



## The Unit for Learning from Success and Ongoing Learning in Human Service Organizations

### Background

The Unit for Learning from Success and Ongoing Learning in Human Service Organizations (LFS Unit) began its activity in 1995 in the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute. It was established by Prof. Jona Rosenfeld who for many years has been involved in the idea of learning from success. The Unit facilitates learning in organizations in order to develop ongoing learning and to advance the goals of these organizations.

### Vision

The vision of the LFS Unit is to help organizations provide their target populations, including socially excluded populations, with high-quality, appropriate and beneficial services. It focuses on promoting practice, organizational structures, policy planning and training patterns, based on the tacit knowledge that exists in these organizations and on their successes.

The Unit is guided by a basic belief that in each organization, there are staff members whose tacit knowledge can and should become overt and usable to all. Based on this belief, committed and enthusiastic work teams can be created by focusing on, and learning from, past successes.

### The Nature of the Activity

Over the years, the LFS Unit and its partners have developed a structured and goal-oriented system that inculcates ongoing learning skills and the ability to develop successful action plans based on learning from past successes.

The action plans, based on the three methods developed by the Unit<sup>1</sup>, allow the teams in each organization to process professional knowledge that has been tacit and turn it into overt, actionable knowledge, while at the same time supporting grassroots processes of change and shared learning focused on reflection in action.

In order to promote its vision, the Unit acts in the following ways:

- **Development of learning methods.** The action plan operates in accordance with these methods<sup>1</sup> in a structured and systematic way in each organization. The methods are adapted to each organization, depending on its character and needs, and they incorporate the system and stages by which the program achieves its goals.

- **Learning from the successes of the people in the organizations.** Extracting the tacit and overt knowledge, processing it, and disseminating it for the use of others.
- **Dissemination of knowledge** through publications, lectures and conferences, and through the MJB website.
- **Academic writing** which develops a language and concepts that serve as a basis for a new discourse on learning about professional activities in organizations.
- **Learning sessions** for preliminary introduction to the concept and practice of learning from success and ongoing learning.
- **Incorporation of LFS and ongoing learning** through cooperation with organizations, and development of joint comprehensive learning programs. These programs are conducted in a number of spheres including supporting learning processes in several organizations concurrently.
- **Training of "learning companions"** who disseminate the learning from success and ongoing learning in their organization and other organizations. The participants in the "learning companion" workshops include people from social as well as business organizations.
- **Supporting the "learning companions"** in order to achieve structured, systematic organizational learning in accordance with the methods on which the program is based. This includes shared learning, documentation and analysis of the learning process, advice and guidance.

## Methods

An external instructor trained by the LFS Unit function as each organization's "learning companion". They support the organizational learning, facilitate the learning and help promote learning from success, using the three methods.

The work methods are based on the three learning methods<sup>1</sup> that were developed by the LFS Unit. Their aim is to create a cyclical work method – with the help of the methods, staff from the organization learn through three types of learning that feed into each other: a) how to learn from past successes; b) how to face the challenges of the future using what they learned from past successes; c) how to adapt an organizational culture of ongoing learning that is beneficial and renewable.

The first method, that focuses on learning from past successes, includes ten guiding questions with which to analyze the actions that created past success and to learn from this for the future. This method is adapted to each organization that is interested in developing a learning culture among its staff, and at the same time, solving issues and challenges that are currently unsolved. Once the staff of an organization adopts the method's language and the learning culture as a way of life, they can turn to solving new problems and challenges, with the help of their learning companion and using the second method, which is about

addressing unresolved issues; as well as the third method, which identifies ways to promote and improve ongoing learning in the organizational system.

## **The Activity – Areas and Cooperative Ventures**

The LFS Unit has forged professional relationships with the Ministries of Education, Social Affairs and Health, as well as with various organizations, committees and human rights organizations in Israel and abroad.

A number of examples from selected areas of activity:

**Cooperation with the Ministry of Education:** "Learning from Success as a Leverage for School Learning" is a program jointly developed and implemented by the LFS Unit and the Secondary Education Division in the Ministry of Education. The program included participants from scores of schools serving diverse populations from all sectors: Jews, Arabs, Druze and Bedouins. As part of the program, schools were trained to become organizations that practice ongoing peer learning, based on identifying past successes and planning future successes. A unique cooperative venture took place in all the elementary schools in Netanya, with the support of the chief school supervisor and the Netanya municipality.

**Cooperation with the Research and Development Division, experimental schools and initiatives in the Ministry of Education** to identify, conceptualize and record the patterns of dissemination and implementation of the experimental knowledge of the dissemination centers and the division.

**Cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services – knowledge management:** The Unit conducted ongoing and fruitful relations with the Unit for Knowledge Management in the Ministry of Social Affairs. The program covered organizational learning in general and learning from success in particular, and worked with a variety of social service departments and services for several years.

**Consultation and support for various organizations in Israel and abroad:** Continuing support allows for ongoing learning and the creation of action plans to benefit their target population. Such support and consultation has been provided to organizations such as: nurses in well-baby clinics; the Youth Probation Service; the Atidim program – public administration cadets; support centers for students with learning disabilities; JDC-Ashalim; and the Fourth World Movement – activity in the area of poverty.

**Training "learning companions" in the IDF:** Development and implementation of a unique workshop to train senior IDF officers as "learning companions", to serve as "training developers" in various IDF corps. The workshop taught the participants the concept and methods of learning from success and ongoing learning, and supported implementation of this learning in the IDF.

**Cooperation with Israel Police:** Cooperation between the Unit and Police National Headquarters resulted in identification of professional success stories in various police stations, inquiring about them and documenting them. The products of this process include

a detailed presentation that describes all the success stories. This presentation is accessible and is used by various branches of the police.

**Writing a book about success stories in working with residents of Aleh.** Aleh treats children, youth and adults with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities and complex medical conditions. The book is a product of cooperation between the LFS Unit and a leading forum of Aleh staff including representatives of all four Aleh centers in Israel. The book presents in detail ten success stories that focus on the advancement and treatment of the Aleh target population. It also presents principles of action that are shared by all ten stories.

**Learning from success in Qalansuwa.** Learning from success and ongoing learning were implemented in a broad range of educational and social organizations in the Arab locality of Qalansuwa. These include kindergartens, elementary schools and junior high schools, as well as key city officials. As a result, Qalansuwa is now a locality that practices ongoing learning by staff, based on identifying past successes and planning future ones.

### **Learning Methods <sup>1</sup>**

The LFS Unit and its partners developed these methods.

The first method – "learning from past successes – the retrospective method", is aimed at developing an organization's ability to learn retrospectively from its own successes. To implement this method, a staff workshop is held aimed at identifying successes in their work. This is done through contemplation and reflection on the actions that made the success possible. The shared learning allows for turning the tacit knowledge ("knowledge in use"), that enabled the staff to act, into "overt knowledge", using "actionable language", that is applicable in other contexts.

The second method – "in pursuit of a learning question - the prospective method" – is aimed at developing organizational action in accordance with challenges posed by the organization itself, that are presented as "learning questions". The learning question addresses an essential and unresolved issue that is in the heart of each team's work.

The third method – "learning about learning: identifying and disseminating the patterns of organizational learning" is aimed at identifying and developing the shared and ongoing learning patterns of an organization. In the workshop, the participants jointly examine, once again through contemplation and reflection, how learning has occurred and developed throughout the program, as well as the processes employed by the organization to promote it. At the same time there is an attempt to identify the activities, the preparation, the dialogue patterns and the dissemination methods of the learning.

## **External Publications and Articles in the field of Learning From Success and Ongoing Learning in Human Service Organizations**

Ellenbogen-Frankovits, S. 2012. **If you Praise, You Will Learn**. Status Journal for Management Thinking, Tel Aviv.

Schechter, C., Sykes, I., & Rosenfeld, J. 2004. Learning from success: A Leverage for Transforming Schools into Learning Communities. **Planning and Changing**, 35 (3&4): 154-168.

Sykes, I.; Friedman, V.; Rosenfeld, J. & Weiss, T. 2004. Collective Reflection at Work through Learning from Success. In the book **Productive Reflection and Learning at Work**, SALTSA Programme, National Institute of Working Life, Stockholm, Sweden.

Rosenfeld, J., Sykes, I., Weiss, T., Dolev, T. 2002. **How to Turn "Learning from Successes" into a Leverage for Developing School Learning**. Ministry of Education, Secondary Education Division, and Myers-JDC-Brookdale, Jerusalem.

Rosenfeld, J., and Tardieu, B. 2000. **Artisans of Democracy: How Ordinary People, Families in Extreme Poverty, and Social Institutions become Allies to Overcome Social Exclusion**. University Press of America, Maryland.

Rosenfeld, J. 1997. **Learning from Successes – How to Create Social Work Suitable for its Purpose**. Society and Welfare 17 (4), 361-377.

Rosenfeld, J., Schon, D.A., Sykes, I. 1996. **Leaving the Straits**. Myers-JDC-Brookdale, Jerusalem.

Rosenfeld J., Schon D. A., Sykes I. J. 1995. **Out From Under: Lessons from Projects for Inaptly Served Children and Families**. JDC-Israel Children-at-Risk Area, JDC-Brookdale Institute, Jerusalem.

Rosenfeld, J. 1989. **Emergence From Extreme Poverty** (With a monograph by Brigitte Jaboureck), Paris: Landover MD, Fourth World Publications.

Rosenfeld, J. and Krim, A. 1983. "Adversity as Opportunity: Urban Families Who Did Well After a Fire", **Social Casework**, 64, (561-565).

Rosenfeld, J. 1981. "**Learning From Success: Changing Family Patterns and the Generation of Social Work Practice**": in Family Life in the South African Indian Community, Occasional Paper #20, University of Durban, Westville Institute for Social and Economic Research.

Rosenfeld, J. 1964. "**The Strangeness between Helper and Client: A Possible Explanation for Non-use of Available Professional Help**" Social Service Review, 38:1: 17-25.

For further details and the publications of the LFS Unit, see the website of the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute: <http://brookdale.jdc.org.il/>