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## **The Role of Experiential Learning in Holocaust Education**

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# The Role of Experiential Learning in Holocaust Education

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## **Abstract**

The paper starts with a brief description and analysis of Holocaust education in Israel as a case of teaching history. The role of experiential learning is discussed, leading to the presentation of the "Journey to Poland", as a central element in teaching and learning about the Holocaust. Several evaluation studies of this journey are noted. Finally, the discussion offers some conclusions concerning the use of experiential learning in the teaching of history, its advantages, limitations and risks.

**Keywords:** teaching history, local and universal history, experiential learning, cognitive and affective modes of knowledge, Holocaust education, Israel, Journey to Poland

## **Rationale**

This paper focuses on the following issues:

- Holocaust education as a case of teaching history.
- The role of experiential learning in Holocaust education, advantages and risks
- Implications for teaching history.

There is growing literature about teaching of history, its potential, its difficulties and its risks (Wineburg, 2001; Resnik, 1999; Zajda & Whitehouse, 2009; Freedman et al, 2008; Barton & Levstik, 2004). Teaching history is considered to be important for the intellectual development of students, and for their growth of knowledge concerning the nature of human experience overtime and place on a global, national, and local level. Learning about the past is conceived as leading to a better understanding of the present and to the commitment to strive for a better future. One of the biggest challenges in teaching history is making sense of the subject matter while implementing pedagogical approaches that provide students with the tools they need to comprehend complex historical processes.

Zajda & Whitehouse (2009) claim that teaching history is both local and universal. It introduces students to the history of their own community, and yields, as well, insights into universal aspects of historical processes. Furthermore, they state that pedagogical approaches can be either traditional or transformational. The traditional approach promotes fact-based learning, and might advance nationalism and patriotism. The transformational approach puts emphasis on an historical understanding based on critical thinking and multiple historical perspectives, "students are encouraged to analyze information and make independent and critical evaluations" (p. 954).

## **Holocaust education in Israel**

Several researchers have examined Holocaust education in Israel over time, following educational trends and how they reflect national

memory, as well as political and social circumstances that influenced Holocaust pedagogy (Resnik, 1999, 2003; Porat, 2004; Schatzker, 1980; 1982). Similar studies have been conducted in other countries, as well, and according to Schatzker (1980):

“Every nation, every generation, and every social and ideological group has its own problems of facing the Holocaust and its own way of integrating it into its life and into its educational system – since every educational system has its own set of aims, ways, and anticipation of results regarding the teaching of the Holocaust. (p. 220)

In Israel, Holocaust education reflects how the State of Israel has dealt with Holocaust memory, its place in Jewish-Israeli identity, and its historical significance. Therefore, teaching the Holocaust in the Jewish-Israeli context might depend on traditional, as well as transformational approaches, serving both local and universal historical knowledge.

An historical examination of national curricula in schools is one of the ways in which Holocaust education has been studied in Israel. Porat (2004) and Resnik (2003), for example, analyzed National Curricula, textbooks, teacher guides, and circulars published by the Director General of the Ministry of Education. The meta-analyses of these sources have led to a complex chronology of Holocaust education, its development and transformation, spanning over six decades of the State of Israel's existence. In essence, this chronology of Holocaust education can be described along a time line with very distinct periods that reflect specific Holocaust pedagogy.

Though the Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day Law was enacted 1953, in the first twenty years of the State of Israel, the Ministry of Education did not give teachers the appropriate pedagogical tools (Schatzker, 1980). A national survey conducted in the 1960's by the Yad Vashem Memorial Authority showed that 66% of schools did not observe the Holocaust and Heroism Memorial Day and only 25.3% of schools had instructional activities related to the Holocaust (Porat, 2004).

In 1980, the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) Committee of Education

and Culture passed a bill - The Holocaust Memory Bill - that amends the State Education Law to include that “all students graduating from Israeli schools be educated on consciousness of the memory of the Holocaust and Heroism” (Porat, 2004, p. 630).

Since the implementation of the Holocaust Memory Bill, there has been a distinct shift in the relevance of Holocaust education in Israel. In his analysis of both formal and non-formal secondary education curricula developed between the 1970’s through the 1990’s, Dror (2001) traces the shift from an almost total absence of the Holocaust in the 1950’s and 1960’s curricula, to emphasis on heroism, and then to emphasis on the fate of the victims and on issues of anti-Semitism.

In summarizing his analysis of Holocaust education in Israel, Porat (2004) claims that “...the Holocaust is an event that stands at the core of what it means to be a Jewish Israeli” (p.635). Holocaust education in Israel has become “...a defining memory, an event that was studied and discussed throughout the school year, a piece of history that formed the core of students’ national identity” (ibid, 2004, p. 635). This is reflected in Cohen’s (2010a) report on Holocaust education in Israel between 2007-2009. The survey revealed that “the school is the most important setting through which students are exposed to the issue of the Shoah [Holocaust]” (Cohen, 2010a, p. 2) in the Jewish public school sector. The majority of students (83%) in the survey claimed that they were interested in learning more about the Holocaust and saw themselves responsible for perpetuating the memory of the Holocaust. Cohen’s survey also shows that along with the Jewish history oriented pedagogy, 80% of the students also identify with the universal values of Holocaust study, namely the negation of violence, racism and the importance of human rights.

The centrality and diversity of Holocaust education in Israel continues to develop though recent research shows that the topic is still not anchored in a multi-disciplinary National Curriculum. On the one hand, the **Taskforce for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research** report on Holocaust education in Israel (2005) shows that the subject is now taught not only in history lessons, but in various disciplines, such as literature, theology and the arts. On the other hand, the only mandatory curriculum for

Holocaust studies is in the history curriculum (State Comptroller Report 2009, 2010).

### **Challenges of teaching about the Holocaust**

Teaching about the Holocaust poses a number of challenges that pertain to both the nature of the historical event as well as its representation in the curricula. Schatzker (1980) states that the Holocaust is “beyond normal perception and apart from human experience yet known in the history of mankind” (p. 221). In teaching about this traumatic period, teachers need to be careful not to demonize the perpetrators, making their actions “inhuman” in the sense that they were not done by human beings, or to oversimplify the historical events in order to make them understandable and banal, for example, by using simulations or role playing. In the case of the latter, Schatzker cautions that “any simulation is based upon the assumption that there exists a fundamental similarity between the simulator and the subject of simulation.” (p. 224) and he goes on to claim that “the term ‘Holocaust’ cancels the possibility of simulation if the subject is outside the realm of one’s experience and the universe of discourse, imagination, and reason.” (p. 225).

Holocaust researchers have debated whether the Holocaust should be taught as a unique and singular event or one of many similar historical events. This discourse has posed a challenge to educators in Israel who wish to incorporate both Jewish and universal elements into their curriculum and must find the balance between teaching Jewish history and teaching the more universal and humanistic elements (Schatzker, 1980).

Another distinct challenge in Holocaust education is developing curricula that will reflect the transformation from what Nora (1989) has described as an "environment of memory", which includes, for example, the personal memories of Holocaust survivors, and is “borne by living societies” (p. 8), to a “historic memory”, which is “intellectual and secular” and implements "sites of memory", namely memorial sites, commemorations, and museums that replace the spontaneous, living memories of a society.

Lastly, there is a need for what Schatzker (1980) refers to as the balance between cognitive and affective modes of learning about the Holocaust and their impact on students. The learning process involves both psychological processes, as seen in the Memorial Day ceremony, as well as cognitive processes, such as examining the historical events and their implications. Teaching methods need to provide the balance between affective effects of Holocaust education and cognitive outcomes.

One way of promoting affective elements in Holocaust education is through experiential learning. In Israel today, Holocaust education is considered a multidimensional experience students are taught through formal and informal venues (Cohen, 2010a). They not only have the formal history lessons, but also attend ceremonies, see performances and presentations, and visit Holocaust institutions and museums. Furthermore, according to the Cohen survey, the majority of students (91%) find informal learning experiences, such as survivor testimony and the Journey to Poland, as the most effective ways of learning about the Holocaust. Informal education tends to rely on experiential learning.

### **Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning is discussed widely in education literature. A comprehensive definition is offered by Carver (1996):

...education (the leading of students through a process of learning) that makes conscious application of the students' experiences by integrating them into the curriculum. Experience involves any combination of senses (i.e., touch smell, hearing, sight, taste), emotions (e.g., pleasure, excitement, anxiety, fear, hurt, empathy, attachment), physical condition (e.g., temperature, strength, energy level), and cognition (e.g., constructing knowledge, establishing beliefs, solving problems) (p. 150-151).

Moreover, "experiential education is holistic in the sense that it addresses students in their entirety—as thinking, feeling, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social beings." (p. 151)

Experiential learning is used in manifold situations and for a variety of



goals. Several pedagogic principles are central features of experiential learning. These are, according to Carver:

**Authenticity** – relevance to the lives of students

**Active learning** – meaning concrete engagement in the process of learning

**Drawing on student experience** – both those that students bring with them as well as those provided by the program

**Providing means for linking experience with future opportunities of learning** - The formal process of student reflection on their participation in activities and/or how this experience may influence potential roles as community members.

The notion of experiential learning is not new. Different scholars and theorists in education have argued for the importance of experience in the educational process. Pestalozzi, an educational philosopher and scholar from the 18th-19th, believed that children should be allowed to follow their nature since they have "inherent capacities" (Forbes, 2003). According to Pestalozzi:

The most essential point from which I start is this: Sense impression [Anschauung] of Nature is the only one true foundation of human instruction, because it is the only true foundation of human knowledge. All that follows is the result of this sense impression [Anschauung], and the process of abstraction from it. (Pestalozzi, 1907, p. 200).

This view of teaching and learning requires presentation of sensory elements like pictures or sounds, as the starting point of educational processes.

Rogers (1994) did not believe in learning that involves the mind only: "It is learning that takes place 'from the neck up.' It does not involve feelings or personal meanings; it has no relevance for the whole person. In contrast, there is such a thing as significant, meaningful, experiential learning" (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994, p. 35). For Rogers, significant learning combines intellect and feeling, concept and experience. Such learning is connected with personal involvement, self-initiation, is meaningful and influences behavior.

The most well-known and influential scholar who wrote on

experiential learning is Dewey. According to Dewey, experience reflects a meaningful connection between the individual and the world (Dewey, 1916). One of the characteristics of experience, in Dewey's eye, is that new experience transforms the perception of the past. Thus, experience enables a person to look critically at previously accepted beliefs in the light of new experience. This characteristic of experiential learning is essential for learning about the Holocaust.

Experiential learning involves emotions. Education processes require two of the leading consequences of emotion: engagement in, and attention to, the subject of the educational process. Moreover, "the importance of emotion in education is not confined to its role in engagement and attention. The role that emotions play in the construction of moral behavior and, by extension, building a citizen is just as important" (Damasio & Damasio, 2010, p. 67). Experience and emotions are especially significant in learning about traumatic historical events.

### **The role of experiential activities in Holocaust education**

In Israel, Holocaust education evolved in such a way that both cognitive and affective methods were used. In what Schatzker (1980) calls the "existential approach" to learning about the Holocaust, emphasis is put on evoking "a direct identification with the traumatic experience of the reality of Holocaust, and the Jewish world that was destroyed and lost." (p. 81). Resnik (see Resnik, 1999; 2003) found that extra-curricular educational activities that serve as "sites of memory", such as the yearly Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony, visits to commemorative institutions, Holocaust museums, and youth delegations to Poland, were integrated and institutionalized into the teaching of the Holocaust in order to arouse this direct identification with the Holocaust (Resnik, 2003).

In recent years, research on Holocaust education has placed emphasis on the affective impact on students (Romi & Lev, 2007), their Jewish identity (Lazar, Chaitin, Gross & Bar On, 2004a), their modes of understanding the Holocaust (Lazar, Chaitin, Gross & Bar On, 2004b),

and the relevance of the Holocaust to their attitudes and views (Litvak Hirsch & Chaitin, 2010).

### **The Journey to Poland**

We now turn to one of the experiential extracurricular activities that serve Holocaust education in Israel. The Journey to Poland was officially added as an elective extra-curricular activity in Holocaust education in 1988 by the Ministry of Education. Over 150, 000 students have participated in this program since its inception, with 24,000 students participating per year. According to the Circular of the Director General of the Ministry of Education (1999 10(1)), these journeys are specifically geared for 11th-12th grade students and are intended to “strengthen the sense of belonging...to the Israeli nation, and their connection to its legacy and history.” These journeys are sponsored by either the Ministry of Education (10%) or are independently organized by schools (90%) but supported by the Ministry of Education. Each delegation of students is accompanied by teachers, who have prepared their students for the journey, a certified guide, security personnel, a physician and a Holocaust survivor.

The Ministry of Education Circular describes in detail the eight cognitive, affective and social goals and objectives of the "journey". Emphasis is put on the students' ability to understand the rich Jewish culture pre-WWII, to sense the extent of the destruction of Jewish life in Poland, and to identify with the fate of the Jewish people. Students are expected, as well, to know the main principles of Nazi ideology, and to derive national and universal lessons, including the importance of a sovereign Jewish state and the values of Zionism, as well as the importance of guarding democracy, humanistic and moral values. Present-day implications for the participants' lives include personal commitment to the existence of Jewish life in Israel, acknowledging the complexity of the Jewish-Polish relationship throughout history, and being personally involved in the renovation, maintenance and preservation of Jewish sites throughout Poland.

The journey to Poland involves four stages: 1) preparation of students and accompanying staff; 2) the journey; 3) guided cognitive

and affective reflection of students and staff; 4) sharing experiences and deliberations with members of the community. Because of the complex nature of these journeys, the preparation and the journey program are well detailed in the Director General Circular (1999, 10/1, 7.6-2). Students who wish to participate in the journey are chosen according to specific criteria, including age, voluntary choice to participate, interest in the subject, and, finally, social and emotional suitability. The preparation includes cognitive, affective and social components.

The journey program includes visits to three types of recommended sites: 1) cities and villages that once had a population of Jewish communities; 2) death sites and extermination camps (with Auschwitz-Birkenau a mandatory stop); and 3) Polish tourist sites. Another element of the journey recommended by the Ministry of Education is a meeting between Israeli and Polish students.

The journey includes ceremonies at the camps, social-educational activities every evening, including reflection sessions, and cultural events. Students are encouraged to take an active part in preparing for the journey by working in committees that are responsible for documentation of the journey, for guiding at specific locations, and for organization of events. The Ministry of Education encourages incorporating into the preparation and processing stages of the Journey Holocaust museums and institutions that have specific pre- and post-journey programs for such journeys.

### **Evaluation of the Journey to Poland**

A number of recent studies on the impact of the Journey to Poland extra-curricular program on participants examine the cognitive, affective and social aspects (see: Romi & Lev, 2007; Lazar et al., 2004 a & b; Cohen a + b, 2010; Glickman, Raz, Friman, Lipshtat, Goldschmidt, & Semach, 2011).

In the Cohen (2010b) survey, which was cited earlier in this paper, the cognitive and affective short-term impact of the Journey to Poland was examined. Participating students that did not participate in Journey to Poland (n=575) exhibited more knowledge about the Holocaust than those students that were not on the journey. When students were asked to

give the reasons for participating in the journey, the most popular reasons (in descending order) were: to see for themselves what happened; 2) because of a family connection; 3) to gain more knowledge about the Holocaust; and 4) a feeling Jewish identity. The least mentioned reason was national (Israeli) identity. Overall, the survey reveals that students see the general educational goals of the Journey to Poland as more important than national goals. Furthermore, 89% of the students viewed the Holocaust as "a tragedy for all humanity" (p. 3) as opposed to 80% of the non-participating students.

In a comparative study (Romi & Lev, 2007), participants included young adults who had recently experienced the journey to Poland (between 1-3 years prior to the study), veteran participants (four to five years prior to the study) and non- participants in the journey. The study examined cognitive and affective dimensions of the journey, as well as the participants' attitudes toward Judaism, the Holocaust and Zionism. Concerning the cognitive dimension, the findings indicate that those who had recently participated in the journey had more knowledge about the Holocaust and that "...the experience provides them with much more knowledge about the period" on a short-term basis (Romi & Lev, 2007, p. 98). No significant differences were found between veterans and those who had never participated. On the affective level, findings reveal that those participants who had recently been on the journey expressed stronger feelings about the Holocaust, for example, strength, pride and hope, which replaced feelings of pain, shock and anger that participants had felt before the journey. No significant differences were found between the veterans and those who had not participated in the journey. As for the impact on the participants' attitudes toward Judaism, the Holocaust and Zionism, no significant difference was found between the three groups. These attitudes include, for instance, "Jewish Identity", "negation of the Diaspora", "the need to fight anti-Semitism" and "a strong bond to Israel" (ibid, p. 95). The researchers noted that Jewish Israeli adolescents have other experiences, beyond the Journey to Poland, that contribute to the formation of their attitudes and personal identity, such as formal school curricula, compulsory army service, and experiences in the community. Therefore, they claim, "the journey does not bestow

advantages upon the participants that are not shared by their peers" (p. 99). Still, the research findings do suggest that "active participation in an emotional-cognitive experience enables a broader and more authentic acquaintance with the Holocaust" (p. 100). The findings of this study reveal that the impact of the journey experience overtime.

In another study, the impact of Holocaust education on students' modes of understanding was examined (Lazar, Chaitin, Gross & Bar-On, 2004b). High school students, who had participated in a Journey to Poland as part of a long-term seminar organized by the Israel Ministry of Education, were asked to identify what they considered to be important aspects of learning about the Holocaust. Overall, students responded that learning about the Holocaust and its implications was important both in an Israeli and a universal context. Still, the study shows an interesting interaction between the local and universal goals of the journey:

...at least on some level, the Holocaust program and journey to Poland had the effect of increasing the Jewish-Israeli adolescent's concern about their own people's right, while decreasing their awareness of concern with human rights, in general (p. 26).

The researchers go on to describe this phenomenon as resulting in a possible collision between two important goals of the program. For some of the adolescents, the universalistic aspects became less relevant:

This perceived incompatibility might show that when an individual is very concerned with his or hers (i.e. Jewish) peoples' rights, his/her ability to attend to the suffering and needs of others in other places of the world (Bosnians, Rwanda, etc.) is limited (p. 27).

Feldman's study (2002; 2008) clearly raises questions about the hidden curriculum of teaching history. Feldman, who carried out an ethnographic study of the journey to Poland, participated in a course for journey guides, guided four groups and accompanied a fifth journey. He presents a critical analysis of the experiential nature of the Journey to Poland: "...the voyage is seen primarily as an emotional experience, which cannot be adequately expressed in words,...it is emotion that is to

serve as the basis for comprehension" (Feldman, 2008, p. 60). Feldman's major criticisms concern the structure of the journey as a type of pilgrimage: "the voyage is a civil religious pilgrimage, which transforms students into victims, victorious survivors, and finally, olim (immigrants; ascenders) to the Land of Israel and witnesses of witnesses" (ibid, p. 60). Feldman also claims that describing this experience a "journey" (masa in Hebrew) implies an experience that involves overcoming difficulties in an isolated environment (Feldman, 2008, p. 62) and is "both a search for family roots of the nation, as well as an ordeal to be overcome on the way to adulthood" (ibid, p. 63). The incorporation of ceremonies and national symbols at the various sites presents participants with an emotional experience that is "triggered externally, primarily through sensory stimuli" (Feldman, 2002, p. 90) that circumvent cognitive mechanisms. Furthermore, Feldman claims, the actual itinerary, which has not changed greatly over the years, is another example of the pilgrimage structure of the journey. With 90% of the sites being visited by all groups, they become sacred sites of collective memory that are visited each year. During this isolated journey Israeli students are physically removed from modern Poland while experiencing what Feldman calls the "Holocaust Poland": "...visits to Poland by Ministry of Education groups are designed to inscribe upon Israeli youth the sense of belonging to an egalitarian collective with well-defined, but constantly threatened boundaries." (p. 91) and presents the Diaspora as "...a place of hostile, strange surroundings, wandering and the inevitable end" (p. 95) in which the Israeli delegation is separated from Polish surroundings.

In a recent evaluation of the journey to Poland conducted by the Israeli National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education (*RAMA* in Hebrew), the cognitive and affective impact of the journey on students, as well as the journey's impact on the students' value system is examined based on the Ministry of Education's written goals (Glickman et al, 2011). In a nation-wide sample, 2,506 students from 55 public schools (both secular and religious) that implemented a program for a journey to Poland, and 39 schools that did not participate, were surveyed between the years 2007-2009.

The overall findings of this national survey support the achievement of the journey's goals. For example, 95% of the students who participated in the journey see it as part of a long-term educational process that provides knowledge and a better understanding of the Holocaust. In comparison to other pedagogical strategies, such as history lessons, visits to Holocaust museums, memorials and seminars, the journey was considered to be the best knowledge source in both a national and universal context. The experience clarified the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the consequences of murderous anti-Semitism. As well, 71% claimed that the journey contributed to their understanding of the universal outcomes of the Holocaust, such as the nature of blind hatred of the other.

The journey, as a significant learning experience, provided the students with a sense of emotional identity with the Jewish nation and an understanding of the importance of the State of Israel for the Jewish people. As well, 87% of the students stated that the journey enabled them to gain a better sense of empathy for the Jewish past. The RAMA survey found that upon return from the journey, there was an increase in the number of students who felt a sense of empowerment. In comparison, the students who participated in the survey, but had not participated in the Journey to Poland, did not show a change in their feelings about the Holocaust.

The survey also examined arguments against the Journey to Poland: 1) as a way of passing on the memory of the Holocaust to the young generation, as opposed to alternative Israel-based programs; 2) the emphasis on the destruction of European Jewry, as opposed to presenting the former rich Jewish culture there; and 3) the emotional turmoil that students might experience as a result of the journey. These arguments were not supported by the students' responses. One argument against the journey that was supported by the survey findings was the discrimination against particular socio-economic sectors that could not afford the journey. It was found that most of the student population in schools that participated in the journey was from an established socio-economic background. Furthermore, students that could not participate in their school's journey because of financial difficulty were also excluded from the preparation process, including visiting museums,



seminars and hearing survivor testimonies. Following this finding, the Ministry of Education in Israel adopted measures to enable all students to participate in the journey.

### **Discussion and implications**

Teaching about the Holocaust in Israel serves as a case of the teaching of historical-traumatic events. Several key issues were discerned: the need to include both cognitive and affective components in the learning process, the difficulty in keeping a balance between national and universal historical elements, and the problem of appropriate instructional modes.

Holocaust education in Israel underwent a process of conceptual transformation leading to changes in modes of instruction. From an education lacuna, through a study of historical facts and figures, the educational process moved to an emphasis on affective goals, such as identity formation, developing a sense of national belonging, and a commitment to universal, humanistic values. These goals were considered to be better served by extra-curricular experiences, such as visits to museums, or participation in a journey to Holocaust sites.

Concrete and emotional experiences in Holocaust education have led to significant outcomes, providing students with knowledge about the nature of the Holocaust, and influencing their attitudes. Although the Journey to Poland had a short-term impact on students, it is still considered an "authentic acquaintance" with the Holocaust (Romi & Lev, 2007).

It is interesting to note that evaluation studies of the Journey to Poland have showed that the increase in the sense of national identity among students who participated in the journey was accompanied by a decrease in universal values. This could be because Jewish-Israeli adolescents view the Holocaust as a cultural trauma (Lazar, Litvak-Hirsch & Chaitin, 2008). According to Alexander (2004), cultural trauma occurs "when members of a collective feel that they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves an indelible mark upon their group consciousness, marking their memory for ever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (p. 1). Lazar & Litvak-Hirsch (2009) claim that a cultural trauma could

become a symbolic boundary when the collective cannot relate to the actions of others, both within and outside the collective, in relation to the cultural trauma.

On the other hand, Lazar and Litvak-Hirsch (2009) state that "when members of the collective feel confident in their cultural heritage, they welcome the actions of outsiders who aim to relate to the collective's cultural trauma, thus eliminating any symbolic boundaries between themselves and outsiders" (p. 189). The impact of emotional experiences might be balanced by introducing other traumatic historical events, such as the genocide in Rwanda, into the curriculum, demonstrating universal dangers of genocide. Though the Holocaust was unique in the attempt to annihilate a whole people through systematic installations of extermination, genocide is known, as well, in other societies.

Questions about human nature and the urge to kill the "other" have to become an inherent part of education in our time. Levy and Sznajder (2002) claim that Holocaust memory takes on a universal characteristic when the lesson is that "it can happen to anyone, at anytime, and everyone is responsible" (p. 101).

Holocaust education might yield important insights into teaching history. Emotional experiences related to national events are powerful agents in shaping the identity of young people, but might detract from their commitment to universal values, like the strive for peace and the resistance against racism. Educational programs have to consider these risks and plan appropriate remedies.

Emotional experience might come in the form of visits to historical sites, like the Journey to Poland, but also in the form of media representations. Mosborg et al. (2007), in their study of students' knowledge about the Vietnam War found that students tended to base their knowledge and attitudes on films, rather than on other sources: "...the home became a venue in which parent and child often shared in the joint experience of the past by turning on the VCR and together witnessing a celluloid version of it" (p. 3). This powerful impact might lead to misconceptions and limit the understanding of complex events in the past. Moreover, attempts to help students to "enter" into the past, and to identify with the thoughts and feelings of people who inhabited

this past, are bound to fail. No simulation, or visit to a museum or an historical site, can come close to the actual thoughts and feelings of Holocaust victims, of slaves in the time of Lincoln, or of soldiers in the Roman Empire.

Experience and emotion are a powerful part of education, but have to be embedded in careful studies of documents and in analysis of historical investigations. The pedagogy of teaching history has to strive for a transformative impact on students, emphasizing historical understanding that is based on critical thinking and multiple perspectives. Moreover, promoting universal and humanistic attitudes, and a personal commitment to moral values, have to be part of this transformational process.

Teaching about the Holocaust demonstrates the strong effect of experiential and emotional learning opportunities in teaching history, accompanied by the danger of bypassing cognitive and critical mechanisms. Cultural trauma might lead to symbolic boundaries, reducing universal implications of local, national historical events. The prevention of such outcomes requires long-term educational processes that balance between local/national and universal historical knowledge.

Emotional experiences are powerful in engaging students, and raising their attention to the subjects of educational processes, but their role in constructing moral behavior is just as important (Damasio and Damasio, 2010). Dewey (1916) viewed experience as creating meaningful connections between the individual and the world. That is the ultimate goal of teaching history.

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