



**January 2008**

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**Invitation to a  
Round Table forum  
with  
Sharon Feiman-Nemser**

**Mandel Professor of Jewish Education at Brandeis University**

**"Teacher Learning"**

**Thursday 10th January, 10:30 am, Mandel Leadership Institute**

Dr. Jen Glaser at [jen@mli.org.il](mailto:jen@mli.org.il) or +972-2-568-8840.

## The Vision is Already Here: e-Culture meets Education at MLI



In an attempt to delve deeper into the value and significance of modern-day internet institutions such as Wikipedia, Facebook, blogs and YouTube, this month Mandel staff, faculty and fellows attended the opening lecture of a new enrichment lecture series entitled “e-vision: The vision is already here”.

“We wanted to bring the Mandel community closer to matters of technological vision,” says Irit Katsernov, the new head of MLI’s Information Technology Department, responsible for initiating and organizing the lecture series.

“There is a tendency among many people to view information systems as solely a technical means, when actually we are speaking about the field to which all of our futures are inextricably tied, even dependent upon,” Katsernov adds. The lecture series is therefore intended to create interest, exposure, cooperation and inspiration for development at the Mandel Leadership Institute.

The first lecture in the series was given by Dr. Susan Hazan, Curator of New Media and Head of the Internet Office at [The Israel Museum, Jerusalem](#). Hazan is an international expert in “Network Culture” and the fascinating virtual world of the Second Life, and author of numerous publications.

"Second life" (SL), explains Dr. Hazan, is an internet-based virtual world launched in 2003, whose impact is so great that a recent ‘NewsLife’ headline demanded: “Why are millions of healthy people choosing to live their lives online?”

Those who think that Second Life is just another computer game couldn’t be more mistaken. Whatever this new virtual world may mean for us (and the approx. 8 million people registered), it is important enough that all major media, commercial, educational, cultural and some political bodies are representing themselves there. Over 500 universities have a presence in the Second Life, including Harvard, which runs an extension school for Second Life participants.

Educational institutions want to exist in the "Second Life" virtual world in order to expand their social-professional network. Hazan doesn’t mince her words on the matter: “If you’re not there, you’re not there”, she says, expressing her clear view that the future of educational activity is intertwined with information technology and virtual life.

Katsernov also sees a vital relationship between the field of Information Technology and education today and in the future:

“Currently, the world is speaking in terms of the 'information society' and the 'information economy'. Information technology in its broader sense is changing and will change major elements of educational practice. If education systems are not suitably adapted to these changes, a lag with far-reaching social consequences will be created.”

The "e-vision lecture series" will continue to address advanced subjects in the field of technology including subjects such as e-inclusion (the reduction of digital gaps) and e-Education.

[For more information about Dr. Susan Hazan](#)

**Second Life** enables its users to interact with each other through motion avatars, meaning that they can explore, meet other users, socialize, participate in individual and group activities, create and trade items (virtual property) and services from one another.

## **Practice and Policy in the face of the Crisis in Education**



In November 2007, Prof. David Cohen, expert in the Policy of Education and member of the Mandel Foundation International Academic Advisory Committee, paid a timely visit to Israel. As Israel's education system appeared to be melting in the current climate of crisis, teachers were in turmoil and many professionals in the field were interested to hear what Prof. Cohen had to say, and if he had any solutions to offer. The Mandel Leadership Institute hosted two public forums focusing on Policy and Practice in Education in which Prof. Cohen presented his ideas to an audience of professionals and academics in the field of education, amongst them Israel Prize recipients, Prof. Haim Adler and Prof. Miriam Ben Peretz, who also took part in the preceding discussion.

Both forums focused in part on the relationship between practitioner and policy-maker, the communication between them and how this can affect the improvement of education.

“One of the most problematic features of this communication,” highlighted Cohen, “is that the practitioners themselves do not always have enough knowledge of what makes good teaching, therefore have very little authority to speak truth to power. In order to communicate effectively with policy-makers and parents, they need much more knowledge than that which they have currently. Greater knowledge and a more autonomous practitioner organization would greatly enhance the capability of relation of practitioners with policy-makers.”

Criticizing outcome-oriented policies, Cohen claimed that ‘accountability’, the new watchword for teaching quality, is “creating a downward spiral; a race to the bottom”, while only a trivial amount of money is spent on development and research to improve education.

### **What is the solution?**

Cohen claims that assumptions have been made in the past regarding money, incentives and organization as key instruments for the improvement of education, but the past 20 to 30 years have demonstrated that there are deep-rooted problems in public education that do not yield easily to those instruments.

He therefore places emphasis on research, stressing that the research needs to be greatly expanded in practice itself. Nonetheless, Cohen noted, that research alone is not the solution and could never solve the problem of underdevelopment of the ‘micro world’ in schools.

In his second lecture, which focused more specifically on the recent crisis in education in Israel, Cohen asserted, "Improvement is dependent upon practitioners;" claiming that the most effective change would involve professionals in education organizing themselves to be the principal agents of school improvement. "Without professional, practical knowledge and structures that can support and sustain this knowledge, macro-policy will not work," said Prof. Cohen. He mentioned organizations such as 'Ovnayim', initiated and run by Mandel graduates and 'Lesson Study' in Japan, as examples of such supportive structures.

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Prof. David K. Cohen,  
University of Michigan

David K. Cohen is John Dewey Collegiate Professor of Education, and Walter H. Annenberg Professor of Education Policy at The University of Michigan.

His current research interests include educational policy, the relations between policy and instruction, and the improvement of teaching. His past work includes studies of the effects of schooling, efforts to reform schools and teaching, the evaluation of educational experiments and large-scale intervention programs, and the relations between research and policy.

His publications include: *Usable Knowledge: Social Science and Social Problem Solving* (with C. E. Lindblom), *The Shopping Mall High School: Winners and Losers in the Educational Marketplace* (with A. G. Powell and E. Farrar), and *Learning Policy: When State Education Reform Works* (with Heather C. Hill).

He has received the American Educational Research Association's Award for Distinguished Contributions to Educational Research, and has been a member of several panels of the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences.

## **Commemorating the life and work of a remarkable educator**

*Pedagogy and Curriculum in Contemporary Jewish Education: A scholarly Conference in memory of Dr. Seymour Fox at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America*



“One could see from the number of participants and the ways in which they spoke, the breadth of Seymour’s influence,” said Dr. Eli Gottlieb, Director of the Mandel Institute, summing up the two-day scholarly conference in November. Attended by approximately 160 people, the conference focused on the issues and ideas associated with the late Prof. Seymour Fox, one of the founders of the Mandel initiatives in Israel.

“From the senior presenters who had known Seymour for thirty or forty years, to those who had only a brief meeting with him, it was clear that they were influenced by his thought and that he touched people’s lives.”

The chance to commemorate Fox came hand-in-hand with scholars presenting their own work in fields he developed, such as curriculum, leadership, research, institution building and vision.

Prof. Barry Holtz, colleague and friend of the Mandel Foundation and one of the organizers of the conference, praised the “outstanding group of presenters.”

“Prof. Fox’s presence loomed large over the conference and over the *content* of the conference’s deliberations. The core ideas that were discussed were very much in keeping with the concerns of Professor Fox’s career and he would have been gratified by the profound influence he had on the lives and work of so many.” added Holtz.

Indeed, those who knew Prof. Fox well deemed the conference a fitting commemoration. Dr. Daniel Marom, Director of the Visions of Jewish Education Project at the Mandel Leadership Institute described the conference as, “a very appropriate tribute to Seymour – both in terms of giving him the love and respect he deserves; and in terms of taking from him for the future; trying to draw on what to bequeath to all of us in the professional world of Jewish education.”

“Seymour’s memory is his living voice in our work, and this is the commemoration of his memory. That’s what everyone at the conference experienced,” said Marom.

Annette Hochstein, President of the Mandel Foundation-Israel, was a panelist in a reflective session on Seymour Fox's life and career, together with Alan Hoffman and David Finn.

"The conference was academically serious, warm, and elegantly-run," praised Hochstein. "Participants found comfort in the congregation of so many people who loved, respected and learned from Prof. Fox. Most importantly, there was powerful evidence that his teachings live amongst a generation of talented younger scholars and educators."

## **Lost in Translation: The Mandel Winter Consultation December 17th-21<sup>st</sup>**



Where do we face issues of translation in our professional practice? What kinds of literacy – if any at all – are preconditions for a flourishing Jewish life? To what extent does the existence of a Hebrew-speaking society ensure flourishing Jewish culture – if at all?

It was with questions such as these that participants in the Mandel Winter Consultation grappled throughout their time at the Mandel Institute in Jerusalem. The conference brought together a group of leading Jewish educational and social innovators currently helping to shape Jewish life in America, providing a forum for dialogue between them and the Mandel

Leadership Institute, which operates a number of programs for outstanding educational professionals in Israel and the Jewish world.

This winter, the Mandel Leadership Institute sought to examine with the participants how profound questions of contemporary Jewish life are played out in their work: how might big ideas and profound conceptualizations – whether modern and familiar or from other times and places – inform their work as Jewish educational and social innovators?

The Mandel Winter Consultation focused on one particular issue, common to the practice of all participants – that of translation. There were a number of questions on the agenda and more uncovered during the course of consultation, such as: What is lost in translation? How, if at all, can it be retrieved or compensated for? Participants addressed the question of obstacles to multilingual Judaism in America, what they are if they indeed exist and how to overcome them, should they wish to do so.



Dr. Ruth Calderon lectures the group

**For more information about the Mandel Winter Consultation, please email:  
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## **Getting to the Heart of the Matter**

*Principals of Jewish Day Schools, all Mandel Jerusalem Fellows Graduates, convene for enrichment and learning*

A group of Mandel Jerusalem Fellows graduates who head Jewish day schools across North America gathered in Manhattan November 12-14, 2007 to discuss "the Jewish character of the Jewish day school".

This focus group conference, organized by MLI faculty members Howie Deitcher and Danny Paller, grew out of a series of meetings conducted with members of this group over the past year-and-a-half. In these conversations principals noted that the ever-increasing managerial pressures of their jobs afford them little opportunity to reflect with colleagues on the deeper purpose and significance of the work, on ideological challenges they face, and on strategies for increasing day schools' impact on Jewish life.



Following an opening session by Dr. Eli Gottlieb, the participants went on to explore a number of themes with various scholars. Prof. Moshe Halbertal of Hebrew University and the Mandel Leadership Institute taught a 16th century text (by the Maharshal). The text raised pertinent questions for the group about authority, closure, and the pressure to systematize norms. A later session on the "Jewish vision of day schools", in which three members of the group – representing modern Orthodox, Conservative, and community day schools – discussed the challenges of identity-formation, community-building, and the new "trope" of organizational management.

Other sessions included a case presentation by Dr. Devora Steinmetz, founder of the Beit Rabban Day School in Manhattan, reviewing the pedagogy of a Beit Rabban Bible class, followed by participant-led case studies on incorporating Israel, the Jewish calendar, and staff collaboration into the day school culture.

Three other participants presented "Jewish day school in the context of community", which highlighted efforts to make Judaic study serious and sacred in an age of careerism (including the introduction of "religious counselors" at one school), parents' increasing delegation of responsibility to the schools, and the reality of growing competition among local Jewish day schools.

Over the two days, the group examined the challenges of leadership, the complexities of religious development in today's climate, and issues of inclusiveness and evaluation – almost all of which cut across ideological lines. Participants also

discussed next steps, including the idea of devising a "Jewish yardstick" which could be broadly used by day schools to do school self-assessment, and doing a site visit to one participant's school, with follow-up analysis and documentation.

Participants praised the effectiveness of the cross-ideological conversations, claiming the meeting raised educational concerns rarely discussed in North American practice. Another principal said, "It brought me into a language of professional expertise and commitment that is inspiring...I return to my school with a renewed sense of purpose."