מאיירס · ג'וינט · מכון ברוקדייל
MYERS · JDC · BROOKDALE INSTITUTE
مايرس · جوينت · معهد بروكديل

ENGELBERG CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Turning Point: Promoting Entrepreneurship and Preparation for Work among Youth at Risk
Evaluation Study

Liat Vazan-Sikron ◆ Brachi Ben Simon ◆ Paula Kahan-Strawczynski

FOUNDED IN 1974 · נוסד ב-1974

RESEARCH REPORT

RR-601-12

Related Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute Publications

Kahan-Strawczynski, P.; Yurovich, L. (with Gabi Hoffman). 2009. *School-to-Work Transition and Employment Programs for Youth and Young Adults at Risk in the U.S. and Other OECD Countries: Review of the Literature*. RR-521-09 (Hebrew)

Cohen-Navot, M.; Ellenbogen-Frankovits, S.; Reinfeld, T. *School Dropouts and School Disengagement.* RR-381-01 (Hebrew)

Vazan-Sikron, L.; Ben Simon, B.; Kahan-Strawczynski, P. 2011. *Derech Hamelech ("The King's Way") – Mentoring Youth at Risk as Preparation for Work Life: Evaluation Study*. RR-596-11 (Hebrew)

Executive Summary

1. Background

Turning Point (in Hebrew: *Nekudat Mifneh*) is the initiative of Ashalim. It brings together five programs addressing youth at risk (ages 15-18). It was established in 2006 to provide youth with ing suitable training and a variety of tools for integration into work. The five Turning Point programs are:

- ◆ **NFTE (Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship)** – a U.S. program imported by Ashalim and adapted to Israel, including a training course in business entrepreneurship of 40-65 study hours. It imparts knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship and setting up a business as leverage for developing learning and life skills. Its main task is the building of a business plan for an original product developed by a group of students and its presentation at local and national competitions. The program began in 2007 via the Dror Batei Hinukh NGO and is implemented in alternative education frameworks.

- ◆ **Reshatot (Networks)** – a 40-hour training course for working life, to teach skills and build networks in the job market. The program is based on the need for wise, planned job-searching, and on networking with people and organizations that may help overcome employment barriers. It began in 2008 via the Dror Batei Hinukh NGO.

- ◆ **Assinu Esek (It's a Deal)** – a program to set up and support business projects. The projects are managed and implemented by at-risk youth who are remunerated for their hours of work. One requirement of their studies is that they maintain contact with a treatment agency. The program began in 2003 and is implemented today by the Zionism 2000 NGO.

- ◆ **Derekh Hamelekh (King's Way)** – a program preparing youth for working life and employment integration (placement) through the relationship between mentor and mentored. The program has several tracks: personal mentoring, personal business mentoring (at the mentor's place of work), integration and support at the workplace, and professional training. The program began in 2006 via ELEM.

- ◆ **Universita Ba'am** – a study program designed to make university accessible to youth from low socio-economic levels. It offers introductory courses in four fields: law, medicine, business administration and psychology, as well as relevant field trips. At the end of the course, participants submit a final project and receive a university certificate. The program began in 2005 via Tel Aviv University. During the evaluation study, it was in the process of joining Turning Point and therefore omitted from the evaluation.

Ashalim helped with the development of the three programs of It's a Deal, Networks, and NFTE (the latter, as said, was developed in the U.S. and adapted to the Israeli context by Ashalim), and it entered the two other programs – King's Way and Universita Ba'am – as a partner.

Turning Point has two main goals:

- ◆ To provide professionals and services with knowledge on the preparations for working life
- ◆ To create effective, attractive methods of work with youth at risk.

i

Turning Point is implemented in cooperation with government sectors (the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services [MSASS], the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Labor, the Fund for Development of Services for Children and Youth at Risk at the National Insurance Institute [NII]); the business sector (the First International Bank), the Third Sector (Matan – Investing in the Community), school networks (ORT, Branco Weiss and Dror Batei Hinukh), and NGOs implementing the various programs (ELEM, Dror Batei Hinukh, Zionism 2000 and project implementers at It's a Deal).

The present study included the evaluations of NFTE and King's Way – the main findings of which may be found in the appendices below and the publications on the Brookdale website.

2. Study Design and Goals

At Ashalim's request, in 2009-10 the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute conducted an evaluation study of Turning Point, carried out by the Engelberg Center for Children and Youth. The study had a complex design that included several stages and goals :

1. To examine in depth two of the programs implemented by Turning Point – NFTE and King's Way – in terms of implementation and perceived contributions for youth and program implementers.

2. To conduct an integrative analysis of Turning Point programs and examine their common features so as to point to the strengths and challenges of the umbrella organization

3. To examine the contribution of Turning Point to services system for youth at risk, in terms of both conceptualizing the importance of preparing for work life and the practical aspects of developing the field of employment in services.

Two reports have already been published that address goal 1 (abstracts of these reports – on the NFTE and King's Way programs - may be found in the appendices). This report focuses on goals 2 and 3.

The study took two years (2009-10) and the data were collected in two stages. The first stage examined the background to and implementation of the program. The second stage examined developments in the assimilation of the program, its strengths, contributions and implementation difficulties. Data were obtained in face-to-face interviews with key figures connected to the program. Use was also made of a review of the literature conducted by the Brookdale Institute for Ashalim on transition-to-work programs.[1]

3. Findings

3.1 Working Principles of Turning Point

Despite the range of activities relating to preparations for working life, Turning Point programs share several common principles. This section presents the principles and their application at Turning Point.

---

[1] Kahan-Strawczynski and Yurovich, 2009.

- ***Target population*** – All Turning Point programs address youth at risk: dropouts or potential dropouts from regular schools and youth treated by social services.

- ***Connection between school and work*** – In all the programs, the approach to employment constitutes an educational-therapeutic tool to raise youth awareness of the importance of education for their future integration into the employment market and, perhaps, also to encourage them to return to an educational setting.

- ***Teaching soft skills*** – The programs focus on imparting soft skills for working life, such as retaining a job, accepting responsibility and meeting schedules, as well as social skills such as teamwork.

- ***Support of an adolescent by a "significant" adult*** – Another common area is the reliance on a supportive adult who guides an adolescent towards adulthood. In King's Way, these are mentors and employers who integrate the youngsters into work; at NFTE and Networks, these are course instructors; and at It's a Deal, these are business and therapy coordinators.

- ***Group work*** – At Turning Point, the group is perceived as the main unit of work. This makes it possible to work with the youth effectively and impart teamwork skills.

- ***Volunteering*** – Volunteering is an important value of the programs, all of which make sure to include mature volunteers. Thus, King's Way has a volunteer mentor; NFTE has volunteers from the First International Bank who both provide consultation to instructors and youth on building a business plan and serve as competition judges; and It's a Deal cooperates with an accounting firm, which volunteered to review the project business plans.

- ***Cooperation with youth services*** – Turning Point cooperates with organizations from different sectors: both youth services and the business sector. The First International Bank is a partner in financing the programs and providing consultation to teachers at NFTE and Networks. At It's a Deal and Kings Way, contact with local business partners is an integral part of the work with youth and effort is invested in expanding the number of employers prepared to cooperate with the program.

These principles, presented by the coordinators and directors, were examined against working principles of similar programs of preparation for employment in the U.S. and in OECD countries, and against factors of success that were found in evaluations of such programs cited in the professional literature (Kahan-Strawczynski and Yurovich, 2009). The factors of success that were found to resemble the operating principles of Turning Point were: **imparting soft skills and the lending of support by a significant adult**. In addition, one principle of the preparation-for-work program is the **creation of a positive peer culture**, which does come to the fore in the group work at Turning Point.

The working principles cited in the literature are found at Turning Point, but they do not receive full expression. We shall now present these and their applications at Turning Point:

Empowering youth through volunteering – As said, the question of volunteering is an important value in the programs comprising Turning Point. The transition-to-work programs also

emphasized the importance of volunteering: however, it relates to the empowerment of youth via integration in community projects as individuals contributing to society.

Cooperation with the business sector in developing and implementing programs – Despite the cooperation with the business sector found at Turning Point, it relates mainly to the program's implementation rather than the stages of planning.

Comprehensiveness – Responding to youth with a package of programs preparing for working life (for example, the completion of 12 years of schooling) is both a principle and factor of success. This is not relevant to Turning Point, which offers only a complementary response to youth already being treated by educational-therapeutic services, as needed.

Long-Term follow-up and support – According to the literature, this component marks a factor of program success, but it is neither a formal nor structured part of Turning Point. It does feature in some programs (It's a Deal and King's Way) when, however, it is based on the private initiative of mentoring adults.

Individual attention – This component is also a factor of success of many programs worldwide and not a formal part of Turning Point. In some programs, each participant pursues a track tailored to her/his needs, wishes, pace of progress and job position. However, in most programs, as said, the group is the main point of reference.

An additional principle not fully implemented in Turning Point is comprehensiveness – providing comprehensive responses to youth as a package preparing them for the working world (e.g.: completion of education for participants lacking 12 years of schooling etc.). This principle is also a factor of success of the programs. At the same time, it is not relevant to Turning Point programs, which provide a supplementary response to youth handled by services in therapeutic and educational areas, as needed.

3.2 Interaction of Turning Point Programs

Since Turning Point comprises several programs, we examined their interaction. According to program coordinators, the main contact was between programs implemented by Ashalim – NFTE and Networks. Program staff worked together to construct strategies. Similarly, following the recommendation of the research team to strengthen program cooperation, a decision was taken to unify the staff; today, a single staff is responsible for implementing both programs. Regarding other programs, there are no ongoing patterns of joint staff work. However, work has begun on creating the infrastructure to construct modes of mutual assistance. Another aspect of interaction is reflected by the programs sharing content: knowledge is imparted to participants of one program in areas dealt with by another program. Thus, for instance, community coordinators and mentors at King's Way were trained through a special module of Networks, adapted for individual work with youth.

Note that because the programs are implemented by different organizations using different work patterns, it is difficult to connect between them.

3.3 Processes and Issues in the Implementation of Turning Point

Two major issues emerged in the current implementation:

- ◆ *The positioning of Turning Point*: a package of programs or a continuum of programs – Turning Point has positioned itself in two ways: on the one hand, it offers a package of programs preparing youth for the transition to work; on the other, it aspires to present a consolidated concept and develop a work theory in this area. This dual positioning has a marketing advantage: while every service may choose the programs suited to its needs and the needs of its target population, the fact of the broader program makes it more attractive to external parties – for marketing and fundraising, and promoting the employment field as a relevant tool in working with youth at risk.

  It emerged from the interviews that Turning Point staff struggled with the question of maintaining the format of a package of programs or presenting them as a consolidated track in preparation for working life; one on which adolescents take their first steps in programs such as Networks and conclude with a program of actual work experience, such as It's a Deal. In practical terms, this means choosing between integrating many youngsters in a single program or allowing a few youngsters to try the range of programs offered by Turning Point.

- ◆ *The process of program assimilation and limiting Ashalim's responsibility for financing and implementation* – The gradual process of scaling down includes activities to ensure program continuation while transferring responsibility from Ashalim to an external party. Each program is at a different stage of the process. At It's a Deal and King's Way, which are implemented by other organizations, Ashalim currently participates in the steering committee, offers consultation and shares knowledge. In contrast, at NFTE and Networks, the decision was to continue Ashalim's management until 2013 but, at the same time, take steps to ensure continued program implementation in services after Ashalim's exit. These steps apply to the levels of the head office, through service participation in program funding (remuneration to instructors and auxiliary expenses for enrichment activities) and of the field, through working with service representatives. For example, at Kidum Noar (Youth Advancement Section, Youth and Society Division, Ministry of Education), senior service/network facilitators have already been appointed and are responsible for marketing the program in their own organizations, and lending instructors ongoing support and guidance. In other services, reportedly, the topic is in process of introduction.

3.4 The Contribution of Turning Point to Youth Services

The contribution of Turning Point to youth services was examined through interviews with leading managers of services for youth at risk in Israel. They were asked to present the employment responses at their own services, report on missing components, and note what they

perceived as the contribution of Turning Point.[2] The contribution to youth was examined also in the evaluation studies of programs operating as part of Turning Point (see Appendix I, Table 1.)

Existing service components – There are three types of programs in the employment field, as reported by service directors:

- *Preparing for working life* – Most programs offer individual or group interventions that include acquaintance with the labor market, job-search skills, and work norms. Sometimes vocational diagnostics are offered for purposes of integration into future training or employment.

- *Vocational training* – Most of the services supply training for specific areas of employment. These are generally offered in conjunction with the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor. At the same time, directors reported a lack of comprehensive training adapted to the specific needs of youth at risk, and noted the importance of finding ways to integrate school dropouts into employment training tracks.

- *Job integration and placement* – Only a few services offer the component of job placement and mostly, these are for young people over the age of 18 years. Directors noted the limited number of workplaces that absorb youth and provide help and support.

The directors also related to components missing from the programs. One is the need to train staff or hire suitable manpower for the vocational area of services, which would allow for responses within the service itself and thereby increase the exposure of adolescents to them. Also noted was a lack of specific budgets to develop the area of employment, which would make it possible to train staff, recruit suitable manpower and conduct vocational diagnostics.

In light of the existing situation at services preparing youth for working life, directors noted the significant contribution of Turning Point to youth services:

- *Expanding the repertoire of service responses for youth* – Turning Point was said to introduce new topics (e.g., entrepreneurship via NFTE), and improve the handling of existing topics (preparing for working life via Networks). In addition, it was cited as introducing components of response previously lacking, such as personal mentoring and support, and developing vocational training in new areas.

- *Expanding the extent of employment interventions* – Different services reported increased activity in the area following the participation of Ashalim, which provided funding and manpower.

- *Providing knowledge and professional support* to services in the area of employment – Due to the expansion of knowledge in the area of employment, the program was able to supply

---

[2] Note that the study does not map existing services programs of youth employment but, as said, is based on the reports of directors of services for youth at risk in Israel, at MSASS (Juvenile Probation Service, the Service for Youth and Young Adults, the Service for Girls and Young Women and Youth Protection), the Ministry of Education (Kidum Noar Youth Advancement Section), the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor (Youth Department, Division of Vocational Training), and the National Insurance Institute(the Fund for Developing Services for Children and Youth at Risk) .

services with the professional knowledge that it had acquired and with professional support in the field. Furthermore, professionalization enabled services to implement these tools among additional populations or areas.

◆ *Creating inter-service dialogue and partnerships* in the area of youth employment – The participation of representatives of partner services and programs on steering committees helped initiate dialogue and create additional contacts.

4. Programmatic Directions

The main goal of Turning Point is to introduce into services for youth at risk the concepts, knowledge and tools of transition-to-work programs. During the writing of this report, Turning Point was functioning on two planes: the continued development and conceptualization of additional areas that may be integrated into the program, to expand and deepen it; and the program's assimilation by services in advent of Ashalim's scaling down. The programmatic directions below suggest ways to continue implementing the program in the context of both processes.

4.1 Directions to Continue Developing the Program

Adding Missing Responses to Services

◆ *Helping services adapt and upgrade vocational training for youth at risk* while adopting the working principles in place at NFTE and Networks, which are considered successful: the use of experiential learning and group work

◆ *Training staff at youth services in the areas of preparing for working life* – in this context, it is possible to offer the tools and knowledge accumulated in the work of programs functioning at Turning Point:

- The Networks program may be used as a platform to create a basic training structure for service staff on preparation for working life.
- Knowledge may be disseminated at the services on youth job placement, recruiting employers, guiding employers in their relationships with working youth, and lending them support.

Directions to Continue Developing Work Principles at Turning Point

◆ *Introducing the component of follow-up of youth over time* – This is a significant factor of success of many programs dealing with the transition to work.

◆ *Continued recruitment and involvement of the business sector* – This is for both upgrading existing programs and mainly in processes of developing new programs.

◆ *Continued teambuilding of Turning Point staff* – For all programs, thought should be given to continued teambuilding, the institutionalization of work patterns, the interaction of programs, and broader conceptualization of the employment area.

- ◆ *Documentation of program knowledge and working modes* – This is a way to institutionalize and disseminate the knowledge and experience accumulated in programs of working with youth in situations of risk in the area of employment.

Directions to Continue Formulating Strategies for Handover of Responsibility to Services
The three additional years of Ashalim's management of NFTE and Networks may be devoted not only to expanding and deepening the programs in the field, but to formulating structured thinking about the process of scaling down; this process would relate to the desirable elements to be introduced into services (knowledge, programs or a combination of the two) and to formulating a strategy to translate the thinking into practice.

4.2 Summary and Use of Findings
The study findings were presented to program staff and the steering committee, contributing to improved work processes in both the umbrella program and the programs evaluated in depth. Thus, for example, based on the findings, Turning Point took steps to build a unified staff that together would lead the programs of NFTE and Networks while at King's Way, the work modes were reported to be unified and the processes of volunteer support improved.

Table of Contents