

This study is part of Prof. Zehavit Gross's research on Holocaust instruction in Israel, and its purpose is to analyze instruction of the Holocaust in state schools in Israel within the framework of formal and informal education, in order to identify the dilemmas and challenges faced by the state education system in Israel. The objective of this study is to enable the decision-makers in the Ministry of Education to improve the teaching methods of the subject of the Holocaust in schools, and to create for the students "meaningful learning". The choice to base the research work on the concept of meaningful learning stemmed from the analysis of the interviews and cross-referencing it with the observations in the lessons. Holocaust instruction could be a milestone in the the new 2022 education reform (social meaningful learning reform, along with sciences and humanities subjects reform), and it is possible to learn from the teaching of this field how learning in the frame of formal education can influence the shaping of the mature character of the student.

Meaningful learning is defined as learning that promotes learners and gives them a sense of growth, a sense of value and cognitive ability throughout the educational continuum. This term encompasses teaching and learning qualities while addressing several key aspects: the learning, the learner and the teacher. Learning about the Holocaust becomes meaningful and important for the learner in adapting to their world, their world of concepts, their cognition and their emotion. In its very occurrence, meaningful learning shapes the reality of the learner's life, their personality, skills, development and future (Avni and Avrom 2020; Agra, Formiga, Oliveira, Costa, Fernandes and Brega 2019). The findings of the present study pinpoint a model that indicates the willingness of all teachers to promote meaningful teaching that is expressed in an effective and interactive partnership that consists of diverse learning tools (including tours and travelling to Poland) between teachers and students. This partnership is built on the principles of equality, transparency, mutual accountability and mutual benefit. In this relationship the teachers become partners with their students in learning; not only do they learn themselves, but they are also able to see the learning process through the

eyes of their students. This perspective is essential because it helps teachers

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examine whether the teaching strategies they have adopted actually achieve the expected goals (Fullan and Langworthy 2014).

Method:

This study focused on state schools in Israel and included high schools from the periphery and the center of the country. At each school, two history teachers, a literature teacher, two homeroom teachers, a social education coordinator, and two focus groups of six students each were interviewed. Furthermore, at each school observations of classes and the Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony were held. Content analysis is done according to the Gross Method (1995), which is a type of theory anchored in the field, and consists of four phases: a word, a category, a connection between the categories, and a theoretical model. In the first phase, external primary categories were identified from the ETIC literature (for instance the development of classroom instruction), afterwards the contents were sorted and analyzed openly. At this stage, categories (such as teaching tools) were identified. In the second phase, the EMIC subcategories were built, which are formulated by locating components or units of analysis that are repeated within the findings (such as promoting the cognitive aspect of the instruction). In the last phase, the connections found between the sub-categories were established, and the findings were adapted into a theoretical model.

Findings:

Regarding the question of what is being done in state schools in the field of Holocaust instruction, both in formal and informal education, it's evident that teachers have numerous varied tools at their disposal for meaningful instruction of the subject, perhaps more so than in any other subject. The teachers combine different cultural tools to create a broad picture of the issue among the students, as well as to encourage students' curiosity and self exploration.

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In this study, we examined the dilemmas and challenges faced by teachers in

the state education system in Israel in connection with the instruction and memory bequeathment of the Holocaust. Teachers are not always able to put into practice their own goals and they point to a number of challenges and difficulties for example: a shortage of time to finish the learning material; distressing feelings due to a lack of coaching workshops for dealing with students' emotional reactions; an absence of professional support, and sometimes even confusion, regarding the choice of content and means for meaningful teaching that will produce a multidisciplinary assimilation, both teachers cognitive and emotional, of the subject. The main challenge of dealing with the subject of the Holocaust is the dilemma between imparting a foundation of comprehensive theoretical-factual knowledge to students, and emotional deepening in certain topics, in accordance with students and their lives. For example, what are the students' choices in life, when they witness from the side an immoral situation? Do they have a part in it? Should they intervene and how?

The teachers claim that "meaningful learning" is the heart of the teacher's work in educating about the Holocaust. The role of the teacher in meaningful learning is to serve as a meaningful educational mediator, organizing and empowering the knowledge and learning experience. The role of the teacher transforms from "teacher" to "educator". The teacher is an exemplary figure who mediates the learning, helps the learner to adapt the learning, to build its way, to follow the progress and to create value for the learning (Avni and Avrom 2020). The findings do indicate (according to Jonassen and Strobel 2016) that the teachers encourage students to think about topics that are relevant to them, while conducting a dialogue and having active involvement of the students in learning. So that the students collaborate with each other, are active in the research process and aim to work on authentic tasks to derive meaning and tools for their lives from the material being taught. Indeed, the students interviewed said that the various discussions that developed in the classroom made them rethink their positions and choices on political issues in Israel and around the world.

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One of the significant tools teachers have used in the present study to develop meaningful learning, is to create 'dilemma discussions'. Through these discussions, students learn together, research, and present different opinions in groups, as suggested by Vera and Laz (2020), to draw conclusions through critical thinking and open discourse. The findings illustrate that the teachers endeavored to encourage critical thinking and discussions while instructing the subject of the Holocaust. However, the findings also indicate that the main difficulty facing teachers is the heavy load of material accumulating into a period when students are busy with the Bagrut exams. Therefore, the teachers have difficulty delving deeper with students on issues essential to their lives and creating an in-depth and knowledge-based discourse.

The teachers assert that they are forced to start teaching the basic historical factual background, in order to complete the historical knowledge that led to the Holocaust. Only after establishing the factual infrastructure they can turn to in-depth discussions and ethical questions on the subject. In the education system there is a time limit, so according to them they lack the necessary time to delve deeper in the material significantly to achieve their goals in studying the subject. That is: shaping the students' personal, national, and religious identities. Thus, the teachers propose to construct a spiral program for Holocaust studies, throughout the school years, to impart basic theoretical knowledge as the groundwork for further engagement in this subject in the upper grades. In addition to the difficulty described above, there are gaps between teachers of various subjects in their training for teaching Holocaust studies. The teachers complain about inadequate training to conduct dilemma discussions, hence some avoid these discourses. Even the teachers who do hold such discussions claim that they do not do so optimally, which creates in them a sense of undershooting their goals for meaningful teaching, which is, as mentioned, the formation of identity and perceptions among the students. This is despite the so-called much freedom and flexibility given to teachers in

planning Holocaust teaching in the classroom, the lack of a guiding hand creates confusion and disorder among them.

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Discussion and Conclusions:

The current study shows that the processes that students and teachers describe in terms of Holocaust education are consistent with the model of Agra, Formiga, Oliveira, Costa, Fernandes and Nobrega (2019), on the meaningful learning process built from four stages:

Tools and strategies - in accordance with aspects of meaningful learning, in order to expand the cognitive structure of students. The teachers have many diverse cultural tools at their disposal, for instance: tours, plays, films, testimonies, excerpts, literature, and more. The curriculum of the Ministry of Education states: "The school assessment will allow teachers to express the moral emphases that are History Department close to their hearts"(Ministry of Education, Supervisor). The great freedom of action made possible by this for teachers has advantages, but it is also a major challenge.

Although the Ministry of Education allows teachers a free choice of the content and tools they will use in their classrooms, our research shows that it is precisely this freedom that is a major difficulty that teachers point to; despite the flexibility and openness leave a wide scope for action, it is sometimes fluid. Teachers often feel that there is no clear guidance, and that their training is not sufficient, to deal with the above scope of action as is also the case with Navhe (2017), Carmon (1980), Shahar and Schwartz (2016) and Gross (2013). The teachers have many tools for creating meaningful learning among the students, but they assert that the curriculum is not formulated and is not connected to the field. This fact serves as a challenge for teachers to try in every possible way to conduct the lessons optimally (Navhe 2017).

The teachers also allege that they do not really know how to make the best use of the tools at their disposal. To this end, they request that

those in charge of this area in the Ministry of Education allocate resources to training those involved in Holocaust education, through professional workshops and training that includes experiences, discussions and teaching strategies.

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Creating a built-in knowledge base for students - creating an .2 interaction between the new study material and the knowledge that already exists in the students' cognitive structure. Due to the time constraint, teachers are forced to decide between completing a broad factual background, which they claim (and also students' claim) is not sufficiently established and delving deeper on topics they would like to focus on in high school grades. Based on the literary review of Gross (2015) and the findings of the present study, it is clear that both the teachers and the students see Holocaust instruction as a potential for engaging in many educational issues, such as: social education, citizenship education, historical pedagogy, moral education, peace education, anti-racism and anti-homophobia education, multicultural education, and more. Hence, the main rationale for studying the subject of the Holocaust, which includes an opportunity to examine the moral consequences that can be derived from it. It is evident that there is a need to rethink the curriculum, to spread it throughout the school years, in order for students to reach the high school years equipped with the appropriate knowledge to deepen in principle and moral issues.

Producing added value for students' lives - Teachers should .3 expand their knowledge by assimilating new concepts with existing ones, which will form the basis for understanding, researching, asking questions and discovering new information and insights. According to the current study, the teachers who teach this topic operate in the constructive method, which focuses on the students' participation in constructing the lessons and working on authentic topics according to

their choice. In the curriculum, teachers have the choice of the topics they want to focus on with the students, according to their nature, the background from which they come and the issues that the teachers want to expand on in the classroom. Such learning, which uses a variety of tools available to the teachers, including the use of activities, tours, plays, films, excerpts, testimonies, discussions and debates, causes students to interpret and draw conclusions from these activities, VII

thus creating meaning for themselves from the topic being studied, as also raised in (Jonassen and Strobel 2016).

Sense of meaning and relevance - This is the added value of the .4 meaningful learning experience for both students and teachers. The students become active partners in learning, and the teachers receive feedback and cooperation from students. The present study shows that there is a significant gap between the teachers' feelings about their abilities to create a meaningful learning experience for students and what the students report. While home room teachers and history teachers feel that they do not have sufficient training to engage in Holocaust teaching significantly, students experience these lessons as meaningful, interesting, and highly instructive for them. This is because learning focuses on questions that students seek to dig into them; questions of choice, of priorities, of religion and belief, of society and politics and more. The students develop skills of research and discovery, of locating information, of discussion and persuasion and the like, and thus, they claim, they acquire new knowledge. The students project from the subject being learned about their personal lives, focusing on "what it means to me" instead of receiving unequivocal statements from the teacher or textbooks.

When learners are active and aim to get an answer to a particular topic, they think more and actively learn more to get the answers to the questions they are looking for (Jonassen and Strobel 2016).

In contrast, the social activities produced as part of the school's social program (ceremonies, plays, and even the trip to Poland) are perceived by students (and even by some teachers) as meaningless, repetitive, and some are done, in their opinion, in an attempt to create emotional manipulation. In doing so, the social program misses the goal of implementing the content and learning processes within the school classes, while emphasizing their ethical aspects. It follows that just as training for teachers is required, to create meaningful dialogue with students, training is also required for social coordinators, which will allow them to create content in line with the content delivered in the formal lessons.

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In this study, the connection between the teacher's training program and their ways of dealing with the challenges that face them during the instruction of the subject was also not examined.