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Jerold C. Hoffberger
Akiva Lewinsky

Consultants
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Senior Consultant
Arthur Rotman
Carmi Schwartz
Jonathan Woocher
Haim Zohar

* deceased

THE ISRAEL EXPERIENCE PROJECT - PHASE III

PROGRESS REPORT

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES



October 1987

Submitted by:
Annette Hochstein
Nativ - Policy and Planning
Consultants

October 18, 1987

Mr Robert E. Loup
Chairman, Sub-Committee
the Israel Experience Project

Rabbi Richard Hirsch
Co-Chairman, Sub-Committee
the Israel Experience Project

I am pleased to submit this report to you to serve as background material for the forthcoming meetings of the Sub-Committee on the Israel Experience Project and of the Jewish Education Committee.

At the meeting we will report that the experimental phase of the Israel Experience Project is proceeding as planned. Progress on the experiments will be presented, suggestions will be made for next steps, including the design of overall strategies for development

A. Progress Report

1. We will report on the successful completion of the pilot summer program with the Youth and Hechalutz Department. Two hundred young people from the US participated in this six week program, which introduced new conceptions of staff, planning, program content, preparation of participants, recruitment, publications for the participants and more. The program was extensively monitored and evaluated. Though we are in the midst of analysing the data of the evaluation and we are planning to follow up on the impact of the program by sending questionnaires to the participants at their homes, we have already learned much from the data for planning future programs. We found - for example - that the concept of having a more educated, older, better trained educator as the group leader instead of the conventional 22 year-old counselor is very successful. Doing away with the professional tour guide and training the group leader to guide in his stead also justified itself. However we also learned that the burden of the six week program is too heavy for one group leader to carry and that the team of counselors working with him must be trained to be able to relieve the group leader of some of the tasks and to assist him/her more effectively. A series of consultations to discuss the implications of the pilot program are now underway. The program was led by a joint team of the Youth and Hechalutz Department and of Nativ for the Jewish Education Committee.

We are now designing a second pilot program with the Youth and Hechalutz Department for summer 1988. The program will be based on what we have learned this year. We will suggest to the Committee that it be expanded to include 600 participants, within a separate experimental unit in the Youth and Hechalutz

Department of the WZO. This unit could become the Department's arm for serving less affiliated youth. If successful it could grow to serve what we have reason to believe is a significant potential population of participants.

2. The "Am Segulah" program with the Torah Education Department of the WZO expects to receive its first 65 participants from Australia on October 27. You will recall that the goal of the project was to expand and adapt the existing framework into a model program for visiting day-school classes. Work began officially on September 1. A team of educators, teachers and counselors was hired. Program development and staff training activities have been carried out, resulting in a significantly changed curriculum. This process is being accompanied by extensive consultations with the school from which the participants come, with the goal of integrating the Am Segulah program into the school's regular curriculum, thus leading toward preparation for the Israel Experience and follow-up.

Yuli Edelstein - former prisoner of Zion and Hebrew teacher - who arrived in Israel during the summer will be teaching Hebrew in the program.

3. We will report that the Kibbutz Institutes program has begun. You will recall that this project is geared at upgrading the Kibbutz Ulpan - a 3-6 month long work-study program - and adapting it to present-day needs. Elements of the program are being tested with the current participants of the ulpan at Kibbutz Hazorea. The elements being implemented include a revised study and work program; a systematic approach to the relationship of participants with kibbutz members, the "adoptive families" and the peer group; enrichment courses in the participants' native tongue (one on the Kibbutz, the other on the Jewish Calendar); the intensive study of the Hebrew language; and a series of seminars and trips to acquaint the visitors with the country and with major issues facing Israel and the Jewish people.

A recruitment campaign is being launched in the US (in conjunction with our Marketing project).

Following the pilot implementation, the program will be revised for the opening of the first full-blown Institute in February 1988. The second Institute is scheduled to open in June 1988 and the third and fourth in the coming and fall and winter. The two-and-a-half year pilot project will include four Institutes - each specializing in a different subject: Advanced Hebrew; the Arts; and two on Jewish Identity (one in the Religious Kibbutz Movement, the other in the United Kibbutz Movement). Each Institute will run three times per year with approximately 60 participants in each run. The Institutes will take place within the United Kibbutz Movement, the Religious Kibbutz Movement and the Kibbutz Artzi. Each run will serve as a pilot to be modified

and improved towards the next.

It should be noted that the work accomplished to date elicits significant interest on the part of the Kibbutz movements and of staff members of the approximately 30 existing ulpanim. We have reason to believe that the four Institutes will be important agents of change and improvement throughout the Kibbutz Ulpanim.

The steering Committee for this project includes representatives of the Jewish Education Committee, the Kibbutzim, the Aliyah Department and the Ministry of Education.

Following the principled decisions taken by the Jewish Education Committee in February 1987 to undertake a two-and-one-half year pilot project, we will suggest that the Committee recommend funding for the second year of the pilot program - beginning April 1988.

4. We will report that the A. Muss High-School in Israel has begun to work on intensified recruitment for the program and has expanded its network of Directors of Admissions for this purpose. We hope to be able to report results - increased numbers of participants - by early 1988. You will recall that the five year goal is to increase the number of participants from approximately 800 per year to 3000 per year.

5. A feasibility study was undertaken for the establishment of a Vacation Town following the Committee's recommendation. The study is being carried-out by "Heshev", a consulting firm, and is scheduled to be completed in April 1988.

However, following consultations, a review of the data, and meetings with the Chairmen of the Committee we would like to suggest to the Committee a two-months long pilot project in the summer of 1988. This project would test many of the components of the Vacation Towns and would, with the data of the feasibility study allow informed decision making for further implementation.

You will recall that the rationale for this project was our finding that most young Jewish adults who travel, do not travel to Israel. We found (Cohen, "Jewish Travel to Israel" 1986) that many would be likely to do so if programs attractive to them were developed. At the same time our educators raised the notion of the use of leisure for educational purposes and designed the idea of Vacation Towns.

Our suggestion will be to test the following elements during the pilot project:

A. Marketing in the USA and France

B. A base at Kibbutz Ramat-Rachel (Jerusalem)

where the following services will be developed and tested:

a. One week of accommodations and services in the Kibbutz guest house (up to 50 participants per week)

b. A week-long package of optional educational-tourist activities

in Jerusalem

c. A hospitality and information bureau to guide participants towards additional educational and tourist opportunities in Israel (not available anywhere).

d. Additional short-term modules in various parts of the country, - each 3-4 days long, all programmed and run by the Vacation Town staff.

6. The Marketing study undertaken by Ruder, Finn and Rotman has been completed, and will be distributed to the members of the Committee. The study both identifies the weaknesses of the current recruitment and marketing efforts and outlines a proposal for a pilot project. The first year of this pilot project would consist of setting up a central Resource Center that would aim at impacting recruitment for summer 1988. The following elements would be included :

With the creation of a comprehensive directory of programs; reaching out to the media (generating articles for newspapers, magazines and the broadcast media); using video for recruitment and for television; experimental telemarketing program; testing the effectiveness of home party techniques; creating a marketing think-tank.

7. In accordance with the policy of expanding efforts to various regions of the world we have begun to review the Tappuz program - a major program of the Youth and Hechalutz Department for young participants from South American countries. This very popular program should be adapted to today's needs and conditions, as its quality has been eroded over the years. A preliminary survey with the Department's staff has resulted in the definition of major problem areas. We would like to suggest that the Committee recommend the preparation of a development proposal for the improvement and expansion of this program. We will suggest that a limited evaluation be undertaken during the coming run of the program in January and February 1988 to provide data needed for the preparation of the proposal.

8. Planning Unit for the Israel Experience, in the Education and Culture Department of the WZO. We will be reporting on our preliminary discussions with the staff of the Department. We hope that by the next meeting of the Committee we will be able to suggest a preliminary development plan for the Department's Israel Experience programs.

9. At the meeting we will also report that every project is being monitored and evaluated. An evaluation Committee consisting of members of the Jewish Education Committee was set up in June and has begun work. Financial monitoring has been carried out by Mr Mike Weil of Megama Consultants and reports will be distributed to members of the Sub-Committee on the Israel Experience project and members of the evaluation Committee.

B. Proposals

We will suggest that the Committee recommend supporting the following programs:

1.a. Expanded pilot Summer Program with the Youth and Hechalutz Department (600 Youth).

b. Publications (Newsletter for participants, for parents, and trip Diary) - for all 6000 North American participants in Youth and Hechalutz Department of Summer Programs (Summer 1988)

2. Continuation of the Kibbutz Institutes for Jewish Experience (720 participants: 10 Institute runs of 60 participants each; two pre-Institute pilot implementation - 60 participants each).

3. Pilot implementation of Vacation Town (two months, 400 participants)

4. Data gathering and survey on Tappuz for South Americans

Detailed budgets have been prepared for each proposal, except the Youth and Hechalutz pilot, still awaiting some data on this past summer's program. If the Committee decides to recommend these projects and if they are approved for funding - a mechanism will have to be established to approve budgets and to monitor expenditures.

C. Next Steps

The Israel Experience project was given the mandate of finding out if and how participation in programs could be increased and if and how the impact of programs could be intensified. Following extensive research, the Committee decided to translate findings into recommendations for action, following which a program of experimentation was undertaken. The experiments were selected in order to test the following elements :

- How to improve some programs that serve large numbers of participants.
- How to increase participation in successful programs.
- What kinds of programs should be designed that are likely to attract population that presently do not participate.
- Develop professional expertise in areas such as marketing; program management; program curriculum design and more.

The current phase of experimentation is designed to offer further data about increased participation in programs, and improvement of programs.

We would like to suggest that with the implementation of the

experiments, the time has come to complete this phase of the Israel Experience Project.

We suggest that the coming months be used to decide whether and how to bring about the desired development of bringing many more people to educational programs in Israel, and of ensuring them a quality experience. To assist in the decision making process, we will engage in the design of alternative strategies for development, to be presented to the Committee at its next meetings. These strategies will address questions such as :

- How much growth is desired? (does the Committee want to double the number of participants, to increase it by 50% by 150%?)
- What rate of growth is desired (20% per year? 5% per year?)
- What population/s does the Committee wish to address? (High-school? Less affiliated? South Americans? Or university students, very Jewishly committed, primarily from the USA? Any mix of these and other populations?)
- What resources are needed (accommodations; manpower)
- What administrative frameworks are needed?
- What is the anticipated cost of each alternative?

On the basis of this data the Committee will be able to consider various alternatives and decide amongst them.

Chairman: Robert E. Loup
Co-Chairman: Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch

Staff, Consultants and Associates

Project Director

Annette Hochstein

Project Staff

Haim Aronovitz
Haya Bahr
Shmuel Benalal
Ami Bouganim
Yoram Cohen
Tali Hadar
Sari Gillon
Micky Lichtenshtein
Debbie Meline
Michal Chetrit

Consultants on Methodolgy

Prof. Seymour Fox
Prof. Michael Inbar

Project Consultant

Rabbi Lee Diamond

Project Coordinators and Planning Teams

Experimental Unit,
Youth & Hechalutz Dept. WZO

Am Segula
Dept. for Torah Ed. & Culture, WZO

Planning Team :
Haim Mayerson (coordinator)
Jonny Ariel
Reed Travis (U.S. Coordinator)
Ariel Milo

Daniel Kahn
Yitchak Zucher

Newsletter:

Linda & Steve Schaffzin

Marketing Israel Experience Programs

Ruder, Finn & Rotman, New York

Kibbutz Institutes

Israel Maizel (coordinator)
Len Goldzweig
Prof. Moshe Kerem
Irit Volshtein

Menachem Lustigman (Aliyah Dept. J.A)
Dr. David Mittelberg
Dolly Ronen