms and supporting the team with improving the present assessment practices.