BABES-BOLYAI University, Cluj-Napoca

Faculty of Sociology and Social Work

Department of Sociology

ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

EFFECTS OF THE HERITAGE EXPEDITION TO POLAND ON STUDENTS AT THE ORT BIALIK EDUCATIONAL CAMPUS

PhD Candidate:

Israel Berger

Supervisor:

Prof. Univ. Dr. Petru Iluţ

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Keywords: teaching the Holocaust, preparation process, youth journey to Poland, criticism of the journey, adolescents, at-risk groups, experiential earning, collective memory, emotional and social perspective, the state of Israel, universalism, Death camps, Remembrance.

1. The structure of the theoretical and practical frame

The introduction is a review of the issue of the Holocaust in which is embedded the main purposes of the journeys of the Jewish young pupils to Poland. I expose my specifically involvement – professionally and scientifically – in this activities for many years.

The *first chapter* is a review of the relevant literature, containing nine sub-chapters and other numerous other particularly sections.

The first topic to be reviewed was collective and personal memory of the Holocaust in Israeli society, and the genocide, as a larger historical and political phenomenon. I reviewed the Israeli society's attitude to Holocaust survivors from the time the survivors arrived from Europe, while constructing the collective memory and the way it gets a different meaning as the time passes. I presented the relationship between personal and collective memory, based especially in Halbwachs's (1980) division between individual memory and collective memory, and between autobiographical memory and historical memory. I follow the way in which they influence each other and the way society changes its attitude to the Holocaust and the survivors. I presented this dynamic issue by reviewing books, films and plays written over time.

The issue of teaching the Holocaust in Israel is the second topic covered in the literature review. I presented the complexity of teaching the Holocaust to Israeli youths, the dilemmas and deliberations of the leaders as expressed in the curriculum which tool years to construct. I reviewed the events which accelerated the curriculum construction to the point of placing the issue at the heart of the agenda in the developing Israeli society, including the reparations agreement with Germany, the Kastner Libel Trial and the Eichmann Trial.

The discussion of teaching the Holocaust and the didactic issues of teaching the Holocaust and presented the division into periods as suggested by researchers, showing, that even the allegedly simple issue of division into periods, researchers are not in agreement. The didactic problems of teaching the Holocaust were presented via the researchers' different attitudes and the way in which they see as the right way to instill the Holocaust memory in the people.

The next topic I introduced the experiential learning model, which allows the pupils to leave the class framework and experience a different type of learning through the senses. Experiential learning helps the pupil absorb contents and messages, engage in critical thinking and thus internalize accumulated experiences gained during the journey to Poland.

I then touched upon the structure of the journey and the way in which experiential learning integrates into its contents. I presented the Ministry of Education goals as expressed in

the Director General's Circular and described how the school realizes the goals via the worlds of content comprising the journey to Poland.

Criticism of the journey, for and against, was the heart of the following topic discussed in the literature review. I presented the arguments made by those who are for the journeys against those who object to them, while developing a discussion between the arguments guiding both sides. It was important to present one of the most complex issues in the process of the journey to Poland.

This led me to the preparation process which is significant, and actually serves as the key to a balanced journey which allows the participants to reach significant insights about themselves, their society and the state where they live. I explained my approach to the preparation and how it touches upon the worlds of contents of which the journey is comprised, so as to construct a preparation process which emphasizes values, the cognitive domain, the domain of emotion, the domain of society and the organizational aspect. The preparation process consists of various activities such as dilemmas workshops trying to present the adolescents with issues where they are required to think and act based on their values. The ceremonies performed in Poland were the next topic discussed in the review.

The adolescents' journey within the journey to Poland was the next topic. The adolescents' world on its complexities encounters the unique and complex journey to Poland. Acquaintance with adolescence, its stages and deliberations which adolescents encounter and the way in which they cope with the emotional, social, cognitive and moral issues with themselves, their families and environment. I touched upon coping with death which is a significant issue in Israel, and the encounter with death during the journey to Poland, which requires special attention. Reference to the values the adolescents encounter in the course of the journey was based on Schwartz's theory (1992). The gender issue and the different boys' and girls' approaches to various situations were then discussed as well.

The topic of society and sociological theories and their implementation in my research was next discussed in the section engage in the ties between the individual and society, and mutual contributions to each other. The way in which the individual integrates into society while adopting its norms and behavior rules, together with the possibility of influencing society is at the heart of this discussion. I have tried to apply the sociological understanding of social and group processes by exposure of classical and modern sociological approaches (functionalism, structuralism-functionalism, and rationality), contemporary approaches on group's dynamics and on their social influences in understanding of social and group processes.

At the end of this theoretical chapter, I outlined three phenomena which are connected, more directly, to my approach.

One of the very important characteristics of the group is represented by its *efficiency*. First of all, this refers to groups' performance and their productivity. Obviously, there are other relevant aspects as well, both from the viewpoint of the group as an entity, and both from the viewpoint of the group members. Thus, satisfaction, self-fulfillment, social prestige, but also the fact that the individual receives knowledge, security and support from the group are also aspects which are very important for the group members (Baron et al., 2006; Delamater, 2006). A high satisfaction with the group leads to more accentuated social cohesion which brings benefits for the entire group and contributes to the viability of the group. In our research, the degree of satisfaction constituted an objective indicator and a concrete dimension regarding the efficiency of school trips.

The literature contends two major concepts in connection with group performance and group efficiency: i) *social facilitation* and *social loafing* – i.e. the tendency of individuals to escape from group tasks. My findings suggest that if the objective of the journey is interesting and attractive and if the group is well organized, social loafing can be reduced and even avoided.

My research investigates the contribution of organized school journeys to the formation and change of representation and attitudes towards the Holocaust among the children who took part in these journeys. Social psychology differentiates three essential conditions for attitude formation and attitude resistance towards an object: i) personal *(subjective)* experience with the attitude object; ii) social comparison; iii) *group dynamics* in the process of adjustment to common goals and attitudes and behaviors of others members. All of these conditions were present in the activities of those pupils who participated in the journey. Consequently, implicitly or explicitly, such dimensions have been studied in the course of our research.

Due to the great responsibility on the shoulders of those who are in charge of taking the delegations to Poland, the last topic of the literature review is that of the at-risk pupils going to Poland. I reviewed the risks which the youths encounter during the journey to Poland while reviewing events which I had witnessed before and during the journey and after returning to Israel. The names mentioned in that section are fictitious names. The section attempts to characterize the pupils identified as pupils "at risk" and describe the way to treat them so as to complete the journey without any special events. I also characterized the pupils which are not to go on the journey due to the concern they will not be able to cope with its pressures.

The complexity of the journey to Poland requires attention to the tiniest details on the one hand, and a broad overall perspective on the other. A successful journey is the outcome of acquaintance with all of the domains pertaining to the journey on all of its details: acquaintance with the pupils, behavior characteristics and adolescence problems as described in the review, the pupil-group interaction and the process of consolidating the group, acquaintance with the

sites in Poland and grading them on the pupils' the scale of mental-emotional difficulty with which they have to cope. Enlisting the teachers to the journey is an issue that was not covered in this research.

Constructing a balanced route dividing the journey program on its complexities and integrating visits to the death camps with visits to tourist sites, encounters with Polish youths, tribute to righteous gentiles, a sing along, communication with the home during the journey via letters collected in Israel written by the families to the pupils and the accompanying staff members – all those constitute the grounds for constructing a preparation process as described in the relevant section, a well-balanced preparation process, ending with going on the journey at the climax constitutes the solid grounds for a solid delegation that will justify its journey.

2. Research question, objectives and methodology

The research pertains to the journey to Poland in the largest high school in Israel, where I am the vice principal and the school's pedagogical director. I went to Poland for the first time in 2000, and until 2010 I served as the head of the school delegations to Poland. During the ten years I had gained a good deal of experience in the process of preparation for the journey to Poland including planning the journey, preparing the pupils, selecting the teachers and guides, selecting pupils for the delegation, and most important accompanying the pupils. Because of my research, I decided to disconnect from the stages of the journey process immediately after returning from the 2010 journey, the journey examined in this research. It was important to take some "time off" after collecting the data, and detach myself from the intensive activity of planning the 2011 journey, which takes about a year. It was important to focus on processing the information and analyzing the findings from a different perspective than that which I had when I managed the school's delegations to Poland. The researched journey took place between September 19th, 2010 and September 29th 2010.

The two *research questions* were phrased after raising the questions presented earlier:

1. In what ways does the expedition to Poland affect the pupil's attitude emotionally, socially and nationally?
2. What do the pupils experience in the expedition? How do these experiences affect their opinions and beliefs regarding their country, nation and society?

The research was conducted in *three stages*:

- The first research stage was quantitative and was conducted in Israel at the end of the preparation process and a few days before going on the journey. Some 100 pupils who went on the journey filled in closed-ended questionnaires with a number of open-ended questions. The questionnaire included the pupils' background, the goals of the journey

and reasons for going to Poland, the pupils' personal expectations of the journey, their expectations of their friends and the environment. The questionnaire examined attitudes and feelings regarding the "I", society and the state and how the world of emotion integrates with other worlds. The questionnaire also touched upon the pupils' expectations of the journey and how they think they would return from Poland.

- The second research stage was qualitative and was conducted in Poland, during the journey, after returning from the visit to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps. A focus group was conducted, whereby they were asked questions about the expectations they had had before the journey of themselves and their friends and of the state. Had the expectations been met? How did they evaluate themselves, society, the family and the state as the journey progressed? Which insights they reached (of at all) in the intensive pressure of the journey? During the implementation of the focus group, and while giving their answers, the dynamics among the participants was such that they addressed the statements of their friends in addition to answering the questions.

- The third research stage was quantitative was conducted a week after returning from the journey. The pupils who had returned from the journey filled in closed-ended questionnaires with a number of open-ended questions. The questionnaire touched upon questions asked in the first questionnaire, while focusing on the changes between going and returning.

The research was applied among a complete population of 17 – 18 year old participants in the journey to Poland in 2010. This sought to promote the understanding of the journey's contribution to the pupils and their attitudes on the emotional, social and national levels. The research also sought to find how the journey influences the pupils' attitudes to society and state in light of the criticism against the journey.

The main *research objectives* referred to the following:

1. On the personal level – to find how the pupil places him or herself in life, what are the pupil's feelings and expectations regarding the journey, why does the pupil not go on the journey, who encourages him or her if any, how does the pupil experience the journey, and how does the pupils return from his or her own perspective and other issues which will be examined in the research;

2. On the social level – what is the adolescent's place among his or her peers? Does he or she trust them as an anchor? Is the adolescent willing to support peers, and does he or she indeed do it? Where is the weak person in society according to the adolescents' perceptions?

3. On the national level – how is the State of Israel perceived by the adolescent going on the journey? By the adolescent returning from the journey? What is the place of the Arab

minority as citizens in the state? What are the meanings of the symbols (flag and anthem) during and after the journey? How is commitment to the Jewish people expressed?

This ***mixed methods research*** included *questionnaires* and a *focus group*:

1. Closed-ended Questionnaire with open-ended questions, before the journey;
2. Focus Group after visiting a death camp, In the middle of the journey;
3. Closed-ended Questionnaire with open-ended questions, after the journey.

3. The main results of the Journey to Poland research: Emotional, Social and National Identity

The journey to Poland was conceived as a journey into the participants' identity. From the emotional dimension, the participants showed a process of maturation and maturity on their ways from adolescents into young adults. From the social dimension, the participants developed a new perception of their relations with their friends. They no longer perceive them as merely classmates or playmates, but, as a robust support mechanism that helped them overcomes difficulties and hard feelings during the journey. Additionally, the participants changed their view of their family and learned to value and cherish their families as a close family unit. From a national dimension, the participants managed to develop their identity as citizens of their country who are willing to defend it beyond the call of duty. Although small signs of nationalism emerged, on the whole, it was a marginal phenomenon.

The findings revealed that the journey on all its stages had a significance contribution to the adolescents' attitudes on the emotional, social and national levels. The journey influenced their attitudes to and opinions about society and state. On the emotional level, the pupils returned more mature than they had been before the journey; on the social level, they appreciate more the significance of society and family. Below are a statistical illustration of the results of social dimension:

Table 1: ANOVA test on Social Dimesnion - Boys and Girls Before and After

Social	Boys Before n=33		Girls Before n=62		Boys After n=43		Girls After n=53		F	Sig.
	S.D.	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	M		
7.1. Experiences of past journey participants	1.33	2.97	1.01	3.81	1.33	3.12	.99	3.79	6.64	.00
7.4. Family stories about the Holocaust	1.64	3.42	1.71	3.36	1.46	3.37	1.32	3.77	.84	.47
7.5. It was important to visit places where my family lived	1.85	3.03	1.77	3.17	1.62	2.95	1.54	3.60	1.43	.23
7.6. The family was interested in my going	1.21	4.09	1.09	4.05	1.09	4.09	1.06	3.85	.54	.66

7.7. I wanted to go on the journey with my friends	1.38	2.73	1.32	3.06	1.15	3.70	1.28	3.55	4.93	.00
15.15. I wanted to hear personal stories about my friends' families	1.14	4.00	.59	4.55	1.06	4.07	.75	4.51	4.99	.00
15.20. I got to know my friends better	1.41	3.39	1.21	3.74	1.08	3.67	1.12	4.02	1.92	.13
17.1. Strength	1.39	3.55	1.16	3.89	1.38	3.63	1.06	3.96	1.16	.33
17.4. Cohesion	1.25	3.61	1.22	4.13	1.08	4.02	.88	4.36	3.21	.02
18.3. Friends who went on the journey with me enabled me to cope with the experiences of the journey	1.17	4.12	.82	4.47	1.08	3.98	.87	4.57	3.94	.01
18.4. The staff who accompanied me on the journey supported me when I needed it.	1.46	3.61	.88	4.19	1.08	3.79	.72	4.43	5.99	.00
18.5. Cohesion which developed during preparation enabled me to experience things profoundly.	1.24	4.03	.69	4.44	1.02	4.05	.59	4.64	5.44	.00
19.1. The journey strengthened my ties with my family	1.46	3.58	1.28	3.59	1.30	3.44	1.07	3.87	.98	.40

On the national level, the state is perceived as an anchor of safety and as a place worth living in, worth defending and a good place in which to develop. The pupils returned with profound insights in the above mentioned domains.

According to other studies, our research revealed significant differences by gender on almost every detached variable.

Practical Implications. The conclusions drawn from the discussion's sections present a situation whereby the pupils return from Poland enriched in the three dimensions which were examined: the emotional, social and national dimensions. The national and universal insights expanded the pupils' perspectives, and therefore, the horizon whereby the pupils regard themselves and their lives. Nevertheless, the findings require special attention in the domains which call for improvement, and perhaps changes in the journey's design.

Examination of the studies pertaining to adolescence and the difficulties of adolescents going on the journey to Poland after their return to Israel, an issue which was not examined in the framework of this research limitations, which will be discussed later on, raises some wonders regarding how right and proper it is to send 11th grade pupils on the journey. Perhaps there is a need to revisit the issue and consider sending the delegation in the 12th grade. Perhaps if the pupils were a year older than the research group, the research would present more significant

patterns of maturation and maturity, and hence, a faster, deeper processing of information, leading to more profound insights.

Addressing all the elements mentioned in the preparation process is the key to a successful journey. The pupils going on the journey are in a stage nearing the end of adolescence, and here, the organizing staff has the responsibility of choosing the delegation members and the teachers and guides who will accompany them. Identifying each journey participant's weak and strong points, adults and adolescents, will allow for the construction of a balanced group which will provide solutions to each of its members and enable them to draw the best out of the journey and the delegation. The identification process was conducted via a questionnaire administered to the pupils. The questionnaire examines the pupil's mental readiness and the pupils' perceptions of coping with the idea of the journey to Poland and the difficulties it presents.

The pupils have to be emotionally mature and ready to absorb the information to which he/she is exposed in the framework of experiential learning. The information absorbed in the preparation process, which the pupil takes to the journey has to provide the pupils with factual tools and a significant background picture about the route and sites on the historical and social levels, including all the events which took place in the site which the delegation will visit. Constructing the journey on the grounds of the personal stories which the pupils bring from home or their close environment gets the pupils closer to the site and to each other. It is a good idea to equip the pupils with more personal stories which the can read during the journey in places where they occurred or in similar sites. It is important that the cognitive ladder is enriched throughout the journey and be challenging throughout, while allowing the pupils to start the processing stage in the workshops at the end of the day. The skilled guides and accompanying adults have to take responsibility for holding the workshops in the structure of the bus.

Enhancing the Emotional Domain during Preparation. Because some studies have been published recently about the damage caused to the pupils returning from Poland due to the problems handling the emotional aspects and due to findings showing the association between the world of emotion and the ability to reach moral, value-related insights, the school ought to construct a model while consulting professional factors such as the counseling/therapeutic mode by psychiatrist (Mimouni-Bloch et al., 2012), as well as other psychology and sociology experts. The model will address the adolescents' world of emotions, and focus on pupils whose families have experienced bereavement, as in the case of a boy whose father was killed in the war, which will allow them to experience emotional experiences in depth, while engaging in a monitoring

process channeling the emotions to the domain of asking moral questions and reaching insights as a result. The issue was discussed in the preparation chapter.

Enhancing the Sense of Identification in Preparation. Comparison to other research findings introduces the delicate balance to which we ought to aspire in order to preserve national attitudes without getting nationalistic as concluded in Kimchi's research (2011). We may assume that proper preparation while meticulously choosing the contents and workshops, together with highly experienced guides who will provide the information, may help the youths avoid reaching nationalist conclusions. I always bear in mind the Nazi German education system, and how it brainwashed the youths, instilling Nazi theories and propaganda in them, and later those youths took an active part in the killing of Jews in Europe. That education system, after the war, held rehabilitative activities with the opposite intention of denouncing racism and Nazism and benefit from the value of accepting others after the Holocaust. The ease in which we can steer and lead the youths from one extreme to another need to be decreased, because of the responsibility on us, the adults. Expression of nationalism which arose while presenting the findings and their discussion require a separate, focused discussion. A model has to be constructed, which I believe could narrow the phenomenon of racist expressions as presented in Kimchi's research (2011). The small number of pupils who made racist comments in my research and those who returned more nationalistic is small, but I do not take those expressions lightly, and the issue ought to be addressed. Preparation ought to include moral universal issues and emphasize the humane aspect of encounters among people and guaranteeing people's rights.

The journey to Poland has address issues of racism as a significant chapter both in preparation and in the journey. It is important to construct a learning unit discussing racism with a universal perspective which will be taught in preparation and applied in the journey. Perhaps I ought to have added background questions to my research questions to find whether there are pupils from bereaved families (and there were a few), an issue which I discussed in the emotional aspect preparation chapter.

Enhancing the Pupils' Universal World View. The pupils' attitudes to the youth group in general, and to German and Polish youths in particular, are temporary, local and does not last. The world reality surrounding the adolescents requires more profound attitudes and finding ways to engage in ongoing relationships. Beyond that, I wish to see Israeli and Romanian youths engage in a relationship based on moral issues and values. Parallel to other issues discussed by adolescents. I am willing to take an active part in a team that will construct such a program.

Research Limitations. Having presented the findings and their interpretation, and the discussion of topic, the research limitations have to be discussed. Some of the limitations were known to me, and some were revealed in the course of writing this report.

1. My position as a researcher – I have served as the delegation head for over ten years during which I planned and applied the format of the delegation to Poland in the school where I teach. The format is based on the Ministry of Education guidelines, while giving the school autonomy in a variety of domains, as mentioned in the literature review. My position as researcher has advantages and disadvantages due to a broad view which enables me to compare the present journey to previous ones. I decided, upon returning from Poland in October 2010, to detach myself from the journeys to Poland and focus on the literature and the research. This detachment has helped me regard the research from a different, more objective and critical perspective. Nevertheless, the experience I had gained helped me view the findings clearly while being closely acquainted with what is happening at each stage of the journey.

2. Due to my being part of management in the school where the research was conducted, I would like to state that throughout the research, the pupils knew the questionnaires they filled and the focus groups in which they participated would be part of the research.

3. The research population consisted only of Jewish pupils of the particular school. The research did not relate to the religious sector, where journey participants are orthodox, conservative, or reform Jews. Perhaps the research called for considering the religious views in data analysis.

4. The research did not consider the journey participants ethnic origins, whether their origins were in the Arab countries where damage to the Jewish communities was marginal, or were their origins in Europe, where most Jewish families were hurt?

5. The research did not initially address the bereavement information of the pupils who participated in the journey. Bereavement as a result of a death of a family member, possible a result of a terror act. This information may have shed light on radical expressions or extreme emotional behavior during the journey (in the examination of radical statements, it was found that a close family member of one of the pupils was killed in a terror act).

6. The research did not address the background of the teachers and guides who went on the journey.

7. The research did not address suggestions from educational and public circles to hold a journey within Israeli boundaries touching upon Holocaust and Resurrection issues and the implications of such journeys examined in the current research.

4. Research contribution and possible future Research

The ***research contributes to both theoretical and practical knowledge***. The research contributes to the *accumulating knowledge* regarding experiential learning and the unique characteristics of learning and teaching/guiding outside school with pupils nearing the end of adolescence in an unfamiliar environment. The attempt to associate the characteristics of preparation and the journey's emotional, social and national products and insights, as well as to characterize the pedagogical contents of guiding in a strange place is primary; despite numerous studies about teaching in class, studies of teaching/guidance outside school and their influence are scarce. On the *practical level*, beyond The Israeli Ministry of Education (1988) policy, the schools responsible for social-moral activities, Holocaust remembrance organizations and the guides regard the journey as an educational means for enhancing the pupils' love of their country and nurturing national heritage.

There are additional expectations of the journey to Poland such as social cohesion, profound learning and contribution to what is learnt in class and more. The research findings also allow for better evaluating the influence of the journey in the various domains. Furthermore, planners of the journey and its preparation, guides and teachers usually act intuitively and are hardly aware of the components and characteristics of this guidance. The research presents another angle of the process which the adolescents undergo and how to apply the preparation program in the best manner so as to realize the journey's educational potential. The findings *contribute to recommendations for improvement and making the guidance theory more effective* both for the education system and the guidance organizations.

Universal contribution: the research findings indicate a pattern of enhancing the adolescent's connection to society, to the family and to the State of Israel. This is achieved via a meticulous application of a carefully planned preparation process and a balanced journey route. All those revolve around a traumatic national event which the Jewish people have undergone. And in the universal perspective, each nation has gone through a traumatic event in its near or far past. Adolescents tend to distance from the heritage and national identity. Can the relationship between the adolescents and the state in which they live be enhanced via a "non-traumatic" approach to a traumatic national event? This question remains open.

Future research. The research I have conducted on the Jewish population calls for a parallel research in the Arab population in the State of Israel where the Arabs have equal rights as citizens of the state, and a comparison of the two populations is required.

From the research I have conducted, it would be interesting to construct, prepare and investigate a delegation comprised of High school Jews and Arabs, and deal with co-existence issues before, during and after the journey. This requires unique, long preparation.

One of my personal conclusions as a researcher pertains to broadening the universal perspective. I would like to be part of a team that will construct a joint Israel-Romanian delegation to Jewish Holocaust sites in Romania, and sites where the Communist regime hurt Romanian population. This ought to be done while constructing a significant preparation program in Romania and Israel. Should such a program be implemented successfully, a visit of the Romanian youth in Israel is to be considered. Research needs to be done on this expedition.

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