

Excerpt From:

# **REFORM ZIONISM**

**AN EDUCATOR'S PERSPECTIVE**

**MICHAEL LIVNI (LANGER)**

**Section 4 - Aspects of  
Zionist Jewish Education**

# Model Community for Zionist Jewish Education<sup>1</sup>

## ***What is Zionist-Jewish Education?***

The purpose of this paper is to advance ideas for communities interested in developing an overall strategy for Zionist-Jewish education. The purpose of Zionist-Jewish education is to catalyze an ongoing process of commitment to the Jewish Community, the Jewish People and to its National Home — Israel. Commitment in a pluralistic society results from conscious confrontation and creative tension between alternative modes of identity and action. Zionist-Jewish education seeks to crystallize Jewish identity and commitment within the context of alternative modes of identity and action made possible by the Zionist endeavor.

## ***Model Community — A Comprehensive Approach***

The unique feature of the Model Community idea is a *comprehensive approach* to which a community will commit itself for a period of years.

This concept is proposed as a practical guideline for the Regional Advisory Councils of the Joint Authority for Zionist Jewish Education. The underlying assumption behind the adoption of an overall strategy for Zionist Jewish Education is that the cumulative impact of its implementation will be greater than the sum of the individual components.

## ***The Principles of the Comprehensive Approach***

The components of the strategy are a concurrent approach to three definable elements in the Community which can be related to as sub-communities:

- 1) The Young — Children, Youth, Students.
- 2) The Educators — formal and informal, professional and Volunteer.
- 3) The Parents — the parents of children reinforce the impact on the young, but they also constitute a starting point for Adult Zionist Jewish education in general.

1. Unpublished Mimeo Circular, Department of Jewish Education and Culture in the Diaspora, Joint Authority (World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency for Israel) for Jewish Zionist Education — JAJZE, June 1991.

Each sub-community necessitates a particular strategy in order to achieve a state of creative tension inherent in the Zionist idea. However, the sub-communities would share a common ideational rationale at least in part. Hence, over a period of time each such sub-community also serves as a partial support system for the other sub-communities. For example, young parents involved in a school program where in the evening parents tell stories chosen on the basis of a peoplehood/Israel orientation may be stimulated to learn more (adult education) and will probably be relatively more supportive of their child going on an Israel program.

The major emphasis will be on the sub-community of children-youth-students. The entire period of maturation is seen as a time period within which a Zionist-Jewish approach is integrated both formally and informally in order to internalize Zionist-Jewish identity. A properly structured Israel experience is viewed as a desirable norm for all Jewish youth. A significant proportion of these should be long-term programs oriented to educating participants to be active in their communities upon their return.

The particular tactics suitable for furthering a general strategy will vary among different countries.

### ***What Communities***

Communities may number from 10,000 to 250,000. They may be defined on a geographic basis. They may be defined on an affiliational basis. An example of such an affiliational basis would be a region of a synagogue movement. The community must have a representative body (committee) which speaks in its name.

## **THE SUGGESTED COMPONENTS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH IN NORTH AMERICA**

1. Promotion of the long-term America-Israel Secondary School Programs (Grades 10-11), 3-6 participants from the community. These programs will be modified where necessary in order to integrate leadership training and junior pedagogic modules in order to enable participants to return to their communities as youth leaders and supplementary school assistants in the movements / organizations / institutions of their choice.

A particular focus on long-term programs at high-school age in North America is dictated by the following considerations:



- a. The participants return to their home communities for a minimum of 1-2 years and hence become part of the process generating model community by being active role models for other youth.
- b. The age of 15-16 is ideal for a combined experiential-cognitive program incorporating Zionist Jewish value clarification and confrontation leading to activist Zionist-Jewish identification.
- c. A possibility exists of organizing parent-youth committees (program graduates and their parents) as lay Zionist-Jewish lobby groups for Zionist-Jewish education.

It is to be noted that within most other countries of the Diaspora age 18 (post-highschool) is a more practical option. In the case of affiliational communities even in North America the possibility of re-integrating into the same affiliational community in a different geographic location is a viable option.

2. Promotion of the integration of day-school programs and the Israel Experience.
  - a. For those communities with day-school education up to Grades 7-8, the final program module will consist of a properly structured short-term Israeli program of 4-6 weeks.
  - b. For those communities with day-school education at the high-school level, a minimum of one semester (Grade 10 or 11) should be programmed in Israel within the total class framework (including part of the educational staff). Day-school programs will be planned in cooperation with the appropriate Departments of the Authority.
3. Day-schools (receiving Federation funds) will retain one teacher-shaliach on the staff of their school. "Shaliach" in this context means a qualified teacher sent via the Joint Authorities' Departments. If the teaching staff of the school numbers over 20, it is suggested that the school will retain two teacher-shlichim. The purpose of shlichim is not only instruction of particular subjectmatter but also to project an alternative mode of Jewish identity within the school community of children, educators and parents.
4. Day-schools will give reasonable access (from Grade 5) to Zionist youth movements to recruit pupils.
5. The community will sponsor a 3-4 week educational seminar for local educators in Israel every two years. The seminar program will be planned jointly by the Joint Authority Departments and representative community institutions.

6. The Community together with the Authority will sponsor local/regional seminars once a year in the areas of:
  - (a) Hebrew Language instruction
  - (b) Modern Jewish history (including Zionist history)
  - (c) Israel
7. Community Education (Parent-Child):
 

A Jewish-Zionist program of community education involving kindergarten to Grade 4, integrating both parents and children will be established. Modules will include supplementary schools and day schools. In this way the school will also become a venue for adult education.
8. The Community will sponsor Hebrew Language ulpanim for adults.
9. The Community will promote Hebrew and Jewish ethnic studies in local Public School systems and colleges where feasible.
10. Follow-up: The community and the Joint Authority by means of the Steering Committee will be responsible for follow-up and evaluation according to the guidelines to be developed for all the model communities.

## **IMPLEMENTATION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY**

1. An authorized body representing the components of the Authority in that particular Community and the community itself will sign a commitment to this program for a five-year period.
2. A local Steering Committee will be established representing:
  - Federation (lay)
  - Zionist Council
  - Jewish Youth Council (lay)
  - BJE and JCC (or equivalent professional body)
  - Joint Authority representative
  - Zionist Youth Council of the community (lay)

This committee will have public responsibility vis-a-vis the Authority for conducting the Model Community project.
3. The question of partial incentive funding for an initial three-year period for the Israel components of the Model Communities will be brought to the Authority.
4. The Steering Committee will act to secure funding for the continuation of the project beyond the initial stage of outside funding participation.