**Post October 7th: A New Paradigm for Global Jewish Education**

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Thomas Kuhn, in his classic book "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions", coined the term “paradigm shift” to describe a fundamental change in the basic assumptions and concepts within a particular scientific discipline, which occurs when existing paradigms are replaced by new ones. Kuhn's work has had a significant impact on the philosophy of science and has been widely discussed and debated in various academic fields.

Drawing on Kuhn’s writings, various psychologists and sociologists suggested a more nuanced phenomenon that they labelled “Paradigm Collapse”. This development can be defined as a fundamental and often sudden breakdown or disintegration of a prevailing conceptual framework, belief system, or way of understanding the world. It occurs when new evidence, discoveries, or societal shifts challenge the core principles and assumptions upon which the existing paradigm is based, leading to its eventual abandonment or radical revision. This collapse may involve a profound re-evaluation of established norms, theories, or practices, paving the way for the emergence of alternative perspectives or paradigms. Ultimately, paradigm collapse represents a transformative moment in human understanding, reshaping intellectual, scientific, or cultural landscapes. It seems abundantly clear that the earthshaking events of October 7th, 2023 caused a paradigm collapse in Jewish life in general, and Jewish education in particular. Over the course of the 4-day Mission for Global Jewish Education Leaders in January 2024, these vision- driven leaders wrestled with this paradigm collapse and its implications for Jewish education worldwide. This Mission was sponsored by The Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combatting Antisemitism, UnitEd, the World Zionist Organization, the Pincus Fund, and the Koret Center, and brought together 32 esteemed Jewish educators from twelve countries, highlighting the significance of cross-cultural learning and collaboration. These educators underscored the importance of learning about other communities’ accomplishments and challenges, and thereby forming a robust global network that will play a crucial role in strengthening Jewish identity and continuity. The Mission was titled: “In the Wake of The Swords of Iron War: Exploring New Questions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Jewish Education”, and attempted to attain a deeper understanding of the paradigm collapse, and possible strategies to imagine new directions

The forum unanimously agreed that the need for fresh, innovative educational approaches to strengthen students’ Jewish identity is more urgent than ever. These new paradigms can help address emerging challenges. There was a shared belief that UnitEd is uniquely positioned to tackle these challenges, and the existing infrastructures it has developed are both effective and impactful. At the same time, these educators emphasized the importance of reimagining the content, pedagogical approaches, and change processes that were in place prior to October 7th.In the following pages, we provide a brief overview of UnitEd’s mission, goals, and current activities, before delving into key areas inspired by the diverse range of activities, discussions, and inquiries from our January Mission. These areas are closely aligned with UnitEd's mission and ongoing initiatives within the Jewish community, and we are poised to invest in these areas, with the goal of significantly impacting the field.

UnitEd was initially founded as a joint venture between the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combatting Anti-Semitism and the Center for Education Technology (CET for short). After a few years, it moved to Herzog College, and currently stands on its own, as a separate NGO, in a direct partnership with the Ministry. Throughout the years and different partnerships, the goal of UnitEd has stayed the same – to strengthen Jewish identity, connection to Jewish communities and the state of Israel through empowering Jewish Day Schools.

This work is done in many different ways: Educator training, content and curriculum development, holistic school processes, teacher placement and more. Most importantly perhaps, all of UnitEd's projects are carried out in partnership with local organizations – the schools, networks and educators on the ground. The relationships that are fostered in this way, along with our global perch (UnitEd works across the Jewish world), allows us to promote strategic projects, working across regions and even internationally.

In the wake of October 7th and the Global Jewish Educators Leadership Mission, we have identified four key areas of focus for UnitEd in the coming years. Below, we briefly highlight some of the components within these areas.

1. **Cultivating Knowledge, Connection, and Meaningful Commitment to Israel among Our Students**

The events of October 7th have underscored Israel's central role in Jewish identity and its profound impact on Jews around the world. Educators must navigate these complex topics with purpose and conviction, fostering open dialogue while addressing Israel's history and present realities.

Teaching about Israel now requires a fresh approach that fosters personal commitment and ongoing engagement.

Students in Jewish schools must develop a deep understanding and appreciation of Israel, including its historical, cultural, and contemporary significance. They should recognize Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people and its central role in shaping Jewish identity and collective memory. It is crucial that students understand the historical context of the Zionist movement, the founding of the State in 1948, and the commitment to establishing Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel. They must also grasp the complexities of Israel's relationships with its neighbors and the ongoing challenges of maintaining statehood. Within this framework, Israel’s adherence to the highest moral standards should be highlighted, along with an in-depth discussion of the current war and its impact.

These topics should be presented with depth and care, encouraging a nuanced understanding of Israel's role in Jewish identity. Through thoughtful discussions and opportunities for reflection, educators can help students cultivate a deeper appreciation for Israel as a unifying force in Jewish life, promoting both a sense of peoplehood and a responsibility toward the local Jewish community.

~~Culturally, students should be exposed to Israel's rich heritage, spanning millennia of Jewish history intertwined with diverse influences from around the world. They should engage with Israeli literature, music, art, and cuisine, fostering a sense of connection to the vibrant tapestry of Israeli society. Students should be aware, even if only broadly, of Israel diverse society, attitudes and opinions, and how these play out in the public sphere.~~

Culturally, students should explore Israel's rich heritage, which spans millennia of Jewish history and reflects diverse global influences. Exposure to Israeli literature, music, art, and cuisine can help students feel connected to Israel's vibrant society. Students should also gain a broad awareness of Israel's diverse population, attitudes, and opinions, and how these play out in the public sphere.

The current war has sparked a wealth of cultural expressions, including art, music, poetry, and more. Integrating these works into Israel education can provide students with a profound understanding and appreciation of the evolving social, historical, national, and religious aspects. By exploring these cultural pieces, students gain insights into the complexities of Israeli society, fostering empathy and a more nuanced understanding of the country’s rich cultural life. . This approach will not only enrich students' understanding of Israel but will also encourage them to engage deeply with its multifaceted identity, promoting dialogue and connection within the broader community.

Ultimately, students should feel a deep sense of pride and responsibility toward Israel, understanding their role as stakeholders in its ongoing journey. They should be empowered to contribute positively to Israel's future, whether through advocacy, philanthropy, cultural exchange, or active participation in its growth and development. Above all, they should cultivate a love for Israel that is both informed and compassionate, rooted in a commitment to its flourishing as a Jewish and democratic state.

To achieve these goals, we must better equip our educators—not only with knowledge but also with the skills and tools needed to cultivate genuine connections with Israel in their students.

1. **Creating a global network of leading Jewish educators**

A global network for Jewish educators is indispensable for preserving heritage and fostering understanding. At its core, it fosters a sense of interconnectedness among educators, transcending geographical boundaries to create a cohesive community dedicated to the transmission of Jewish values, culture, and identity. In his piece in this volume, Dr. Gil Graff accurately captures the importance of the global Mission in the following way: “The Global Education Convening was a reminder of the value of interaction among and between Jews living in diverse communities.”

This network facilitates the exchange of knowledge, resources, and best practices, allowing educators to draw upon a rich tapestry of ideas and experiences. By sharing innovative teaching methodologies and curriculum designs, educators can adapt to diverse learning environments and cater to the evolving needs of their students.

Furthermore, a global network provides invaluable opportunities for collaboration and professional development. Educators can engage in meaningful dialogue, collaborate on research projects, and participate in training workshops to enhance their pedagogical skills and deepen their understanding of Jewish history, texts, and traditions.

UnitEd, situated in Israel, is poised to spearhead the creation and nurturing of a global network for Jewish educators. With a network spanning 40 countries and partnering with over 650 Jewish day schools, UnitEd bridges geographic, denominational, and ideological divides. Its mission is to collaborate closely with local Jewish educational institutions, equipping them with innovative tools and strategies for impactful Jewish education.

By fostering connections and sharing achievements and challenges, UnitEd aims to cultivate a robust global network essential for reinforcing Jewish identity and continuity. This network empowers educators to instill pride and belonging in students, fostering active engagement in Jewish life. Thus, beyond educational excellence, UnitEd's network serves as a catalyst for building resilient and vibrant Jewish communities worldwide.

In essence, a global network for Jewish educators is not only a vehicle for educational excellence but also a catalyst for building resilient and vibrant Jewish communities across the globe.

1. **Preparing Educational Leaders to Confront the Emerging Challenges**

In the wake of October 7th, Jewish educational institutions have undergone a period of introspection and adaptation, recognizing the need for a new approach to preparing educational leaders.This pivotal moment has highlighted the importance of equipping leaders with the skills and knowledge to navigate complex issues, foster unity, and cultivate a sense of belonging within the Jewish community, centered around a shared appreciation of Israel’s significance. Leaders should receive training in cultivating a positive Jewish identity, embracing pluralism, and implementing community-building strategies to ensure their schools provide welcoming and supportive environments for both students and the broader community.

. As Rabbi Craig Kacev poignantly argues in this volume, “The uncertainty in the wake of October 7th, much like the COVID pandemic, caught leaders in a situation they could not plan for and unfolding situations full of uncertainty and risk. It is in these situations that humble heroes stepped forward, exuding confidence, as was witnessed when we met with school leaders in Ofakim, while working in teams, remaining open to suggestions from colleagues.”

To achieve this, educational leaders must receive comprehensive training in crisis management and conflict resolution. The events of October 7th serve as a stark reminder of the potential for internal and external challenges to disrupt the educational environment. Leaders must be skilled at addressing sensitive topics, facilitating open dialogue, and fostering healing and reconciliation within their schools,

Additionally, educational leaders must be prepared to engage students in meaningful conversations about commitment, Jewish practices, and social justice. The events of October 7th have sparked renewed interest in exploring Jewish identity and connection to Israel, alongside broader questions of social responsibility and ethical leadership. Leaders should be trained to facilitate discussions on these topics, drawing from Jewish values and teachings to inspire students to contribute positively to their communities and the world at large.

Lastly, educational leaders must embrace innovation and adaptability in response to changing circumstances and emerging challenges. October 7th has highlighted the need for schools to be agile and responsive in their approach to education, whether through the adoption of new technologies, the development of interdisciplinary curriculum, or the implementation of experiential learning opportunities. Leaders should be encouraged to think creatively and collaboratively, seeking out new strategies and best practices to ensure the continued success and vitality of Jewish education in the years to come.

**4. Transforming the Jewish School into a Community**

As Alex Pomson points out in this volume, the ability of schools to engage with their communities beyond strictly "school activities" had a positive effect on new families transferring during Covid, and while there is yet no hard data on school transfers following October 7th, we can assume that would be true in this case as well.

This data point brings to the fore the importance and opportunity for Jewish Day Schools to step beyond "classic" school roles and functions, both internally and outwardly, in thinking of themselves more as communities than only educational institutions.

During Covid and its aftermath, emotional wellbeing became a global issue in education. Following October 7th, this issue became even more prominent for Jewish day schools around the world, which felt they had to address these issues on many levels –teachers and faculty, students and their families. The ability of schools to think of themselves as communities and act together towards shared goals is a stronger foundation for individual members to build their emotional wellbeing on, whatever their specific role may be,

Methodologically speaking – we should acknowledge the importance of "informal" or experiential education in strengthening Jewish identity, communal bonds and emotional wellbeing. While formal educational systems are geared towards more information-centered teaching, we should be utilizing other aspects of Jewish civilization and incorporate them into the daily life of the school, thus creating a robust Jewish environment for our students. schools can and should be more than the sum of their educational parts.

With the ongoing support of the Ministry for Diaspora affairs and combatting Antisemitism, and with our partners around the globe, we believe that, working in these areas, we will be able to make a positive and meaningful impact on the filed of Jewish education after October 7th.