



RESEARCH REPORT

Program for Jewish Educators in the Former Soviet Union: Evaluation Study

Jenya Gorbatsevich ✦ Yehonatan Almog

The study was initiated and funded by the JDC Former Soviet Union (FSU) Division

Program for Jewish Educators in the Former Soviet Union: Evaluation Study

Jenya Gorbatsevich

Yehonatan Almog

The study was initiated and funded by the JDC Former Soviet Union (FSU) Division

Jerusalem

March 2016

Translator and Editor: Naomi Halsted

Layout and print production: Leslie Klineman

Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute

P.O.B. 3886

Jerusalem 9103702, Israel

Tel: (02) 655-7400

Fax: (02) 561-2391

Website: <http://brookdale.jdc.org.il/>

e-mail: brook@jdc.org.il



Related Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute Publications

Katz, E. and Korazim, M. 2012. *The Paideia European-Jewish Leadership Program: Graduate Views of Program*. RR-603-12

Korazim, M. and Gorbatsевич, J. 2012. *The Contribution of Educational Programs on the Experience of Soviet Jewry in the Holocaust to Selected Groups in Israel and in the FSU*. RR-611-12.

Zalberg, S.; Katz, E. and Youssim, I. 2004. *Hesed Evaluation Study: Jewish Identity Community Orientation and Voluntarism - Report Number 7: Hesed's Impact on Jewish Identity and Community Renewal*. S-115-06.

To order publications, please contact the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, P.O.B. 3886, Jerusalem, 9103702; Tel: (02) 655-7400; Fax: (02) 561-2391; E-mail: brook@jdc.org.il

Reports and English summaries are also available on the Institute website: <http://brookdale.jdc.org.il>

Executive Summary

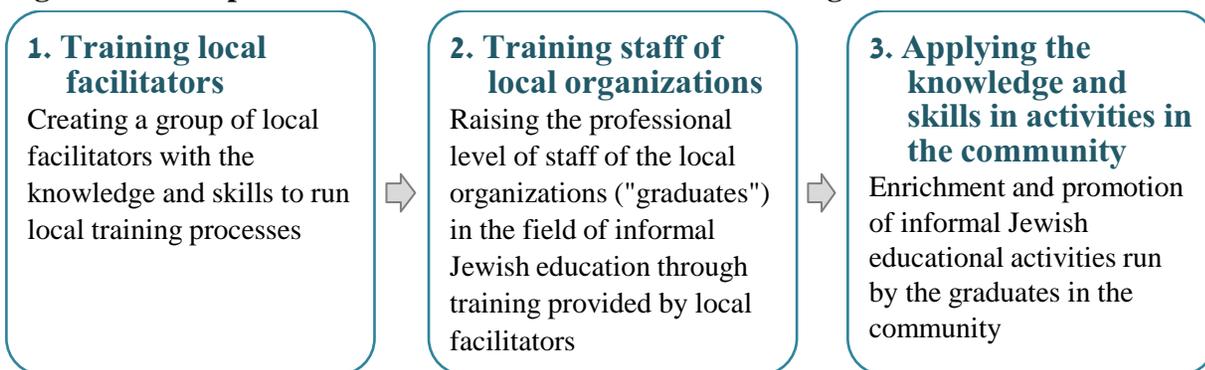
1. Background

Every year since 2007, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) has organized training seminars in the former Soviet Union (FSU) for informal Jewish education professionals working in local organizations that are supported by the JDC. Until recently, most of the seminars were run by Russian-speaking Israeli educators. In recent years, there has been growing awareness of the importance of empowering local educational staff (“local facilitators”) who can assume responsibility for training staff of local organizations.

As a result, in 2013, the Jewish Educators Program (JEP) was developed and is now implemented thanks to the support of an anonymous donor.

The program is based on the Training for Trainers model, which trains local professionals who then disseminate the acquired knowledge and skills to others. The program is implemented in several stages (Figure ES-1).

Figure ES-1: Implementation Model of the JEP in Three Stages



The Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute (MJB) was commissioned by the JDC-FSU Division to conduct an evaluation study of the JEP. The current study focuses on the second and third stages of the JEP – the training by local facilitators of staff of local organizations (“graduates”) and promotion of the informal Jewish educational activities the graduates conduct in their respective communities. The study focused on two (out of the four existing) types of training seminars that take place in the second stage: those for Jewish renewal staff and those for youth club directors (for details, see Study Design below).

The graduates of the seminar for Jewish renewal staff are responsible for conducting a range of activities in the area of informal Jewish education in JDC-FSU community centers (JCCs). The areas of responsibility of the graduates who are youth club directors are more focused. Nevertheless, in both cases, there is great variance in the frequency, character and extent of the activities for which the

graduates are responsible. Hence, the conditions under which they apply the knowledge and skills they acquired, and the organizational and community contexts in which they do so, vary greatly as well.

2. Study Design

As noted, the study focused on evaluating the second and third stages of the JEP: the training given by local facilitators in seminars for staff of local organizations engaged in informal Jewish education (“graduates”); and the application of the knowledge and skills acquired by graduates to the activities they conduct in their communities.

In addition, the report presents several case studies of activities conducted by the graduates, to allow for a better understanding of the activities they conduct in their communities and the contribution these make to their participants.

Examination of the Contribution to the Graduates of the Seminars at their Completion and the Application of what the Graduates Learned to their Activities in the Community

The study examined eight training seminars conducted as part of the JEP between January 2014 and February 2015. Two were for youth club directors and six for Jewish renewal staff (for further details about the seminars included in the study, see Appendix I). The main sources of information for this stage were the graduates. Their perception of the training seminars was examined by means of two self-administered questionnaires – one distributed at the end of the seminar, the other an online follow-up questionnaire completed 4-6 months after the end of the seminar. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with three of the local facilitators in order to obtain background information about the way the seminars were conducted.

Examination of the Contribution of Activities in the Community to their Participants

The contributions were examined from two perspectives: that of graduates implementing the activities and that of the members of the community who participated in them (“participants”).

The perspective of the graduates was examined using an online follow-up self-administered questionnaire, which was distributed 4-6 months after the end of each seminar. That of the participants was examined through semi-structured telephone interviews. For this purpose, we selected three types of activity conducted in 2014-2015 and implemented by graduates in their community. Each type of activity was examined in two different communities and eight participants were interviewed in each community.

Table ES-1: Study Design Summary – Data Collection Method and Sources of Information

Data Collection Method	Source of Information	No. of Respondents
Self-administered questionnaire at the end of the seminar	Graduates	149
Online follow-up self-administered questionnaire 4-6 months after the end of the seminar	Graduates	131
Semi-structured telephone interviews	Participants in community activities Local facilitators	48
Analysis of documentation	-	-

The main findings are presented below and they relate to all graduates of both types of training seminar. If there are substantial differences between the graduates of the two types of seminar, comparative findings are presented. Note that we also examined the extent of differences in the perceptions of how the seminars are implemented and their contribution according to the background characteristics of the graduates, but no consistent significant differences were found in this context.

3. Main Findings

3.1 Graduates' Perception of Implementation of the Seminars

In general, most of the graduates expressed positive views of the implementation of the seminars – the time allocated to the different components of the JEP, the time allocated to different study methods, the duration and level of intensity of the seminar - and their satisfaction with different aspects of the organization of the seminars.

However, looking at the findings overall, several aspects that the graduates wished to improve may be noted. Some of the subjects were brought up by all of them, while others were noted in relation to only some types of seminars.

- ◆ ***Among all the graduates***, the need to: allocate more time to discussing practical educational dilemmas and sharing experiences among the graduates; identify the needs of the graduates and base the seminar program on those needs; improve transfer of information to the graduates before start of the seminar.
- ◆ ***Among the youth club directors***, the need to: devote more time to Jewish content and familiarization with new methods in informal Jewish education; devote more time to practicing the methods learned in the seminar; improve the quality of the materials distributed during the seminar and the physical conditions.
- ◆ ***Among Jewish renewal staff***, the need to devote more time to enrichment activities.

3.2 Graduates' Perception of the Contribution of the Seminars

In general, we found that the graduates felt that the seminars significantly contributed to them, in most of the areas examined. However, there was a difference in the contribution emphasized by the graduates of each of the two types of seminar. This difference apparently derives from the differences in the nature of the seminars (Table ES-2).

The seminars for the Jewish renewal staff are intended for participants engaged in a broad spectrum of educational activities and are one-time events designed to provide general professional enrichment in the area of informal Jewish education. Accordingly, the graduates felt that the seminars' main contribution to them was in providing Jewish knowledge and a broad range of tools and perspectives in that area.

In contrast, the seminars for youth club directors are intended for a group that is more homogeneous in terms of the work they do, and ongoing professional contact is maintained with the group over the year. The seminars are therefore designed to provide professional training specifically for that role. Accordingly, the contributions emphasized by the graduates in these seminars were mainly about their acquiring tools for educational management, understanding the way that others cope with similar professional dilemmas, and strengthening their professional network. The graduates in these seminars reported more than those in the other group that they were already applying the material they had learned to their work in the community.

Table ES-2: Relative Strengths of Each Type of Seminar as Perceived by Graduates

Seminar for Jewish Renewal Staff	Seminar for Youth Club Directors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Increasing knowledge about Judaism ◆ Broader toolbox in the area of informal Jewish education ◆ New approaches to teaching ◆ New perspectives on informal Jewish education ◆ Strengthening professional identity as Jewish educators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Acquiring management tools and responses to professional dilemmas ◆ New perspective on the role ◆ Strengthening professional contacts ◆ Exposure to work done elsewhere and learning from the experience of others ◆ Applying the content/subject matter learned in the seminar

On the following pages, we will expand a little on the contribution to the graduates as they perceive it at the end of the seminar, the extent to which they remained in professional contact after the seminar, and the seminars' contributions to the activities in their communities.

Contribution to the Graduates at the End of the Seminar

At the end of the seminar and again 4-6 months after the end, most of the graduates reported that the seminar had contributed to raising their professional level. In a more detailed response to an open

question, three areas in which the seminar had contributed to their professionalism stood out: planning the activities, exposure to new methods, and exposure to a range of existing possibilities and new ideas.

Altogether, the great majority of the participants reported that the seminar had met their expectations and mainly noted that it had increased their knowledge about methods used in informal Jewish education. Beyond that, the participants in each type of seminar stressed that it had not met more specific expectations (Table ES-3).

Table ES-3: Unmet Expectations of the Graduates of Each Type of Seminar

Seminar for Jewish Renewal Staff	Seminar for Youth Club Directors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Learning from the experience of others ◆ Broadening the pool of methods intended for specific age groups (such as early childhood) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Broadening Jewish knowledge ◆ Transforming the material studied from general discourse into practical know-how

A large majority of the graduates reported that they had benefitted from most of the aspects that were examined at the end of the seminar. The more general topics (such as strengthening the wish to professionalize and exposure to new approaches) were awarded higher scores and slightly lower scores were given to the more concrete subjects (such as exposure to sources of information or imparting a new perspective on their role).

As noted, a comparison of the two types of seminar reveals that there were differences between the scores awarded by the youth club directors and by the Jewish renewal staff. The Jewish renewal staff gave higher scores to topics relating to tools, approaches, and concepts in informal Jewish education, while the youth club directors gave higher scores to aspects that related directly to their roles (responses to professional dilemmas, management tools, perception of the role).

Maintaining Professional Contacts

Most of the respondents reported that they intended to maintain contact with other graduates after the seminar and most did indeed do so. With regard to maintaining contact with the local facilitators, most of the graduates were intending to contact them, but in fact, less than half of them actually did so. A comparison of the two types of seminar reveals differences in this context: there were more reports from youth club directors of the intention to contact other graduates and local facilitators and more of them actually did so.

Contribution of the Seminar to Activities in the Community

The extent to which graduates had applied what they acquired in the seminars to their work in the community was examined 4-6 months after the end of each seminar. In general, the findings reveal that, despite the intentions of most of the participants to apply the contents of the seminars to the activities in the community for which they were responsible, a relatively low percentage (35%-49% in most of the aspects examined) reported that they had actually done so. A comparison of the two types of seminar found that more youth club directors reported that they had done so than did the Jewish

renewal staff in regard to: sharing content with colleagues, introducing new contents to their work, and initiating new types of activity.

However, it is important to emphasize that when the graduates were asked why they had not applied the content, or had done little in this regard, the most prominent reason in most aspects was that they had not yet had time/opportunity, but were planning to do so in the future.

3.3 Participants' Perception of the Contribution of the Activities in the Community

The study examined three types of activity: training programs for young counselors ("madrichim"), family clubs, and meetings on tradition and culture. Each activity was examined in two different communities. Each type of activity had similar goals, structure and contents in addition to its own particular characteristics.

We found that the participants in the activities sampled in the study gave a very positive evaluation of the activities and reported that they had benefited from a variety of contributions from these activities. A large proportion of the participants noted the warmth of and their great appreciation for the graduates responsible for conducting the activities.

We found that some contributions were common to all the activities, whereas other contributions were specific to certain activities. Participants in all the activities noted the contribution to broadening their knowledge of Jewish content including history, tradition, culture and language. Given the different nature and goals of the activities, the participants at the training program for young counselors and the family clubs also emphasized the social aspect: widening their social circle and/or strengthening ties. The madrichim were the only respondents to note two other particular contributions of these activities: personal development as leaders and practical experience in the field.

4. Conclusion

Looking at the study findings overall, it can be concluded that the training seminars provided through the JEP contribute knowledge, professional concepts, and new tools to their graduates, thereby raising their professional level. The Jewish renewal staff and the youth club directors reported great satisfaction with most of the aspects of implementation of the seminars.

When considering the possibilities of augmenting the program's contribution to the graduates and to the activities they conduct in the community, two possible interrelated programmatic directions arise from the study:

1. Strengthening the seminars with more concrete content (such as exposure to sources of information and engaging in defining the professional capacity and role of the graduate)
2. Strengthening the emphasis on the ways to apply the content learned in the seminars to the activities in the community conducted by the graduates, particularly those working in Jewish renewal.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Dr. Asaf Kaniel, Director of Jewish renewal in the JDC-FSU Division, for his role in initiating this evaluation, for his dedication and support, for sharing his insights, and for providing helpful comments throughout the study. We would also like to thank Debbie Halali from the JDC-FSU Division and local JEP facilitators for their help in gathering the information in implementing the research and for their close and productive cooperation with us.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Implementation of the JEP	2
2. Study Design	3
2.1 Study Goals and Issues.....	3
2.2 Study Design	4
3. Study Findings	7
3.1 Background Characteristics of the Graduates	7
3.2 Implementation of the Seminars	7
3.3 Contribution of the Seminars	14
3.4 Implementation of Activities in the Community Conducted by the Graduates	27
Appendix I: Training Seminars Included in the Evaluation Study: Location, Date, Number of Participants, and Response Rate	34
Appendix II: Background Characteristics of Graduates, by Type of Seminar	35
Appendix III: Knowledge, Use and Interest in Additional Training on Use of Databases on Informal Jewish Education.....	36
Appendix IV: How the Graduates View the Contribution of the Activities in the Community.....	38
Appendix V: Perception by the Participants of the Activities in the Communities of the Contribution of the Activities and the Quality of their Implementation	39

List of Tables

1. Introduction

Table 1: Types of Training Seminar	2
Table 2: Training Seminars Held between January 2014 and February 2015 and Response Rate	5
Table 3: Activities in the Community Included in the Study	5
Table 4: Summary of the Study Design – Data Collection Method, Sources of Information and Number of Respondents	6

3. Study Findings

Table 5: Quotes on the Main Contribution of the Seminars	20
Table 6: Aspects where the Perceived Contribution was Higher for the Graduates of each Type of Seminar	21
Table 7: Reasons for Little or No Application of the Materials Learned in the Seminar to Activities in the Community	26
Table 8: Characteristics of the Selected Activities and their Participants	28
Table 9: Main Contribution of the Activities in the Community as Reported by the Participants	31

List of Figures

1. Introduction

Figure 1: Implementation Model of the JEP in Three Stages	2
-----------------------------------------------------------	---

3. Study Findings

Figure 2: Graduates' Perception of Time Allocated to Various Components of the Seminar Program	8
Figure 3: Graduates' Perception of Time Allocated to Various Components of the Seminar Program, by Type of Seminar	9
Figure 4: Graduates' Perception of the Time Allocated to Using Various Study Methods	
Figure 5: Graduates' Perception of the Duration of the Seminar	10
Figure 6: Graduates' Perception of the Number of Activities Implemented Each Day, by Type of Seminar	11
Figure 7: Graduates' Satisfaction with the Organization of the Seminar	12
Figure 8: Graduates' Satisfaction with Two Aspects of the Organization of the Seminar, by Type of Seminar	13

Figure 9: Extent to which Graduates would Recommend a Seminar of this Kind to their Colleagues	13
Figure 10: Contribution to the Graduates' Self-Image as Jewish Educators	15
Figure 11: Contributions to Self-Image of Graduates as Jewish Educators, by Type of Seminar	16
Figure 12: Contribution of the Seminar to the Graduates' Professional Work in the Field of Informal Jewish Education	17
Figure 13: Contributions of the Seminars to the Professional Work of Graduates in the Field of Informal Jewish Education, by Type of Seminar	18
Figure 14: Contribution of the Seminars to Establishing New Professional Contacts and Strengthening Existing Contacts	19
Figure 15: Intention to Contact Other Graduates and the Local Facilitators after the Seminar and Actually Making Contact	22
Figure 16: Intention to Contact Other Participants and the Local Facilitators after the Seminar and Actually Making Contact, by Type of Seminar	22
Figure 17: Graduates' Intentions at the End of the Seminar to Apply What They Learned to Activities in the Community and Actually Doing So	23
Figure 18: Graduates' Intentions at the End of the Seminar to Apply Subjects Learned and Actually Doing So, by Type of Seminar	24
Figure 19: Graduates' Reports of Exposure to New Sources of Information about Informal Jewish Education at the End of the Seminar Compared with their Reports of Use of these Sources of Information Several Months after the Seminar	25

List of Tables and Figures in Appendices

Table I-1: Training Seminars Included in the Evaluation Study, January 2014-February 2015	34
Table II-1: Background Characteristics of Graduates, by Type of Seminar	35
Figure III-1: All Graduates	36
Figure III-2: Youth Club Directors	36
Figure III-3: Jewish Renewal Staff	37
Figure IV-1: The Graduates' Evaluation of the Contribution of the Activities they Conduct in the Community to their Participants	38
Table V-1: Participants' Perception of the Contribution of the Activities and the Quality of Implementation	39