



Speech given by the late Prof. Shlomo (Seymour) Fox at the inauguration of the School for Educational Leadership – October 27, 1992

The School for Educational Leadership was established because its founders believe that the way to significantly improve our educational system is to recruit, train and place very talented and committed young people in the key leadership positions in the field of education.

This assumption that a thousand creative and sophisticated educational leaders placed in key positions could guide the system to successfully meet the challenges that face our country in the next decades is a thesis that was carefully investigated before it was acted upon.

It all began in December 1990, when the Mandel Foundation (a private philanthropic foundation in Cleveland, Ohio) decided to review, to reconsider the program of its activities in Israel. This was the background for the meeting that place on December 21, 1990, between the Minister of Education, Mr. Zevulun Hammer, and the Chairman of the Board of the Mandel Associated Foundations, Mr. Morton Mandel. At that meeting the Minister and Mr. Mandel agreed that people, personnel are the key to success of all systems, be they large or small, whether they are governments, businesses, Ministries of Education, schools or classrooms. The Minister described the acute shortage of top people for positions in the Ministry of Education, in teacher training institutions, in systems that work with the Ministry such as ORT and AMAL, in the local city systems of education, the community centers, the system of informal education, the media, etc.

An idea emerged at that meeting to establish a place, an institution to meet this challenge. They decided to study the idea, its importance, its potential impact, its feasibility and its cost.

This study was immediately undertaken by the newly established Mandel Institute for the Advanced Study of Education in Jerusalem. It was a wonderful assignment that posed one special difficulty. There were few precedents to learn from, for the idea was to recruit mid-career people (who had enough educational experience to demonstrate leadership potential) and train them to assume the key educational positions in the country.

We (and I should immediately specify the members of the team within the Mandel Institute who undertook the assignment) led by Dr. Ami Bouganim, a senior researcher at the Institute and its members were Annette Hochstein, Director of the Institute, Professor Michael Inbar, a consultant to the Institute and myself. We interviewed hundreds of people in Israel, France, and the United States.



In France we learned that a large part of their success in developing an outstanding civil service could be traced back to the decision by Napoleon to establish a series of independent institutions (Ecoles) of various kinds beginning with the Ecole Normale Superior, whose purpose it was to train elites for the French educational system and reaching its climax with the Ecole Normale Administration, established in 1947 by De Galle and De Bras.

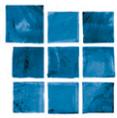
It was clear that the difference between our two countries would lead us to think of establishing a different kind of institution appropriate to a young country that is not centralized as is the case for France. We were, though, encouraged that an institute could be created that would be appropriate for Israel.

We studied the war colleges in the United States and Israel. We familiarized ourselves with the elite programs at universities for journalists, for physicians, and for educators. We learned a great deal from the Jerusalem Fellows, a program established in Israel by Bank Leumi and the Jewish Agency, to train leaders for Jewish education in the Diaspora. All in all, we interviewed close to 200 people and their enthusiastic support for the idea encouraged us to take the next step which was securing the funding necessary to undertake the program. We already had two partners, the Ministry of Education and the Mandel Associated Foundations. We realized that if we were to establish an institution with 40 students in each class, in their 30s and 40s (people with families) for a two year period of study and work and require them to devote fulltime, if we were to recruit outstanding faculty to teach, and individual tutors to prepare them for the future positions, then a large multi-year budget was required. The Mandel Foundation turned to the Doron Foundation in Israel, the Rich Foundation in France, and Felix Posen in England. Their generous and enthusiastic response made it possible to make the decision to establish a school for educational leadership.

During these first six months the structure and the program of the institution was also being planned. The school would recruit 40 students for a two year program. The Russian Aliyah, with its many scientists, academics, artists and engineers led us to consider a student body of 20 veteran Israelis and 20 olim (immigrants). We thought the Russians and other olim could infuse the system of education with new energy as well as help the system of education absorb the million olim that were expected to immigrate to Israel.

Though the students would be recruited by and large from the field of education it was proposed that the institution could also attract talented scientists, academics and army officers who wanted to contribute to Israeli society through education.

When the funding had been secured the founding partners decided that the time had come to establish a joint committee of representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Doron and Rich Foundations, the Posen Foundation and the Mandel Foundations to plan and oversee the establishment of the school. This committee met regularly as a group and decided on all



issues from recruitment to selection of students and faculty, the curriculum and the establishment of an Amuta and its various committees, such as the academic committee.

I wish I had the opportunity to describe the work of the committee and its many decisions. Let me give you but one example. Although we knew that there was a great shortage of candidates for the top positions we asked ourselves – what are the key positions? How many positions should be included as key positions? Who is filling them now?

The committee decided to commission a survey that would try and answer these questions. The results are fascinating. There are at least 1,000 positions that could determine what can happen in Israel's educational system. Professor Lawrence Cremin, the great historian of education, describes these positions as the gatekeepers, the people who decide whether change can or cannot be introduced into the system.

I believe I am reporting accurately when I say that this was a most rewarding experience for all the members. Together we fashioned the ideas and the steps that made it possible for us to open the School for Educational Leadership on September 1, 1992.

In February 1992, we placed two small advertisements in the newspapers and an article in the Russian-Israeli press. We received more than 2,000 inquiries, while 600 candidates actually filled out applications which involved writing three essays and obtaining three written recommendations. The committee interviewed more than 200 candidates and chose the current entering class. We recruited what we believed to be an outstanding faculty that will guide the practical work as well as teach courses in the areas of education, in policy studies, and the humanities and Judaica. Time does not permit me to describe the program except to say that at the school the students study together in the areas of education, Judaica, the humanities and policy studies. Each student is now choosing an area of specialization where he hopes to assume a leadership position upon graduation from the program. This will require practical work, apprenticeships, individual research and group projects, all guided by a tutor. The students are encouraged to enroll at universities or yeshivot to enrich their background and prepare them for the future positions. The school has made available courses, seminars and workshops in languages (Hebrew for Russians, English for some of the Israelis), in computer literacy, in management budgeting, etc.

Madame Minister, Shulamit Aloni, we began on September 1 with twenty promising fellows, which include two Russians. On November 1 we begin a Mechina – that will help prepare the students in Hebrew, the system of education and Israeli society – for eleven Russian olim, whom we hope will be able to join the school at a later date as fulltime students.

Though we have had so many outstanding applicants we decided to begin with less than 40 so as to learn how to establish the program with a smaller group.



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בית ספר מנדל למנהיגות חינוכית

Mandel School for Educational Leadership

A joint venture with the Ministry of Education

These students are committed for two years of fulltime work and studies and they are able to do so because of the fellowships awarded to them.

Madame Minister, since you undertook your position you have been a source of great encouragement to us. Twenty students in the school and eleven students in the Mechina come from a variety of backgrounds. They are religious and non-religious. They are preparing themselves to work in science, education, in administration, in curriculum development, in the teaching of the humanities and of Judaica, in building new institutions that will serve as demonstration centers for open education, in informal education and in the use of the arts and media for education.

They come from Haifa and Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Rehovot... They come from Leningrad and Moscow and Kiev.

We believe you'll come to know them and develop close working relationships with them. Today we are honored that you are officially opening the institution and its first school year.

Established by the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation