



מכון הנרייטה סאלד
המכון הארצי למחקר במדעי ההתנהגות

Szold Institute Report

Executive Summary

Background

The European Department of the International School for Holocaust Studies of Yad Vashem has trained over 17,000 educators and teachers in over 500 seminars since 2005. Its objectives are:

- To teach the lessons of the Holocaust in a manner that pushes the boundaries of current educational paradigms, stretching them to new deeper levels of understanding and internalization.
- To empower educators by providing them with pedagogical guidelines and tools to combat the new antisemitism and its manifestations coming from the right and the left wing.
- To convey the importance of safeguarding human rights and preventing racism or xenophobia through Holocaust education.
- To encourage opinion-makers to incorporate the lessons for the Holocaust into their modes of working with the public.
- To train and empower teachers to teach the Holocaust using a multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural, and age-appropriate approach.
- To facilitate the creation of local networks of Holocaust educators who will support and implement programs, thus widening the circle of qualified educators on the national and international levels.
- To establish remote means of maintaining fruitful, long term contact with graduates of the ICHEIC educational programs.

This is an executive summary of a follow-up study to assess the impact of Yad Vashem's seminars on Eastern and Western European educators who attended them. Working in English, German, Polish and Russian, the authors solicited responses from 915 people from 30 countries who attended seminars from 2014-2019.

Objectives of the Study

The present study served as a **formative and summative** evaluation, and its goal was to investigate the impact that the seminar programming had on the respondents' views of the knowledge, educational approaches and resources that they gained from Yad Vashem; their relevancy; and implementing and incorporating them into their classrooms. The primary questions from the study were derived from Yad Vashem's aforementioned primary objectives, and they focused on assessing the impact that the professional development experience at Yad Vashem had on the participants at the end of seminars in

2019 (hereinafter: “the participants”) and the graduates of seminars that were held from 2014-2018 (hereinafter: “the graduates”). The study sought to assess their satisfaction on whether their expectations and needs were met, suggestions for improvement, the program’s impact and perceived influences in the immediate short term and in the long run.

Research Methods

In order to get a comprehensive and in-depth view of the situation, the authors of this study combined quantitative and qualitative methods of evaluation.

The quantitative data were gathered via online questionnaires that were sent to the participants and graduates in four languages: English, German, Polish and Russian. The questionnaires included, inter alia, personal and professional data, general feelings about the Holocaust, and aspects of satisfaction with the seminar. The graduates were asked about their interest in the Holocaust and how the seminar influenced how they teach this subject matter. A total of 332 participants in seminars in 2019 answered the questionnaires, as did 583 graduates of seminars that took place between 2014-2018. In total, the survey heard from 915 educators from 30 countries.

The qualitative data were gathered via partially structured phone interviews with 12 seminar graduates.

Main Findings

Holocaust Education among Participants and Graduates

- Over 70% of participants and graduates teach about the Holocaust. Most of them do so in a school framework. 57% of participants and 54% of graduates teach students aged 15 and up, and 45% of participants and 44% of graduates teach students aged 12-15
- When teaching the Holocaust, about 75% of participants and nearly 80% of graduates teach about discrimination, racism and antisemitism, and the resources that they use are mostly movies (85% participants, over 80% graduates), primary historical sources (67% participants, ~70% graduates) and apps (17% participants, ~30% graduates)
- It seems that 76% of the graduates have adopted Yad Vashem’s age-appropriate pedagogical approach to teaching the Holocaust, and even more (92%) have shared it with additional teachers. Moreover, about half of the graduates said that they get help from local sources, such as centers for Holocaust studies and local Jewish centers
- Over 70% of graduates feel challenged by the limited amount of time that school curricula allot for Holocaust education, which is a major difficulty for them. Around 20% of graduates also felt that their students had little motivation to learn about the Holocaust

Participants’ Feelings about the Holocaust and Holocaust Education

- A high percentage of the participants (96%) said that they believed that the Holocaust must be taught everywhere in the world. Over 80% agreed that it is important to understand the Holocaust as a chapter in the course of Jewish history and not as an isolated event.
- Participants from Western Europe agreed slightly less with the statement that a Holocaust could happen again, anywhere, at any time and to different groups. In contrast with participants from Eastern Europe and the Balkans, they agreed slightly more with the statement that it is not advisable to teach young (elementary school) pupils about the Holocaust.

Motivation for Participating in the Seminar

- The primary reasons that the participants stated for participating in the seminar were wanting to deepen their knowledge of and insights about the Holocaust and wanting to expand their knowledge of methods and educational philosophies for teaching the Holocaust (91% and 85%, respectively). Additionally, 70% of participants wanted to learn more about Israel.

Evaluating the Seminar

- A high percentage of participants reported that their expectations were met during the seminar (96%). Additionally, a large majority said that they would recommend the seminar to their colleagues (98%).
- In general, there was great satisfaction with the seminar, particularly the quality of the guidance by the presenters and lecturers (99%), the learning environment (99%), the tour of the Holocaust History Museum (97%) and workshops (96%). However, the participants also reported a comparatively lower level of satisfaction with the free time and the time available to process the information and their experiences, with participants from Eastern Europe and the Balkans expressing greater overall satisfaction from the seminar compared to the Western Europeans.
- The graduates thought that the seminars' strong points were the richness and diversity of the content, the caliber of the lecturers, the experiential learning, meeting Holocaust survivors, and the group experience.
- The participants and the graduates mostly suggested improving the methods and means of guidance during the seminars, and allocating sufficient time to process the information. Furthermore, they mentioned the need to tailor the content as much as possible to the various populations (mostly pupils aged eight and up), and they wanted to become more familiar with Israeli society.

Using Yad Vashem Educational Material

- A high percentage of the graduates use Yad Vashem's print material (88%) and online material, particularly the pictures (78%) and testimony films (69%)
- A high percentage of the participants and graduates asked to receive information from Yad Vashem about new material (85% and 79%, respectively)

Impact of the Seminar

- The participants gained both academically and pedagogically from the seminar.

In the **academic aspect**, the seminar contributed noticeably to the participants' knowledge of topics concerning Yad Vashem and the various sites on its campus; Jewish life before the Holocaust; everyday life in the ghettos; Jews and Judaism; Israeli society; the uniqueness of the Holocaust compared with other genocides; racism, antisemitism and the development of the "Final Solution;" and the Righteous Among the Nations.

In the **pedagogical aspect**, the seminar contributed noticeably to their understanding of Yad Vashem's educational philosophy (100%), the ethical dilemmas that the victims of the Holocaust faced, the significance of the Holocaust for the Jewish people, learning about the approach to teaching the Holocaust through biographical stories, learning about the sequential approach (before, during and after the war) to teaching the Holocaust, receiving educational material that Yad Vashem developed and receiving tools for imprinting Yad Vashem's educational philosophy.

The study found mixed results when comparing gains attained in the academic aspect by the participants from the various European regions. In topics pertaining to Israeli society, Judaism and the Jewish people and the collective memory of different nations, participants from Eastern Europe and the Balkans showed higher gains. Participants from Western Europe gained more in areas pertaining to the Jewish life before the Holocaust, life in the ghettos and the development of the "Final Solution." Regarding the pedagogical aspect, participants from Eastern Europe and the Balkans gained more in comparison with participants from Western Europe.

- The graduates thought that the seminar had an impact on them primarily because they were interested in news about Israel, read articles about the Holocaust, reacted to racist and antisemitic expressions, and talked with friends and family about the Holocaust.
- Since the seminar, most of the graduates (92%) reported having passed on Yad Vashem's educational philosophy to other participants, used Yad Vashem's educational resources, adopted the method that emphasizes biographical stories, and visited Yad Vashem's website. In most aspects that were investigated, graduates from Eastern Europe were influenced more than graduates from Western Europe, sometimes considerably so.
- A high percentage of the graduates have maintained professional ties with each other (88%). Additionally, it was found that as more time goes by, the more graduates help other educators develop units to teach about the Holocaust.

Main Recommendations

On the basis of these findings, the Szold Institute recommends that Yad Vashem consider:

- Expanding the number of seminar activities that require active participation.
- Spreading out the timetable and scheduling breaks to rest and process the experience.
- Employing differential guidance for certain populations (mostly pupils aged eight and up) and tailoring the content of the seminar to their needs.
- Scheduling tours of schools and meetings with Israeli teachers as part of familiarizing the participants in the seminar with Israeli society and the need to develop joint educational activities.
- Developing a virtual learning community for the purpose of developing connections that fellow graduates have created.
- Clarifying the content and information that the graduates would like to receive, and the channels in which they prefer to receive it.
- Tailoring Yad Vashem's material further to the language, age and culture of students of the participants and graduates as needed.

In summation, the seminars appear to have met the key objective that the European Department set for itself: teaching educators from overseas about its educational philosophy and pedagogical principles for

Holocaust education. The seminars noticeably contributed to the participants both academically and pedagogically, and many of them have been making frequent and varied use of the knowledge that they gained, including Yad Vashem's print and online educational resources. Satisfaction with the seminars was high in most respects. A high percentage of the participants and the graduates said that the seminars met their expectations and that they would recommend that their colleagues apply to participate in them. Finally, the graduates seem to feel that the seminars have had a resounding impact over the years, and many of them said that they felt a stronger connection to Israel and were increasingly interested in the Holocaust.

However, in light of the study's findings, several issues that came up require attention: increasing experiential learning; allocating more time to process the information and the experience, and to rest; optimally tailoring the content to the different populations; and increasing exposure to Israeli society in order to maximize the seminar's potential.

In conclusion, the admirable willingness of seminar graduates from Europe to participate in this study and to cooperate with Yad Vashem years after their seminar is noteworthy. There seem to be grounds to consider expanding the study to graduates from other continents in order to learn about their positions, how they implement and incorporate the seminar content, and their current needs for teaching the Holocaust.