

Forms of Jewish Education in the Diaspora

Research in Jewish Education in the United States

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The following is based on both personal experience and on Jewish educational research in the United States. Little research has been done on Jewish education in other countries, except for a few scattered studies. Thus what follows is slanted by the American experience and may not be valid for other countries.

There have been some positive developments in Jewish education, and we should describe those before looking at the problems. First, the proportion of Jewish children receiving some formal Jewish schooling is greater today than it was among our ancestors in Eastern Europe, mainly because very few girls received Jewish schooling. It is estimated that in the United States 75 to 80 per cent of Jewish children attend a Jewish school at some point. Although their stay is short and the education not intensive, they do have this contact. Moreover, the numbers and proportions of Jewish children receiving all-day Jewish schooling has grown dramatically since World War II and continues to do so, albeit at a slower rate. All-day schooling now appeals to a broader spectrum of the Jewish community, including less traditional Jews. Over the last twenty years, we have witnessed a tremendous growth in Jewish higher education, in yeshivot and universities. Some have estimated that the number of students studying in yeshivot in the United States alone today is higher than in Europe in the heyday of yeshivot, the estimates running from five to ten thousand students. During this same period, there has also been tremendous growth in research and publications in Jewish studies and the translation of classic Jewish texts into modern Hebrew, English and other languages, making the Jewish sources more accessible to ordinary Jews. All these

are very positive trends in Jewish education, belie those who have only gloomy prognoses.

Despite the positive trends and improvements in Jewish education, it appears that the average Jew today is less knowledgeable about and perhaps less committed to his Jewish heritage than were his European-born ancestors. How much present-day Jewish students actually take with them, when they stop attending Jewish schools is questionable. The low educational impact of the schools is not a mere failure on the part of the schools to educate, but is also a failure of the community. It also shows the schools' inability to compensate for the lack of informal cultural transmission in contemporary Jewish families. Today we expect Jewish schools to provide the sense of *yiddishkeit* that families and communities provided in earlier generations. In the post-Holocaust and post-Israeli independence period, organized Jewish communities have relegated educational concerns to a secondary status. Jewish schools have been underfunded. School facilities have not kept up with demand, teachers are underpaid, and curriculum materials are relatively unavailable or antiquated in comparison to those for secular studies.

One critical problem is that, in both administration and teaching, there is a dearth of well-trained Jewish educational professionals. First, we have a shortage of trained and knowledgeable teachers to educate the children. Second, despite the accomplishments of Jewish day schools, and the increasing number of children who attend them, there is a great need to increase the amount and quality of education in supplementary schools. About 70 percent of American Jewish children ever attend supplementary schools. The number of teaching hours, and the quality of the curriculum, needs to be improved. The number of pupils continuing into Jewish high schools ought to be increased. Another critical need is to expand Jewish programming for college-age Jews, a relatively neglected population in the Jewish community. There is considerable research indicating that those years are a critical time period during which religious and cultural values and identity form. Many Jewish students stay in the college environment for a long time, since they go on to graduate studies. Yet, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, they only have the opportunity to attend a smattering of Jewish programs.

Some broad guidelines follow for policy planning. First is that educational policymakers and decision-makers should view Jewish education from a systemic perspective. Educators and planners should think in terms of educational systems, rather than just limited programs. This means, that they should plan educational programs in

concert with other institutions – synagogues, youth groups, summer camps, study programs in Israel, parent and family educational programs. Community resources should reinforce school curricula. Student participation in extra-school activities should be rewarded in the school.

Second, programming and resources should be made available for all stages of youth. The success of schools should be judged in terms of their continuation rates, each level of schooling feeding into the next.

Third, from a demographic perspective, the quality and quantity of adult education programs for the baby boom generation, those who are now having the children, is critical. These parents should be involved in the Jewish education of their children, and in their own Jewish education and cultural enrichment, so that this will be transferred to their children. These adults are presently the core of our Jewish community. Thus, we need to work to increase the Jewish identification of families.

Fourth, one way to reach desired populations is to use the mass media for communicating to both adults and children. There must be a diffusion of Jewish culture to greater numbers of people and places and a spreading of a sense of shared community, locally, nationally, and internationally. We need to use new technologies to bring the best Jewish educators into the homes and classrooms of children and adults in faraway places. Given the high socio-economic levels attained by Jews, it is reasonable to assume that home video and cable television are proportionately more prevalent in Jewish homes than non-Jewish homes, but little Jewish programming for these media can be found.

Fifth, we need to create financial incentives for young people to enter the profession of Jewish education. This involves awarding scholarships to those who want to pursue careers in Jewish education. But, more than that, it means providing good occupational opportunities, in terms of salary, job security, and career advancement. We also need to expand the international exchange of Jewish educational professionals, looking not just to Israel for Jewish teachers, but for example, to other English-speaking countries.

The last recommendation is that we experiment, document, and evaluate. We need good research on two levels. First, we need up-to-date, accurate statistical information describing the current condition of Jewish education. Second, there is a need to evaluate the outcome of educational innovations and experiments, and to analyze how they can be improved.

If It's So Good, Why is it So Bad? Jewish Education in Great Britain

Brenda Katten

Many Jewish organizations vie for credit for the few good things that are happening in Jewish education, without paying attention to the areas that need improvement. The frightening erosion of the Jewish people should be the single issue on the Jewish agenda. Education, of course, is the weapon to fight the erosion.

The Jewish community in the United Kingdom faces problems in both formal and informal education. Apart from those of London and Manchester, Jewish communities around the country are declining. London has nine Jewish primary day schools. These are not sufficient to meet demand, especially from parents who are unable to provide Jewish education for their children. Most young parents today are incapable of providing Jewish education themselves, and thus rely on formal Jewish education. With two Jewish high schools in London, this means that the majority of Jewish children receive only Sunday school education once a week up to the age of Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The quality of this education is very low. The 15,000 or so Jewish students in universities around the country are ill-equipped to resist anti-Jewish propaganda and missionary movements.

In 1984 a Jewish Education Committee set up by various organizations commissioned a survey that showed that the quality of teachers was extremely low. Young people of talent are not being attracted to the professions of teacher, youth leader, or rabbi, who should continue to be granted the respect they received in earlier generations.

Not enough educational use is made of programs in Israel. One such program enables fourteen-year-olds to spend six months in Israel, thereby improving their Hebrew and their future commitment to Israel.

British WIZO has joined hands with Youth Aliyah and other organizations to produce a program geared for sixteen-year-old school-leavers. They can learn vocational skills during a two-year program spent in Israel. Numerous other schemes for young people are available. Many people, even Zionist activists, are not informed about what is actually available for their children. Moreover, young people frequently cannot afford to pay for such programs as they are too expensive.

In informal education, while there are many excellent youth clubs, there is a gap between the adult community and the young. The adults pay only lip-service to the need to encourage the young. A Jewish Youth Week is projected, to make everyone aware of what resources are available in Britain and Israel. We must be more active and vocal in encouraging young people, to ensure that they get the support they deserve.

Fund-raising for Israel has tended to displace raising funds to improve the quality of Jewish education locally. Those who become teachers or make aliyah should get greater respect than those who simply write checks for Israel, as it is the former who are ensuring that the next generation remains Jewish.

In a practical sense, we should no longer think of Israel as poor and the Diaspora as rich. If the schools we need are not built, the children whom we wish to send to Israel will not go. The budget of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization has to be stood on its head. It is they which should provide funds to combat demographic erosion in the Diaspora. The demographic studies have confirmed our worst fears. The time for talking has ended and the time for action has to begin.

Hadassah's Work in Jewish Education in the Diaspora

Carol Diamond

Hadassah's work in Israel and America gains its inspiration from Jewish education. We have come to know in Hadassah that an understanding of what the movement is and stands for is not only an intellectual concern but a weapon in the struggle for Jewish survival. Jews have the right and the duty to live positive Jewish lives in the Diaspora, and Hadassah works to safeguard the cultural and religious heritage of our people by educating ourselves and our children. The goals of Hadassah's Jewish Education Program reflect this need. Yesterday's answers are no longer useful: the Israeli desire to negate the Diaspora no longer makes any sense. Because the world is much smaller than it used to be, we must enhance communication among Jews and, although Zionism remains our ideal, understand that Israel and Diaspora Jewry must both contribute to Jewish life outside Israel.

In America, the Diaspora I know best, the problems are different from those of Israel, but we Americans can still help with problems in Israel. The demographic issue is how best to increase fertility, but perhaps a more important issue is how to retain the secular Israeli as a Jew. Perhaps here American Jews can help because we have an acceptance of religious pluralism, and may be able to attract the Israeli secularist to a different form of religious orientation. For example, the American Masorati (Conservative) School in Jerusalem has attracted many secular Israeli families who would not have sent their children to Israeli religious schools.

American Jewish communities have other problems with which Israelis can help. We need to have places for Jews to meet each other. Israel can generate the kind of programs we need in order to create arenas for meetings. We can send our young and adult population to meet their peers in Israel and take back rich experiences to their communities. Thus Jewish life in Israel and the Diaspora will enrich each other.

Hadassah is, has been, or will be active in each of three major policy points referred to by Sidney Goldstein.

First, Hadassah can emphasize Jewish rituals expressing comfort, hope, and the need to stress the positive. The Hadassah Education Program, from its inception, has encouraged such a positive attitude among women. Hadassah was an entirely American phenomenon, American women coming to the aid of Zion and enriching themselves spiritually through that incentive. Hadassah in the past had great impact on the education of Jewish women who otherwise had little exposure to Judaism. They received education through materials developed in the chapters, delivered by trained text people and educational chairpeople in thirty-six regions, and the groups and chapters within them. The Jewish women then brought that lore into their homes, very often having nothing else other than the inspiration they received from Hadassah. We never neglected the adult population, from twenty-five to forty-five. They were the people we influenced to create a viable Jewish life in their homes, and send their children to Zionist camps and year-long courses.

Hadassah has produced books on Jewish ethical approaches to business, on interpersonal relations, and on medicine. There is a plethora of publications which we produce yearly and monthly. There are instructions and guidelines for our people to enable them to bring Jewish education to their constituency. We have intensive programs in Bible, in Jewish history, and on Zionism. American Jews, especially in Hadassah, have always been very practical.

Sidney Goldstein said that Jewish rituals that give comfort and hope should receive emphasis. Hadassah does just that, looking well beyond conventional outreach, and bringing the message to the country through a detailed long-range plan, including such aspects as one-day events to promote Jewish education in small cities. We have education tours and we furnish scholars to take education out into the country – one of the actions asked for as a solution to demographic problems. Thirty-six such events are planned for the next five years, reaching 1,080 women in regions from New York to California. Events projected for the next five years in the central states are aimed at a target population of 5,250 women. Thus, providing university-level lectures establishes Hadassah as a serious forum for Jewish education among Jewish women. Another plan is to train text people, study-group leaders, who will be trained in short seminars at the Melton Center of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and in turn will train other study-group leaders.

The third policy point was outreach to unconventional families, and families where there are still unconverted. Here Hadassah still needs to become active. Hadassah has a big role to play in this respect. A book has been developed on marital status, and young leadership is being prepared.

Educational and Other Activities to Preserve Jewish Communities in the Diaspora

Michael Rosenak

The subject of this workshop, “Educational and Other Activities to Preserve the Jews of the Diaspora”, which is part of the Jewish demographic problem in its entirety, is in fact the subject of survival. Our problem is not how to create or foster the spiritual or non-spiritual man who will be defined as the last Jew in the world, as the late Arthur Cohen would have it, because our interest lies in the Jewish man living in the midst of his people, in the midst of the Jewish public. The question is what the school and Jewish education can do so that there will be such Jewish life within the Jewish communities. One possible answer, as an intellectual option, to the question of what Jewish education can do for Jewish collective existence, is – that education can do nothing.

All education, and this also includes Jewish education, deals with three fields: firstly, education transmits principles of a given cultural tradition and asks the young generation to treat them as a real and correct characteristic of cosmic and human reality. Secondly, education strives to transmit a given cultural language, so that men will be able to function within a given culture as members. And thirdly, education fosters ideal models in accordance with criteria of a given tradition.

Namely, there are three requisites – principles, culture and existential ideal – for men to behave in accordance with their tradition. All the specific things – beliefs, skills, fields and patterns of worship etc., are taught in order to transmit principles and a cultural language and in order to nurture ideal people, the assumption being that there is a public which believes in these things, lives in accordance with these patterns, and encompasses individuals who aspire to these ideal patterns. When there is no such public, when there are no such shared principles and cultural language, the skills, the patterns and all that they teach, appear empty and inappropriate, and instead of bringing people into the culture, they are liable to do the opposite. In other words, it may be assumed that if the people targetted by the education, the parents, the children, the public, do not accept many things as self-understood, then in fact the education has nothing to impart to them. Consequently one possibility is that the school and the education are quite unable to provide us with a formula for survival.

Another possibility also exists: a question which greatly preoccupies the educators is how to relate to research findings in the behavioural sciences, sociology, and psychology, and empirical research; whether as a kind of “Facts of Life”, and so the educational work must be carried out in the field, in the framework or parameters of these facts; or perhaps they simply serve to explain what the challenge is and what should be taken into consideration when attempting to change the reality. These are two possibilities, the reality or “Facts of Life” of the Jewish world, of modern individualism, of disintegration of the communities, of marriage and birthrate patterns – these are facts which are emerging increasingly from the studies, even if there is disagreement over their interpretation, but the question is what education must do with these facts and how it must prepare itself in light of the reality described in these studies. Within this reality, as a complement to this reality, we expect Jewish education to protect Jewish values, and the question is how? If it protects Jewish values, then it will oppose many values of the surrounding society.

For instance: No one disputes that freedom is a good thing, but freedom, as a formal value, is expressed in Western society *inter alia* as

unbridled individualism. Society certainly exists, but there is no organic attachment between the individual and his society, and the society at most constitutes an agent serving the individual. Clearly, Jewish tradition or the Jewish set of values disapproves of unbridled individualism: the very definition of our theme – the Jewish community – requires of the Jew a significant if not organic link. How must the Jewish school protect this?

Another example is the status of married life, the status of family life. There is a conceptual status, and there is another view of reality, of *brit*, of *kiddushin*. Certainly conflict exists between the Jewish values which the school must as it were protect, and between the other reality. So the next question asked is, how are we to understand what Jewish values are, what they involve, if we really wish to execute or implement them. What do they require of us if we really want this? What is the price of war or struggle against the values of society and with whom will we effect this? The very fact of discussing this topic constitutes part of the possible contribution of education to the problem with which we are concerned.

Notwithstanding, I consider that there are several things that education can do: firstly, the most peripheral thing that the school can and must do is to appear publicly as the major community institution, and to provide for the community various services desired by the public. In other words, this is not an absolutely educational function, but the kind of function that every community institution, where there is a community, must fulfil.

Secondly, the school, or educational institute in general, can furnish information and manpower to study the problems with which we are concerned. If we train teachers well, we will have a stock of people able to come to grips with the question of how and to what extent the school must protect Jewish values in its immediate surroundings. If the teachers cannot do this, then they cannot come to grips with the parents and with the children either. In other words, ideally the school can furnish manpower to discuss questions which concern us, and can provide a way to fulfil the philosophical function of education in the community.

Thirdly, the school must participate actively in the implementation of the community policy. By way of example, the school must actively undertake a policy of assistance through scholarships and subsidies for large families, in order to allow every child to study at a Jewish school.

Likewise, I consider that the school must reconstruct the community; through its curriculum and at the ideological level, it must build and consolidate the place of Israel in education. The school must relate to

Israel seriously. I wish to put forward the thesis that a school or a community which does not relate to Israel seriously, does not relate to the Jewish people or even to Judaism seriously, because there is almost no question on our Jewish agenda that is not related in some way to the State of Israel. And of course this is also true of Hebrew which as you know is a very sore point as regards curricula in Jewish education in the Diaspora today.

In the formal Jewish education frameworks today, there are three ways of relating to the problems and the crisis which the Jewish people is traversing.

The first possibility is segregation, as in the ultra-Orthodox community. The alienation from many important things in the world, and from whole sectors of the Jewish people is considered a reasonable price to pay for the building of an education which is not merely customs and ceremonies, but truly principles and culture and ideal models. In this case the community is not faced with the question of survival, because it has education, and from its point of view anyone really concerned for the survival of the Jewish people will join sooner or later. That is the ideology.

The second possibility is of maximum openness, that is, how to deal effectively and well with Jewish individuals in a world which is completely individualistic, and in an age in which any community activity is absolutely voluntary. In other words, to see in the findings of social science a normative system in which the reality is thus and thus, and in such a reality it is possible to do such and such things.

The third possibility is to educate young people and parents to know the tradition through the various interpretations at our disposal. In any case schools today succeed only with cognitive things, and through this study they can enable young people and their parents to take a critical look at their reality, a reality which they had always regarded as manifest. If they no longer see the present reality as manifest, but as something that requires a critical eye, and something that can be modified and amended in light of the historical and traditional reality of the Jewish people, then it is very possible that the school will be able to use the findings of the social sciences in the most effective way, and at the same time, will be able to see them not as a framework of education, but as a challenge for education. It is very possible even that through the study, through the serious relating to tradition, a new sense of community will be created, although there are also other things in the community which help this.

Jewish Education and the Preservation of Jewish Communities in the Diaspora

Mordechai Bar-On

After seventeen years of running informal educational programs, I have come to the conclusion that education is merely one factor among others which contribute to cultural change. We cannot hope to impose the burden of change on the Jewish schools or youth movements. They reflect rather than influence change, and can at best contribute to incremental change. When one appraises the success of Jewish schools according to the same criteria as those applied to regular schools, it is obvious that their role in Jewish life is problematic. The criteria are three: how the school imparts the skills needed in society, how it conveys the values which the society lives on, and how well it serves as a socializing agent. Apart from those of the most religious groups, Jewish schools find it hard to impart such elements in a Jewish sense because the Jewish society which they serve is very assimilated and thus part of a larger community.

One function the schools can and do fulfill is to “teach synagogue skills,” but they cannot impart the skills for being a Jew in the Diaspora. The values of most Jews who are not orthodox are those acquired from the surrounding society, with an overlay of what we believe are Jewish values. It is problematic to try to impart these to students who see that society around them functions otherwise. There is a contradiction between what the school teaches and the practices of the home. Perhaps rather than lamenting, we should face the fact that Jewish schools should not try to give skills, values and socializing, but rather something else, such as a certain awareness, perhaps. If we do so, we may also realize that perhaps schooling is neither the best instrument, nor the best use of our resources.

The consensus at the workshop was that the important issue is the integrity of the school with the environment, i.e. the family and the real community around the child. The Jewish school should not be an isolated phenomenon, but should constitute an opportunity to involve the entire community. Schools should be created not just for the children, but with the entire community in mind, activating the surrounding community first and then involving the children. Perhaps Jewish education should be less aliyah-directed than Diaspora-directed, in order to conform with the realistic prospects of most of the pupils. A Midrash used by Professor Rosenak recounts why Moses broke the Holy

Tablets after he came down from the mountain: he did this not in anger but because he realized that the people were not ready for them – he had to choose whether to break the people or break the Tablets, and so chose the latter. In the same way, Jewish educators should consider what Jews are ready for today – perhaps it is better to break ancient prejudices, which served the past better than they will serve the future, than to break up the Jewish people.

World Union of Jewish Students Programs

Bella Borstein

The program Tochnit Arevim, which existed between 1977 and 1981, has recently been revived. This is an international Jewish Peace Corps in which young men and women up to thirty-five volunteer a year of service abroad, in small-diaspora communities. Countries in which we have volunteers serving in highly assimilated communities are Italy, Colombia, Canada and Guatemala. These are communities where there are no *shlibim* and little Jewish leadership. They do such things as teaching in the schools, providing video services, introducing Jewish adults to Israeli dancing, and inviting families to their homes to experience Shabbat. They work with what they find, and try to bring people closer to Judaism and to Israel.

Youth Activities on University Campuses; Summary of Workshop

Gideon Shimoni and Norman Zissblatt

Dr. Rela Geffen-Monson has conducted significant research on Jewish university students in the United States. One thing she discovered is that many Jewish students do not like other Jewish students very much. However, the chairman of the World Union of Jewish Students, Joseph Abramovitz, assured us that this does not apply to the Jewish student leadership.

The session in itself was less a workshop than a stocktaking of the many Jewish organizations covering the young up to the age for student organizations. This multitude of organizations is the natural framework for programs to improve the demographic situation.

The speakers at this session addressed three major issues.

The first was the importance assigned to Israel in youth organizations. All agreed on its importance, and stressed the vitality of Israel in their programming, including visits, meetings, and receiving information.

The second question was the importance of the Israel emissary system. While all thought the principle was significant, there was strong criticism of the selection process for *shlibim* [emissaries], their lack of preparation and knowledge of the local environment, and the fact that they often work against local organizations rather than with them.

Jacqueline Goldman defended the performance of *shlibim*, and suggested that the Israeli government consider sending overseas men and women doing non-combat army service, in order to influence highschoolers and students in favor of aliyah.

The third issue addressed was the formulation of actual proposals for developing specific activities. While the group deplored the absence of students themselves in any numbers, and their lack of opportunity to speak, the importance of that age group was stressed. Recent surveys have shown that eighty to ninety per cent of young Jewish people are studying on college campuses in America. The chairman of WUJS maintained that students themselves are not consulted sufficiently in the formulation of campus programs. Few experts and organizers will admit that students themselves should participate actively in the decision-making bodies.

Charlotte Jacobson stated that while she supports greater participation by young people, she has not seen them interested in any issues other than that of youth groups. If they desire a greater voice, they should be prepared to take more responsibility, and be involved in wider demographic problems than their own narrow interests. A representative of the WUJS responded that the organization had been promised funding to bring more students to the conference, but the funds were then cut off.

Dr. Rela Geffen-Monson presented her published survey of Jewish students' attitudes toward marriage and family. The survey indicated that participation in Jewish youth organizations is conducive to later participation in student activities. Thus it is important to work with them. Secondly, it is very important to provide settings in which young men and women can meet each other. Jewish activities on campus should have as academic an orientation as possible. Local communities should keep in touch with their young people when they leave for

university by, for example, sending them local publications or providing subscriptions.

David Schers and Yirachmiel Barylka spoke about specific models for Jewish activities in South America. Although Latin American Jewish communities are oriented toward the United States as their model, small communities do not receive sufficient attention, and the models of North American communities would not be helpful in organizing them better. Don Scher described community centers in North America, and noted that today they emphasize reaching out to the unaffiliated. The world secretary of Bnei Akiva described the situation of Zionist youth movements. He stated that these organizations have to grapple with the problem of the prevalence of individualism in Western society, running counter to the youth movements' collectivist ideology. This problem, insofar as it affects Jewish youth, eventually impinges on the issue of Jewish demography. Uri Gordon suggested some practical solutions to the problems of these groups.

Discussion

Carol Diamond said that Hadassah drew in many women for social reasons and only later inspired their interest in Israel, and Jewish education, and in sending their children for visits to Israel.

Belle Simon said that Hadassah, instead of limiting itself to its traditional membership of young married women who have small children, is now reaching out to singles, creating a Jewish atmosphere within which young people can connect. The organization, with pilot projects in two cities, will not be called Hadassah, but will probably choose its own name. It may organize weekends, using Hadassah's six camps around the country, and educational personnel. The *Hadassah Magazine* can be used to identify young people who may be interested in participating, by appealing to families which already belong to the organization for names of their grown children. This ambitious project to bring singles together ultimately may have some positive effect on demographic problems.

Rabbi Yitzhak Hessen advocated intensive Jewish education for adults and children in both Israel and the Diaspora.

Rachel Ben Ezer stated that the various specific efforts should be blended together, one drop to another to create a torrent. The present conference should lead to a wish to work together, to make a broad plan and assign portions of it to the various organizations.

Charlotte Jacobson added that the Zionist movement is definitely not pursuing its aims at the expense of the Diaspora, because the Zionist movement spends large sums to encourage Jewish education and commitment overseas. She added that the main problem for American Jewry is the campus generation, and among these students the challenge is to overcome their indifference and boredom with Jewish subjects. Even programs in Israel do not achieve a sense of Jewish commitment among students who come to Israel. This conference should fire in us a desire to move forward and crack the problem.

Rodney Gouzman described the demographic situation in Australia. With a Jewish population of about 90,000, there is an effort to expand Jewish education to meet demand. More Australian Jewish teachers will be trained, because bringing teachers from other countries, including Israel, has been a failure.

Dan Thurz mentioned that the Hillel campus programs, with a budget of seventeen million dollars, a hundred full-time rabbis, and three hundred part-time people, active on four hundred campuses across the United States, has not been unsuccessful in reaching out. If one compared the situation today with that of forty years ago, Jewish education is far more advanced, and part of the credit goes to the inspiration of the achievements which have taken place in Israel.

Sinai Leichter said that today we can learn from the aftermath of the Chmielnicki massacres, which happened about three hundred years ago in Eastern Poland, wiping out more than two thirds of Polish Jewry. At that time there were only about a hundred thousand Jews in the Turkish empire, so that future of the Jewish people was in the balance. Polish Jewry regenerated through a deliberate campaign initiated by the Jewish Parliament, or Vaad Arba Artzot, which appointed commissioners in every Jewish community, even the tiniest, to promote marriages and Jewish education. They were very successful in regenerating the Jewish people both numerically and culturally. Today secular Jews in America, Canada and Europe do not even want to get married, let alone have children. It should be pointed out to them that they are promoting the extinction of the Jewish people, the end of their own families.

Rabbi Brian Fox said that there is more to Jewish educational institutions than simply education. Jewish education is too much in the hands of the professionals. When the Jews themselves take over and become responsible for establishing their own institutions they are committed to a far greater extent. We have to give the problem of the survival of our communities back to the communities themselves.

Carol Diamond stated that Hadassah does precisely that. The

organization is committed to the work yet to be done among unconventional families, singles, and changing women.

Harold Himmelfarb added that the Jewish organizations are remiss in not collecting data on Jewish demography and education, as do most other religious persuasions in America for their own communities.

Michael Rosenak stated that, instead of each educator assuming that he or she knows exactly what a “real” Jewish education consists of, it is important for discussions to take place between educators of various persuasions, so that common ground and a basis for mutual respect can be found.

Macy Gordon criticized Bar-On’s portrayal of Jewish schools in the Diaspora. He said that Diaspora schools are more effective than state schools in Israel (Mamlachti) in imparting Jewish values to the non-Orthodox majority. Israeli children [in secular schools] do not have the opportunity to acquire so-called synagogue skills as American Jewish children do. In fact Israel itself could benefit from some of the organization, knowledge, and educational techniques applied in Jewish education in America.

Continuity of Jewish Communities in the Diaspora

Yosef Meleze-Modrzejewski

Youth is one of the most dynamic and fragile components of the Jewish nation. It is assigned a most important mission – to ensure the continuity of the Jewish people. Whoever talks of “youth” means “education”.

It is not surprising, then, that when we set out to define demographic policies as a means for dealing with the danger of demographic erosion facing us, as stressed by the demographers, education becomes the central theme in our thinking and deliberations, in three ways: (a) education itself; (b) assisting families in handing down Jewish values to younger generations; and (c) activities among students and youth organizations.

Jewish education may be viewed as a continuous process, starting in kindergarten, going on through university up to golden age; starting in Talmud Torah and going on through Yeshiva, and involving the study of very specific subjects such as Jewish philosophy or the archeology of Eretz Israel. Jewish education should cultivate and hand down our

spiritual patrimony, starting from our deeply rooted foundations in the Written Law and Oral Law, while including the experience the Jewish people accumulated in its long journey through history and through its contacts with other peoples and cultures. This education should respect traditional methods without belittling means provided by modern technology today. The content of Jewish education cannot be determined by round table discussions, conferences or programs, but rather stems from current, daily work.

Great differences characterize Jewish education in our generation in various Diaspora communities.

The discussions at this conference have made the differences, between the American educational system and the methods applied in France or other Western European countries, even clearer. In this connection it seems that it was easier for our fathers to cross the Red Sea than for us to cross the Atlantic Ocean. For example, last year we expected a group of American students to participate in a university summer course organized by the Rashi Center, under the guidance of professors from France and Israel. Only a very few showed up. This year, hopefully, they will be more numerous.

Thirdly, in my opinion, education is the wall that protects the Jewish people against the demographic demon. We can talk of 1.7 to 2.8 children per couple, which is not, according to Profesor Bachi, the cruel result of King Solomon's judgement. Two children born to a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother make two non-Jewish children. In the opposite case, two children born to a non-Jewish father and a Jewish mother make two Jewish children and not two halves adding up to one whole. The Jew is a divisible unit, but what is the value of such a unit if it has no consciousness of its being, no tradition, no history and no national aspirations?

Jewish education transforms the quantitative dimension into a qualitative component. Therefore education is a central demographic factor in the drive towards the existential objective. And this is the objective for the sake of which this convention asks us to mobilize all our forces.