
The Kibbutz: Integrated Learning Environment and Informal Educational Experience

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ABSTRACT

The kibbutz educational system achieves continuity of community, childrearing and teaching, due to (1) the wider meaning of learning in a kibbutz society: children learn how fellowship and cooperation work together; (2) similarity between social educational principles: education is collective and communal, imbued with the attitude of economic cooperation, and related to the community through work; (3) structure of the children's society educational program: to provide resources and guidance and to achieve cultural integration.

JOSEPH R. BLASI*

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Introduction

The kibbutz is perhaps the most successful intentional communal experiment in modern times. Because these communities were developed in a foreign country and a great deal of research and written material about them is shrouded in Hebrew, the movement has still to be recognized with the global importance it deserves. The first kibbutz was really a rural commune founded in 1909. As the movement expanded and the communes began to resemble communities, the word "kibbutz" was invented to denote a larger community group. Today there are some 240 kibbutzim with a total population of about 94,000 people (about 30,000 men, women, and children), or approximately 3.3% of the total Israeli population. The population of an individual kibbutz varies from 50 to 2,000, although the size of most settled communities is between 500 and 700 people.¹

The communal nature of kibbutz society means that most of its members are constantly interacting around the multiplicity of functions in the society. The process of schooling is not loaded down with the burdens of providing individual personal solutions to such basic problems as finding worthwhile work, economic opportunities, and justice. The community itself creates the appropriate conditions which instruct members how to succeed in the community in

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¹The research was conducted at Kibbutz Vatik, a pseudonym for a kibbutz of the HaShomer HaZair Federation of Kibbutzim. This community has approximately 600 inhabitants. The author spent almost one year in the community as a visiting researcher who participated fully in social and work life. This paper is based on an initial review of field notes, questionnaires, and extended interviews (conducted in Hebrew) with fifty community members. The Research Project On The Kibbutz at Harvard University is supported by the National Institute of Mental Health, Center For The Study of Metropolitan Problems. A complete report on all the empirical findings of the project is now available from: The Institute For Cooperative Community, P.O. Box 298, Harvard Square Station, Cambridge, Mass. 02138. It is entitled *The Quality Of Life In A Kibbutz Cooperative Community*. For a general anthropological description of the kibbutz, see Medford Spiro *Kibbutz Venture In Utopia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956).

which they live. Thus, the "life is collapsing around you and so try to figure it out in school" phenomenon found in many American schools is not the way the Kibbutz operates. Neither does learning stop and "real life" begin after high school. Real life is comprehensible and intelligible within the framework of what one has experienced and what one was told as a child and student. This kind of education, with the close integration between experiences in school and in the larger community, is possible, of course, only when there is genuine micro-community.

The Kibbutz Educational Program

What is it about the kibbutz educational system that accounts for the generally impressive tendency for the community to achieve the kind of continuity such evidence indicates? We would like to single out four aspects of learning in the kibbutz which may account for this:

- (1) The wider meaning of learning given a society like the kibbutz;
- (2) The similarity between social and educational principles in the community;
- (3) The actual structure of "schooling" and child-rearing in the kibbutz;
- (4) The very positive outcomes from the kibbutz educational system.

By developing these aspects we hope to illustrate the unique stand the kibbutz takes on creating a common ideology for the members of its society.

(1) The Wider Meaning Of Learning In Kibbutz Society.

The economic sphere in the kibbutz is not neatly divided from the sphere of social relations. Fellowship and cooperation mutually support each other. One does not make money with one crowd, make friends with another, and make decisions with still another. The community nature of kibbutz society means that most of its members are constantly interacting around developing the goals of the society. These interactions in the communal economy, in the political arena, in the family, in the cultural life have resulted in many clear behavioral changes in the kibbutz when we compare the 240 communities with other societies. Because as a society the kibbutz is a deliberate attempt to structure experience such that *relatively permanent changes in behavior occur*, it is a learning society. This is actually the definition of learning. In fact, the whole community can be considered a "school of living", centering on the norms discussed above: the balancing of individual and community commitments, work, economic cooperation, political participation, ideology and national service. One can say that life in the kibbutz community prepares the person as much for the school as vice versa. The "school" is not loaded down with the burdens of providing magical solutions to survival, happiness, justice, fitting in, and finding worthwhile work.

This attempt to define learning more specifically helps one to see that the goals of learning in the kibbutz (community norms) can be "taught" in a series of different situations. How, for example, is the half-hour story which a kibbutz kindergarten teacher reads to the children about economic cooperation different from the economic cooperation the child may experience and see for hours each day? Why should the parent's rewarding of a child for sharing toys be distinct from the cooperative behavior of the children's play group which is rewarded by the teacher-member? How does the knowledge that each Saturday night one's parents go to the general assembly meeting differ from the more direct emphasis the children's nurse puts on group consultation before decisions? In fact, it would be quite accidental to arrange educational language and plan life in such a way that what happened in a school was called *learning*

and what happened in other areas of life was not included in the construction of the educational program. Small community life in the kibbutz avoids this difficulty and thus it constitutes a total learning environment where school and living broach a common set of real issues in co-terminal areas of life. It is true that adult life is not the life of a child and learning is not *just* living. It is *letting* children participate in community activities without *planning* special activities, or organizing their time to aid them in getting the experiences they require to live in the society. This presumes that they are developing, and have special needs, and require a certain amount of reserved attention and guidance. The free school or extreme de-schooling approach is not accepted by the kibbutzim which organizes itself quite seriously for the special developmental exigencies they consider the issues of children. A review of the principles of educational organization will illustrate this.

(2) *Similarity Between Social and Educational Principles.*

Bertha Hazan in *Collective Education In The Kibbutz* says "Collective education is a product of kibbutz society, which bases every aspect of its life on mutual aid and unlimited reciprocal responsibility, as well as on equality and sharing. Collective education has grown organically out of the social milieu. The relationship between the educational system and the social essence of the kibbutz and its aspirations has endowed collective education with its form and content."²

Education is collective and communal. The children live together in small groups in children's houses within the village. In the early days of the kibbutz this meant quite a separation of parents from the children. It must be remembered that those who had the first children were vehemently opposed to their own form of childrearing which they considered possessive, controlling and oriented to individualistic values. The kibbutzim later found that such extremism as limited visiting hours for parents and the priority breastfeeding by mothers of other children before their own, did not in fact improve childrearing. It stifled the parent-child relationship and caused a great deal of unhappiness with the parents.³ Today, the nurses in the children's house are chosen by the educational committee which is heavily influenced by the parent's evaluations of each particular nurse or child care worker. Parents can visit the children during the work day and often give special attention (that would be impossible in another place) to a child with particular physical or emotional problems during the day. They consult with the child care worker at any time or with the parents of other children in their child's play group.⁴ In addition at Vatik and many other communities a resident child therapist and a member experienced in child care counselling is available to help parents and child care personnel

²A. I. Rabin, and Bertha Hazan, *Collective Education in the Kibbutz* (New York: Springer Publishing Co., 1973), p. 4. This text was used extensively in preparing the descriptions that follow. Also, participant observation notes from Kibbutz Vatik.

³For more on history of Kibbutz education see Viteles (1966), Vol. 3, Section 1, Ch. 5; Section 2; Ch. 5; Section 3, Ch. 5.

Educational programs vary with the four Kibbutz federations. Viteles (1966) Vol. 3 outlines the main tenets of each federation of communities. It should be noted that many of these differences no longer exist. For up-to-date statistics on Kibbutz federations and the Union of All Kibbutz Movements, see Criden/Gelb (1974). Appendix on Kibbutz Federations.

⁴For more on the parent-child relationship see: Joseph Shepher, "The Child and the Parent-Child Relationship in Kibbutz Communities in Israel," *Assignment Children UNESCO Paris*. No. 10. June, 1969. A. I. Rabin "Attitudes of Kibbutz children to family and parents," *American Journal Orthopsychiatry* 29 (1959): 172-9. Gerson, M., "The Child and his Family in the Kibbutz: The Family". IN: Jarus, A. et al: *Children and Families in Israel*, 1970: 251-262. Sol Kugelmass and Shlomo Breznitz, "Perception of Parents by Kibbutz Adolescents," *Social Relations*, Vol. No. pp. 117-122.

understand problems that may arise. In the evening (from 4 to 8 p.m.) the children go to their parents houses and spend time that is cherished in the community as time for children. In comparison to many American homes the communal childrearing system does not separate children from parents but rather safeguards child care and uninterrupted time for the parent and child, since the kibbutz parents are not bogged down in economic pressures. There are strong sanctions — supported mostly by gossip — for parents who do not fully devote much of their “children’s hour” to their children. The balance between individual and community commitment informs this system: the kibbutz today has sought a balance between a wide diversity of child-care patterns and possibilities, and relationships to their children. Communal child-rearing means that each child has an equal opportunity for the physical and emotional conditions and resources necessary for development. These resources and conditions do not depend on their parent’s amount of work, profession, or even education, since persons with different jobs and responsibilities in the kibbutz get an equal amount of goods and services. This is because not only wages but differential wage structures do not exist in the kibbutz. The community through the General Assembly and the Educational Committee decides about child care. So, for example, if a certain child has emotional problems or requires special attention the child care worker will take the initiative to work with the parent and give the child special attention. This total learning environment means a unity of the factors influencing children: parents, teachers, the children’s society (the groups of children), and the social life. In the kibbutz they not only work together and consult each other about the children but the “school” is run on principles congruent with the community.⁵

Education in the kibbutz leads the children into the community not away from it through communal work. As soon as they are able children in their small children’s society begin to help clean the house and do chores. Older children begin with a short period of work per day. High school students have regular work responsibilities from 2-3 hours daily. In Vatik they participate in many different branches. One student drives the new giant mechanized tractor ploughing fields each day in the hot desert sun. This tractor specially conditioned for day-round desert use is one of the largest machine investments of the community. Children in the early years spend much time touring the farm and learning about different branches.

The children’s society is unique to the kibbutz system, for *child care is not only collective but learning itself is.* That is, the kibbutz puts great emphasis on the ability for the children’s group to socialize its own members. Children live together, learn together, and go through their development together. Throughout this process economic rewards and opportunities are held equal in the context of the collective society of the kibbutz. The children are encouraged to learn and expand their lives through organized group activity, individual development of special interests and skills (music, mechanical, art . . .), but not through rewards for competitive behavior or learning. In the later years of grade school and high school children are encouraged to make group decisions and group plans, preparing them for the norm of political participation in the community.⁶ In the high school this format is more explicit. A social secretary, secretariat, and several committees are chosen after the kibbutz institutional system, and general assemblies are held as a means of maintaining the group.

⁵Moshe Kerem, “The Kibbutz: State of the Dream” in *Judaism*, Issue 80, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1973, pp. 182-193.

⁶M. E. Spiro, with the assistance of G. Spiro. *Children of the Kibbutz* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 268. This book is the best study of kibbutz education available in English although some parts are dated.

It is true nevertheless that the Education Committee and the high school staff are mainly responsible for the structure of the high school (i.e. the program of study and daily organization and staff) despite the participation of the children in determining their society.

The project method attempts to apply the values of participation and the totality of the kibbutz learning environment to educational instruction. In elementary and high school this is guided by a belief that the wish to learn is an inborn instinct for contact with the environment, and that different kinds of teaching can in fact distort the child's desire to learn. In the steps of Dewey and Whitehead kibbutz teachers try to find out what it is that interests the children. From these interests they try to present the conditions and resources for learning.⁷ It is generally agreed that the project method is quite impressively applied in kibbutz elementary schools. For example, fourth graders learn about their own kibbutz and in the process study history (of the settlement), the people who built it (and about their countries of origin and ancestry), its location (branching off into geography), the sources of livelihood (involving discussions of the economic branches), and how it functions (with a discussion of social structure and problems). The kibbutzim have constructed materials and outlines for many such projects for use with their youngsters connected to questions the children are asking about their sphere of life. Elementary schooling in the kibbutz thus applies well the principle of participation in decision-making (in this case the children's participation in their own society and learning). While teachers are trained in their ability to teach definite skills (writing, reading) and be attuned to the developmental exigencies of each stage of childhood and this period of life involves many practical learning tasks, on the whole, the first six years of schooling is more a total cultural learning environment intertwined with the community's life, its cultural milieu, and the children's inquisitive concern about their own existence. With its leisurely farm and nature tours, the heavy use of art and music, the free spaces and priority attention from parents, teachers and educational budgets early childhood indeed is a crowning achievement of kibbutz education. Many second generation members we interviewed remember it as "the garden of Eden."

(3) *Structure of The Children's Society Educational Program*⁸

Education in the kibbutz is social change. The community formed their early educational system out of a desire to create a "new Person" who would accept the values of a just society. Several historical studies by Viteles⁹ outline the source materials for this original conception of education by the early kibbutz members. In the beginning, Degana Aleph (the first kibbutz) established collective child-rearing and education as a utilitarian necessity to relieve a huge demand on manpower so that more members especially women, could work. Only in the 1920's around the time of the arrival of Russian immigration to Israel did more ideological kibbutz members begin to root the communal learning system in a radically new social ideology. One can examine the fascinating documents from the meetings and councils that bore this unique system in the late twenties, along with recent statements of kibbutz educational ideology. In the past, however, a common mistake has been to over-idealize education in the kibbutz by describing it in ideological terms. While the excellent description of collective education given by Rabin and Hazan presents

⁷See Rabin (1973) Chapters on the project method in Kibbutz education.

⁸For analysis of Kibbutz educational structure, see A. Itzoni, "The Organizational Structure of the Kibbutz." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1958. Also in *Human Relations* 12 (1959): 549-555.

⁹See footnote 3.

a detailed summary of principles it is difficult to visualize the day-to-day complexities and the educational structure and problems from that material, of educating a whole society's children. Spiro's classic empirical work, *The Children of The Kibbutz* can be considered the basic work for attaining a realistic day-to-day picture of kibbutz education and child-rearing and an assessment of the "psychological price" it, like any socialization system, exacts from its products.¹⁰ Although it would be unfair to read his work without sufficient understanding of the society as a whole and the ideological antecedents and goals of the educational system because of the special nature of the kibbutz as a society and a learning environment, it is an excellent review of actual kibbutz practice. Bettelheim's work while wellknown¹¹ has distinct problems. Kibbutz educators have leveled serious criticism especially at Bettelheim, but also at Spiro for his often harsh evaluation of the second generation. In brief, both authors consider that the second generation has paid a high price for their unique kind of learning by developing an inability to get involved in intimate relationships and a certain flattening of affect (distance from emotions and deep feelings) in their personalities. Bettelheim has been quite persistent in his claims despite his findings based on short-term participation observation were totally disproved by empirical research¹² Spiro, in a recent preface to his book¹³ admits that his view of the second generation member's personality has some problems because it cannot be concluded from his work that kibbutz adolescents and young adults exhibit "negative features" in their personalities more than people from other socialization systems, nor should his psychoanalytical perceptive (which constantly looks for sources of tension in the human personality and relationships caused by unconscious drives) lead one to believe that a social system might be devised that could eliminate all emotional conflict or tension.

The following summary of the daily structure of kibbutz education is presented in the context of these two issues: first, that this alternative educational system should neither be over-idealized or presented in a way not giving ideology and the quality of learning in kibbutz society as a whole sufficient emphasis; secondly, that one must beware of seeing problems in kibbutz education that are not integral to or causal by the system itself but may be general problems of youth and of socialization.

The structure of child-care and learning in the kibbutz has three goals: to shape development, providing resources and conditions for the kind of development the kibbutz considers important; to watch development, providing special guidance and care in attending to children's needs, and to adapt development to kibbutz society and achieve cultural integration. These goals will be discussed in connection with the structure of the general educational program, and then more specifically in connection with the kibbutz high school.

In shaping development the kibbutz gives the very best of resources in creating the children's society.¹⁴ Child-care nurses for young children and

¹⁰See footnote 6.

¹¹Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Children of The Dream* (New York: McMillan, 1969).

¹²Jeffrey Jay and Robert Bimey, Research Findings on the Kibbutz Adolescent: A Response to Bettelheim, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 43 (April 1973): 347-354. See the following for more on culture and schooling: A. I. Rabin, "Culture components as a significant factor in child development: II, Kibbutz adolescents," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 31 (1961): 493-504.

¹³Spiro, *Children of the Kibbutz* (1965 edition), pp. xiv-xv.

¹⁴For other general views of Kibbutz socialization see: D. Rapaport, "The Study of Kibbutz Education and Its Bearing on the Theory of Development," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 28 (1958): 587-597. L. Y. Rabkin, "A Very Special Education: The Israeli Kibbutz," *Journal of Special Education* 2 (1968): 251-261.

¹⁴A. Rabin and Hazan (1973) discuss these centers.

teachers are trained in specially designed programs at the three branches of Seminar Ha Kibbutzim coordinated by Oranim, the Pedagogical Center For the Kibbutzim^{14A}. The kibbutzim have created an alternative child development research and education complex to foster the values they consider important and integrate progressive knowledge and research on children's lives with their own culture. Each individual kibbutz gives priority to the children's budget providing them with the very best housing, food, medical care, supervision, play and study facilities. These conditions are under fairly constant scrutiny not only by the community as a whole but especially by the various branches of the Education Committee. Each kibbutz has infants' houses for children from birth to 1½ with four to six children to a room, cared for by a nurse (metapelet). Children from 1½ to four live in the toddlers' house. These more spacious quarters provide toys, a play area, and other amenities geared to their physical development and potentialities. The children's group formed in the babies house will continue as a unit until the beginning of high school. At the age of 3-4 three or four groups of children are combined to form a kindergarten group of 15-18 children which lives in their own house made up of bedrooms, a playroom, a dining room, and an outdoor playground with suitable equipment. In the later childhood years from approximately eight to twelve years of age the junior children's community is formed. It consists of four educational groups (third to sixth grade) of 15-20 children providing a wider variety for choice of companions for play. Each group has a full time educator and child care nurse (responsible for guidance in the children's home, personal care and training). On the whole the young child's society is made up of 50-60 children. From approximately the age of 13 on the children move to the youth society of the high school made up of about 150-200 children. It is a group of educational groups (containing the original group of six and the elementary school groups which by now have set group identities). Each group continues to live and learn together but all the groups cooperate in social and cultural activities. Usually, the high school is done cooperatively with other kibbutzim, and thus, may be located at another kibbutz. This distance gives the group the opportunity to remain in the kibbutz movement yet outside their own kibbutz with a larger and more diverse group of persons (usually including 18-25 children from cities and villages not kibbutzim). It also discourages, as Hazan and Rabin note "premature imitation of adult life and safeguards the value of studies and youthful activity."¹⁵ The high school community is unlike the smaller children's houses which have much adult supervision, a small children's farm, and is continued in the middle of the kibbutz. The high school community is actually a "little kibbutz" with its own common dining room, meeting rooms, work branches, committees. Because it is so large it has the quality of a small kibbutz. The children at this point live with one or more roommates in dorm rooms scattered usually in one-story structures around the community dining room and study halls. The youth society has shops, hobby rooms, music rooms . . . for common use. The older high school kibbutzniks have rooms at their home kibbutz where they live during the summer and on vacations, and which they use as their "base" when they return home each afternoon to work in their community.¹⁶ With the general plan and structure of educational conditions in the kibbutz in mind, the way the kibbutz watches and guides development can be considered.

¹⁵For an interesting analysis of Kibbutz children's activities, see: Theodore M. Abel and Regelio Diaz-guero, discussion of A. I. Rabin's "Kibbutz Adolescents," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 31 (July 1961). J. Baratz, "Dagania: The Story of Palestine's First Collective Settlement." Tel Aviv: Zionist Organization, Youth Dept., 1946.

¹⁶A few kibbutzim still maintain their own high schools in their communities. In the different federations the manner of arranging the high school is different. For example, in some the children do not return home every evening while in others this is not the case.

The integration of learning with the community does not mean that the community is not finely attuned to the developmental exigencies of each child or age-group. In early childcare the nurse (metapelet) is specially trained in baby care and mother-infant relations. During the first six weeks after birth the kibbutz mother spends full time with the child for the kibbutz recognizes that the link between mother and child is the basis for future development. The mothers breast-feed the children together in a relaxed atmosphere in the babies house. The mother gradually during the first year begins to resume the normal work schedule (six hours for women, eight for men) especially after weaning around the fifth month. The metapelet does not act as the child's mother, neither does she attempt to form a highly intimate bond with each child. Today, the metapelet is considered a child-care professional who assists the mother, attempts to supervise, understand, watchover, and provide special assistance to the early development of the children. To answer charges that kibbutz children suffered from emotional difficulties because of this pattern of childrearing several researchers looked into the matter and found that the term "hospitalism" resulting from maternal deprivation could not be applied to kibbutz children. Rabin,¹⁷ Neubauer,¹⁸ and Spiro¹⁹ agree on this conclusion concerning the children's emotional and physical health.

In the toddler's house ideally the metapelet who began working with the children's group continues to be their nurse. The nurse working with a small group can give extensive individual attention and guidance to each child, creating a direct, loving relationship with each child. The children from babyhood have an increased awareness of each other and it is the special attention and guidance the nurse gives to the forming of this awareness and these relationships that makes her guidance so valuable. The metapelet is responsible for much of the training given to the children (toilet training, eating, dressing . . .). She organizes activities for the small group during the day which includes walks, play, work in the garden, and expressive activities.

At the age of three several metapelet begin to collaborate in merging their groups in preparation for kindergarten. The kibbutz views the metapelet as supporting the parental relationship with the children through their support rather than confusing the children or depriving them. As Hazan and Rabin point out, "One individual cannot possibly fulfill all these needs (of the child) adequately as every mother who has raised a child in the kibbutz will confirm. Greater success is assured when the mother and the permanent metapelet work together to create an environment that will afford the infant many forms of contact."²⁰ A tenet of the childcare program is to provide support for parents so that their relationship with their children is not a constant "pain" competing with the demands of a busy life, but occurs in more relaxed, pleasurable en-

¹⁷Albert I. Rabin, "Infants and Children under Conditions of "Intermittent" Mothering in the Kibbutz," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 28 (1958): 577-584. See also Rabin, *Growing Up in the Kibbutz* (New York: Springer Publishing Co., 1965), Chapter 5, "Early Development: Infants." Background material for maternal deprivation and effects of culture on development study is: 1) J. Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 1951). 2) A. Kardoiner, "The Roads to Suspicion, Rage, Apathy, and Social Disintegration," in I. Galdson (ed.), *Beyond the Germ Theory* (New York: Health Education Council, 1954). 3) R. Spitz, "Unhappy and fatal Outcomes of Emotional Deprivation and Stress in Infancy," in I. Galdson (ed.), *Beyond the Germ Theory*. 4) L. J. Yarrow, "Maternal Deprivation: Toward an Empirical and Conceptual Re-Evaluation," *Psychological Bulletin* 58 (1961): 459-490.

¹⁸P. B. Neubauer (ed.), *Children in Collectives; Child Rearing Aims and Practices in the Kibbutz* (Springfield, Ill.: C. C. Thomas, 1965).

¹⁹Spiro (1958), Chapter 6.

²⁰Rabin (1974), p. 25.

counters when the parents can give children great attention. One must admit that the disintegration of American nuclear family life and the extended family, the economic and time pressures and the fragmentation of the whole society often create many strains and tensions in the child's life and the relationship with the parents. The kibbutz hopes that by relieving some of this tension that better mental health for children and better family life is possible. The parents visit the kindergarten at different times during the day²¹ or sometimes the children may visit their parents at work. They observe their child in the group and spend much time sharing reactions with the kindergarten educator and the child's nurse. They participate in special events such as presentations of the group's art and help prepare for holidays and other occasions. In addition, the education committee, the federation's visiting educational personnel, and the staff of the three kibbutz child guidance clinics provide assistance in individual and group therapy and diagnosis of children and parents and individual and group guidance for parents and educational personnel with special in-service training programs for these personnel.

After elementary years in the junior children's community the emphasis is on the formation of the peer group. This is a common concern for children at this age. Children spend most of their time in the Company of other children who begin increasingly to care for each other's development with the guidance of the nurse and the educator. Rabin and Hazan summarize the developmental priorities of this stage of the educational program:

Kibbutz society is based on the free education of the individuals living within it. The children's community therefore is not another means of imposing correct behavior on the children; rather, it is a sphere in which they learn correct social behavior in the course of experiences while at the same time satisfying their need for play, work, and enjoyment. It is not an organizational framework, but one of essence, in which the child molds his or her personality and learns to impose limitations on himself or herself and to respect the rights of others.²²

The High School and Youth Society

Let us now consider how the young adult's development is guided in the kibbutz high school. Adolescents in Kibbutz Vatik mentioned that there were clearly a few members in each group who felt they did not fit in, had low status, and to an extent were hurting because of this. It has not been determined however if this program is integral to kibbutz group socialization or to the peer group centrality in adolescent socialization no matter where it occurs. Another younger adolescent of Vatik criticizes the group about a different issue: lack of diversity.

When one lives one's life with the same people, and for seventeen or twenty or how many years you have seen that person, learning their strengths or weaknesses, their characteristics in a very basic way as a result of living so closely, one develops a rude or vulgar attitude. People have had it with one another. In this closed society, people stop caring, stop paying attention to one another. It is as if they figure that it would not make any difference to them if they acquired different habit of relating. You do not change your society, it is not like changing air (when you breathe), it is human. This is a problem here that people are bored and have had enough of each other. I think it is that way in every kibbutz.²³

While it is not the author's experience that this *is* indeed a widespread phenomena, this adolescent's opinion generally exaggerated while personally valid, points

²¹This visiting is not strictly limited as it was in the early days of the kibbutz. Parents have primary emotional control over their relationship with the child.

²²Rabin (1974), p. 60.

²³*Interviews With Kibbutz High School Students*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Kibbutz Research Project, unpublished manuscript, 1976).

to the strain on high school society in the kibbutz. Childhood is over. Adult life is creeping up and this fellowship-oriented collective society does not seem to have removed the pains, the angry immediate and sweeping evaluations, the bitter accounting of adolescence.^{24 25}

Each group has a counselor-educator who is the full time advisor, counselor and educational coordinator. The educator tries to direct the development of the group by intervening with various individuals, conducting weekly group discussions on personal and organizational problems, mediating individual-group conflicts. The educator has a different job and is very carefully chosen by the educational committee and the parents.²⁶ As a member of the same community and not a paid outsider he or she like all the teachers is open to constant criticism and feedback without the ability to expel, punish, fail, or otherwise manipulate the children using the fairly extensive power that many teaching bureaucrats have.²⁷

Let us consider three special problems in the high school: authority, ideology and outside educational norms. Regarding authority, when we consider a small cooperative community as a modern learning environment these are particularly knotty issues. Spiro noted²⁹ that the primal issue of alternative schools was in fact a central bone of contention for kibbutz teachers, students, and parents: should the teachers exercise more authority in dealing with the youngsters for educational goals or is the appeal to conscience, to the responsibility of the group enough? While Zvi Lavi, a former director for Educational Department in the Shomer Hatsair Federation of Kibbutzim recognizes several prominent free school experiments as influential in kibbutz educational practice,³⁰ the kibbutz is clearly not using a high school approach which favors basically spontaneous learning in a variety of unstructured situations at the full control of the children.

Another problem with high school education intrinsic to the kibbutz is ideological education. At the time of Spiro's study in 1951-52 membership in the kibbutz political movement and weekly ideological meetings, was compulsory. Adults were more explicit and determined in teaching the younger members about socialism and kibbutz ideology. In recent years, this has all changed. Lacking legal enforcement structures (no police, no expulsion, no marks, no ability to ruin the future work career) the kibbutz high school cannot force its member-students to participate more than they are actually desirous of participating. Thus, "educational performance" is not a closely measured statistic.

²⁴For a perspective on adolescent social problems see: E. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton Publishers, 1950).

²⁵One of the best descriptions of the children's society is found in Joseph Shepherd, "Self-imposed incest avoidance and exogamy in second generation kibbutz adults." Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Rutgers University, 1971, New Brunswick, N.J.

²⁶The control parents have over the educator's appointment and dismissal is central to the real "local control" of learning here. It is the author's observation that "educators" are subject to extensive and continuous feedback from parents and children.

²⁷This lack of bureaucratic authority is balanced with an advantage. There is little juvenile delinquency on the kibbutz probably because asocial is dealt with directly and personally by the peer group and the community, because a fellowship-oriented community reduces the invisibility of asocial acts, and because such acts are not objectified by a bureaucracy of policemen, courts, and social workers which ultimately force the "labeling" of the juvenile. This area requires much further research to test such hypotheses.

²⁸Nevertheless, Talmon (1972) studied the increasing concern of Kibbutz parents with children's occupational placement. A veteran Kibbutz researcher has said that parental control over educational placement and resources vs. communal control would threaten the kibbutz's very existence.

²⁹Spiro (1958), p. 314.

³⁰Rabin (1974), p. 135.

It depends more on life experience, personal goals, and development. Many a "poor high school student" in the kibbutzim has with the development of subsequent career goals, become quite creative.³¹

A third problem with the kibbutz high school is that more than the other sectors of the educational program it is effected by educational norms of the outside world and the surrounding society. Recently, for example the project method which saw learning experiences and material growing from the child outward to the school, has been modified. The kibbutz decided it was necessary to have subjects and stress skills in a more programmed way, so math, language arts, crafts, and physical training were taken out of the project method.³⁴ The Israeli Ministry of Education also made various demands for the standardization of the kibbutz curriculum, with national norms, and in fact, connected the kibbutz's ability to receive municipal education aid on this process. Demands for standard facilities, class size, etc. was one of the factors that lead to the joining of the high schools of many kibbutzim — in order to be able to financially deal with the demands — and the consequent disappearance of the community high school of each kibbutz. The school began to have subjects, time periods, pre-set goals, increased specialization on the part of the teachers, although grades have not been formally introduced in spite of the fact that some students and parents favor their introduction. The desire on the part of youngsters to go to the University has meant that they must study to be able to pass the national matriculation exam, a rigid requirement for university admission.³⁵ This was long fought by the kibbutzim and eventually they gave into the government.

(4) *Outcomes Of The Kibbutz Educational Program*

Existing research is to a great extent quite impressive in showing that the kibbutz educational program achieves many of its broad cultural goals. Kibbutz education is one of the most studied parts of the kibbutz community. Recently, kibbutz members and kibbutz educators have focused their concern with the quality of the community as a total learning environment on the plight of the second generation in the kibbutz. Rosner studied members of the second generation of the Kibbutz Artzi Federation which was founded after World War I. This Federation includes some 75 kibbutzim and is the federation of Vatik. 16.1% of all the second generation born in the communities left for other kibbutzim, mostly because of marriage. Therefore, 70.5% of the 2,904 second generation members born in the kibbutz still lived there. This is a very high percentage and there is no reason to believe it is different for the other Federations. It is generally accepted that the ratio has increased since 1967; according

³¹For a comparison of kibbutz and non-kibbutz school achievement see Gina A. Ortar, "Educational Achievement of Primary School Graduates in Israel as Related to their Sociocultural Background," *Comparative Education* 4 (1967): 23-24. The unique difference of "performance" in the kibbutz should be kept in mind.

³²Spiro (1958), p. 303.

³³Rabin (1974), p. 110.

³⁴Rabin (1974), Chapter on the kibbutz high school.

³⁵The Israeli matriculation exam for entrance to the Universities is becoming more accepted as a tolerable goal of high school training in some kibbutz circles. Other members, however, feel that it violates the Kibbutz's educational principles. A compromise position is available. Kibbutz and other students can elect not to take the exam and participate in the Mechina (Preparation), a one year pre-university program offered by universities.

to recent research 30% of the second generation of the same federation leave their communities.^{36 37 38}

While the observations of these kibbutz sociologists, the work of Spiro and Bettelheim and our own research at Vatik illustrate that indeed second generation members are living effectively as kibbutzniks (i.e. they abide by the norms of social life), little is known about what their ultimate criteria are for making decisions, how their basic concerns are constituted, other than the fact that they tend to be less ideological (in the socialist-old-timer sense) since they had a kibbutz as a home and not a movement. They also tend to speak about personal concerns when evaluating their membership. Many we interviewed spoke of living in the kibbutz because it was their home, their community. Oftentimes, kibbutz-watchers consider such trends as indicative that the second generation has *no* ideology or communitarian concerns. Rosner, however, is finding in his second generation study that the concerns are not expressed in the same way as their fathers and mothers, but the newer members do indeed have a kibbutz ideology.³⁹ Amir⁴⁰ studied kibbutz-born and kibbutz-bred (those who came later to the kibbutz) soldiers in the Israeli Army and found that kibbutz members have a significantly different and startling ability to advance successfully in the army framework. They are over-represented in their general ability, voluntarism, and suitability to be officers.

In addition to a fairly successful second generation it is clear that kibbutz childhood is quite healthy. Rabin⁴¹ found that kibbutz children somewhat lagged behind non-kibbutz children in intellectual and ego development in the first two or three years of life. This was attributed to some frustration because of the temporary withdrawal of the mother at this time. Nevertheless, his research clearly established that these difficulties disappeared and were overcome after the first few years, so that kibbutz children at ten are as well developed intellectually as non-kibbutz children or surpass them. They showed greater emotional maturity, less sibling rivalry, less selfishness, and somewhat more anxiety and hostility towards their parents than non-kibbutz children. Seventeen year old kibbutz children functioned intellectually somewhat better and were as emotionally adjusted as their non-kibbutz counterparts. They had less conflict problems and hostility towards their parents. In young manhood, Rabin found kibbutz young men to be strong in ego, less aggressive, less rebellious towards society, and less oriented to defense mechanisms than their non-kibbutz counterparts. He discounted previous hypotheses that maternal deprivation produced social

³⁶The research is unpublished and was conducted by Menachem Rosner, Director of the Center For Social Research On The Kibbutz, Givat Chaviva, Israel. The more recent study was also completed by the Center staff and was communicated to the author by Ephriam Rosen, Director of the Social Department of the Kibbutz Artzi Federation.

³⁷Erik Cohen and Menachem Rosner, "Relations Between Generations in the Israeli Kibbutz," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5 (January 1970); also in Rosner, ed., *The Kibbutz as a Way of Life in Modern Society*.

³⁸Moshe Sarel, *Research Report on the Second Generation in the Kibbutz* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1959). (Mimeographed in Hebrew.)

³⁹M. Rosner, "Perception of Intergenerational Relations in the Kibbutz." Paper delivered at 10th International Congress on Gerontology, Jerusalem, p. 9. Available from Givat Chaviva.

⁴⁰Yehuda Amir, "Effectiveness of the Kibbutz-born soldier in the Israeli Defense Forces," *Human Relations* 22 (1969): 333-344.

⁴¹Rabin (1965). See also: A. I. Rabin, "Personality maturity of Kibbutz (Israeli Collective Settlement) and non-Kibbutz children as reflected in Rorschach findings," *J. proj. Tech.* 21 (1957b): 148-153. Rabin, "Personality study in Israeli Kibbutzim," in B. Kaplan (ed.), *Studying Personality Cross-Culturally* (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1961B). R. Kohen-Raz, "Mental and Motor Development of Kibbutz, Institutionalized and Home-Reared Infants in Israel," *Child Development* 39 (1968): 489-504.

immaturity or that kibbutz adolescents were more hostile than non-kibbutz children, a former emphasis of Spiro. He also concluded that the children did not develop homogenized personalities, and in fact were quite variable in their differences from one another.

Kaffman⁴² who directs the child guidance clinic for the kibbutzim found in two studies that kibbutz children were less prey to mental disturbance and had no clinical entity of mental illness which was prevalent among them. He also notes that out of 3,000 emotionally disturbed kibbutz children which his clinic treated not one case of early childhood psychosis was found. This was attributed to the unique aspects of the educational and child-rearing program in the kibbutz. He also found that kibbutz children had fewer mental problems than non-kibbutz children. These conclusions are widely confirmed.⁴³ Other researchers have taken these hopeful facts further. Kohen-Raz's book outlines how emotionally-disturbed children are actually introduced from the outside into the kibbutz program and are greatly helped.⁴⁴

Conclusion

This examination of the educational purpose in the kibbutz and issues of creating a common ideology illustrates how deeply learning is a part of the larger environment in the society and how the special features of the kibbutz educational program work. I have included an honest assessment of advantages, strains, and problems of this program. As a highly integrated democratic society of the small cooperative community type, the kibbutz is an important example of how the educational program and the community as a total learning environment encourage the quality of life in the community. Yet, Spiro and Bettelheim and others generally agree that the kibbutz has not created the "new person." The utopian dream of unbridled unbothered and fully dedicated humans has not come true, if it is even desirable. Nevertheless, in certain critical areas the kibbutz has proved that childhood and society are deeply related, and that many positive experiences can be encouraged and negative outcomes eliminated by kibbutz child development.

RESUME

Le système d'éducation des kibboutz permet de maintenir la continuité de la société, d'éduquer et d'instruire les enfants grâce à: (1) le sens plus large de l'apprentissage dans la société des kibboutz: les enfants apprennent à collaborer dans la solidarité; (2) la similitude des principes d'éducation sociale: l'éducation est collective et communautaire, imprégnée d'un sentiment de coopération économique, et reliée à la communauté par le travail; (3) la structure du programme d'éducation sociale des enfants: fournir les moyens et les conseils pour atteindre l'intégration culturelle.

⁴²Mordeci Kaffman, "Characteristics of the Emotional Pathology of the Kibbutz Child," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 42 (July 1972): 692-709.

⁴³See also: A. Jarus, et al. (eds.), *Children and Families in Israel: Some Mental Health Perspectives* (New York: Gordon and Beach, 1970). Kaffman, Mordehai, "Evaluation of Emotional Disturbance in 403 Israeli Kibbutz Children," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 117 (1961): 732-738. Kaffman, Mordehai, "Children in the Kibbutz. Clinical Observation", in Jules H. Masserman (ed.), *Current Psychiatric Therapies*, vol. 3 (New York, Grune and Stratton, 1963), pp. 171-179. Kaffman, Mordehai, "A Comparison of Psychopathology: Israeli Children from Kibbutz and from Urban Surroundings," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 35 (1965): 509-520.

⁴⁴Revven Kohen-Raz, *From Chaos to Reality: Experiences in the Re-education of Emotionally Disturbed Immigrant Youth in Kibbutzim* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1972).