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Ackerman, Walter, 1990.

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Dilettante approach to the education crisis

Walter I. Ackerman

NO PARTICULAR expertise is required to understand why issues related to peace and security and economics dominate debate and discussion in the current election campaign. The public correctly senses that the policies of the next government in these two critical areas will affect every one of us in countless ways. Concentrating on these issues, however, exacts a heavy toll; many other problems in our society are neglected as a consequence and do not receive the attention their importance warrants. Education is a case in point.

Even a casual reading of the press in recent months is sufficient to justify the conclusion that Israel's education system – from the elementary schools to the universities – is deep in crisis. The share of the gross national product (GNP) allocated to education fell from an average of 8.3 per cent during the five-year period from 1981 to 1986 to 7.8 per cent for the 1986-1987 school year.

As a result, elementary, junior-high and high schools have been forced to reduce hours of direct instruction. Time allotted to key subjects, remedial programmes and enrichment activities have been severely curtailed. The system still counts an intolerably high number of teachers who lack proper certification and principals without academic degrees. Teacher colleges do not attract the best and the brightest of our young people – for understandable reasons. A shortage of qualified teachers in the natural sciences, among other factors, has spurred the spread of "grey education" and other practices that widen the gap between those who have and those who don't.

The strikes that disrupted the opening of the current academic year are symptomatic of the malaise in our universities – a deterioration of standards and a failing ability to maintain the high quality of research and instruction essential to our country's existence and development.

The testimony of an elementary-school principal provides graphic support to those who fear the declining quality of the country's schools: "Since I became principal here eight years ago, there has been a continual decline in the number of instructional hours budgeted for the school ...Until four years ago we were able to offer remedial instruction in English, Math and Hebrew to our weaker pupils and enrichment classes to the more able...in grades seven and eight, classes were divided into small groups for reading...We've had to cut all that out...We used to have a language centre that worked with half of a class at a time – it's difficult to keep track of each pupil's progress in a class of forty children. I can't do that any more. I get a certain number of hours for each class; it's hardly enough to meet the minimum required for arithmetic, Bible, English and Hebrew." *(Ha'aretz,* 30.9.88).

CONSIDERING that the calibre of a nation's schools is critical to its growth and development, circumstances such as those cited above demand a public airing of the ills besetting the system together with comprehensive proposals that will guarantee the right of every citizen to an education of quality and provide the country with a pool of highly trained manpower.

To date we have neither!

An uneven flow of information – newspaper articles, radio reports, occasional television programmes and personal experience – makes it extremely difficult to determine exactly what goes on in our schools. We have no equivalent to *A Nation at Risk*, a report to the people of America on the state of their schools.

A sampling of campaign literature reflects a similarly piecemeal approach. References to education are buried deep in party platforms and other publications. In general they address single issues – tuition-free university education; an extended school day; provisions for children of working parents during vacation periods; income-tax deductions for families whose work pattern requires that their children be enrolled in day-care centres, nursery schools and summer camps; a promise to work toward the rehabilitation of institutions of higher learning; a commitment to an educational system that fosters freedom of thought, scientific knowledge, creativity and tolerance.

These are each isolated items, which, for all their individual importance, fall far short of dealing with fundamental problems. The present structure and functioning of the system is taken as a given that only requires some tightening. It is difficult to come across a programme that questions basic assumptions, lists details and attends to the consequences, economic and otherwise, of its implementation.

The lack of serious public debate about education is something of an anomaly in a society created by a nation whose tradition values learning so highly. Paradoxically, educators themselves may have contributed to this unhappy state of affairs. The cumbersome machinery of a centralized system, manned by officials seemingly unaccountable to anyone, raises an almost impenetrable wall between the Ministry of Education and the public it is intended to serve. Municipal offices of education, especially in large cities, are only slightly more accessible. In spite of provisions of a law guaranteeing them a voice in curricular decisions, parents are only rarely invited to participate in discussions of substance. Only the most persistent and dedicated parent groups can find their way to influence. Little seems to have changed since *Asefat Hamorim*, the first teacher's organization in the country, declared, almost 100 years ago, "We have no need or interest in the ideas and opinions of the parents...we will decide how the school should function."

No less important a factor is the myth that maintains that education is somehow above politics. The State Education Act of 1953, which abolished the party-controlled "trend system," contributed to the belief that educational policy is determined by some neutral agency free of narrow partisan interest. This, of course, is nonsense. There is no significant educational policy anywhere that is framed apart from a political perspective and an ideological orientation.

Political leaders who celebrate the virtues of education but do not encourage public scrutiny of concrete proposals do the culture of democracy a great disservice. Worse than that – they mortgage the future of our country.

The writer is Shane Family Professor of Education, Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

aki/6MN-W

W. Ackerman

THE STRUCTURE OF JEWISH EDUCATION IN THE U.S.

by Walter Ackerman

The paper will attempt to describe and analyze the structure of Jewish education in the United States, its development and functioning from the beginnings until the present time. The purpose is to suggest direction for the future. The linear scheme presented below is a framework; as the study progresses, it may take a different form.

I. Beginning
   1. Private/individual effort
   2. Public-institutional, organizational

II. Towards Community Responsibility
   1. The ideology of community responsibility -- roots, circumstances, proponents
   2. The New York Kehillot and the Bureau of Jewish Education
   3. The Bureau of Jewish Education in Boston
   4. The spread of bureaus
      a) rationale
      b) funding
      c) functions
   5. Role of federation
   6. American Association for Jewish Education.

III. Professional Organizations and Their Relationship to Education Agencies

IV. Synagogue Commissions and Other National Agencies
   1. Rationale
   2. Function
   3. Relationship to other agencies

V. Place of Agencies in Informal Education
   1. Types
   2. Functions
   3. Relationship

VI. Summary and Implications

Changing trends - new role of Fed's - impact on central agencies? Linkage to dual educ. institutions?

file Ackerman

Brandeis University

Philip W. Lown School of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies

Benjamin S. Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service 617-736-2990

Waltham, Massachusetts 02254-9110

TO: MARK GURVIS

FROM: JOE REIMER 4/3/90

RE: W. ACKERMAN'S "THE STRUCTURE OF JEWISH EDUCATION"

I read Professor Ackerman's paper with great interest. It certainly elicited much reaction which I will try to capture in these notes.

1) While the description of structure offered in the opening paragraph may well describe some structures, I'd suggest a possible set of structures that evolve (as part of a system) that are not as clearly or consciously goal-oriented as suggested here. Family structures would be one example. My point in practical terms is what Susan Shevitz calls "organized chaos" -- that some situations that look non-structured are examples of "organized chaos": seeming disorder that is structured around other than rational, linear principles. If Jewish education "is without a compelling framework", it does not necessarily follow that each of its units are "autonomous" and "free to develop as it sees fit." By analogy: two independent nations living side by side without even diplomatic relations (e.g. Israel and Syria in Lebanon) may not have a "framework" for working out their relations, but yet may exist in a "structure" such that each knows that its behavior will activate a reciprocal reaction from its neighbor and so heavily influence one another. The same may be true for several synagogues in one community or two communities within the same geographic area, or several training institutions in one field. "Lacking all power of enforcement" does not equal "being without mutual influence". If there is no power of enforcement in Jewish education, there may yet be mutual influence.

2) Is something missing between pp. 3 & 4? -- because I miss the continuity at that point. When halfway down p. 4, the author writes "A suggestive alternative to the pattern we know today...", I'm not sure he's spelled out that pattern, or something is missing from my copy?

3) a) On p.7, in writing wonderfully about the curious relation between BJE's and denominational commissions, the author makes two statements I find unclear: (1) In what sense did the "statements of broad educational policy" become "a standard by which the work of individual schools may be judged"? Does he mean that is their intended or actual objective? In whose eyes are they a standard? What is the relation between a central agency's setting a standard and the "autonomy" of the individual unit?

b) Which or what kind of "transcendent authority" is alluded to at the end of the third paragraph? The reference is too elliptical for me to understand as written.

4) On p. 8, the issue of setting standards arises again. While the colleges may once have set standards, I doubt that they still do so today. Is the author suggesting that as their currently appropriate role? If so, why and how? Also, is he suggesting on the same page that bureaus are not the appropriate address for in-service training? Should universities be looked to for in-service? This quick reference is alluring, but not well-developed.

5) On p. 9: I miss much of the point about Israeli agencies. The paragraph says too much too briefly such that it simply passes me by. I also wonder if the word in the third line is "personnel" or "personal".

6) On p. 10, I cannot be satisfied with the quick, dismissive treatment of CAJE. I'm neither a CAJE member nor supporter, but I cannot see how all that can be said about CAJE is that it is not a professional organization. First, I am not clear as to what kind of teacher's organization the author has in mind (teacher unions)? Second, the founding and spread of CAJE, to which he himself alludes on p. 15, begs interpretation. With Agudat Hamorim only a historical memory, with denominational bodies only weak sisters, how can the growth of CAJE be dismissed in one line? Does it not tell us something of value and interest about the structure of Jewish education in the last decade? Does it not relate to the later discussion of federations and to the ongoing discussion of national-local interaction?

7) On p. 13, I like very much the author's attempt to suggest contacts between "the two worlds" of formal and informal education. But in paragraph 3, who is the "we" referred to twice? And more broadly, what does the general lack of contact tell us about the structure of Jewish education? Is the structure -- such as it is -- primarily designed for formal education? Are there more systemic ways to think about how the structure might evolve to be more inclusive? Is that a specific federation agenda?

8) The final thoughts about planning not being a "neutral" activity are crucial. Yet the full implications of that -- which I think essential for this Commission -- are not spelled out. Please do not leave us without further elaboration on this point. (Is the last sentence on p. 14 a healthy one?)

In summary, I feel Professor Ackerman's paper is full of promising insights on the structure of Jewish education, but is too brief and often elliptical to be fully satisfying. I'd particularly wish fuller treatments of current phenomena - such as CAJE and Federation involvement and their relation to the <u>evolving</u> structure of Jewish education.

JR:ls

* * * * *

Mark:

I've carefully read and reviewed B. Reisman's paper. I think it is too long and needs some re-ordering to help the reader through. Bernie may draft me to help in that editing.

Joe

MEMO TO: Annette Hochstein

FROM: Mark Gurvis

DATE: April 4, 1990

SUBJECT: Reaction to Ackerman and Reisman Papers

I have gotten initial reactions from Joe Reimer and Jon Woocher on the papers by Walter Ackerman and Bernie Reisman. You should note that we seem to be missing a sheet between pages 3 and 4 in Ackerman's paper that makes the reading somewhat difficult. I am appending those two sheets with this memo so you can identify what might be missing.

Reimer -- Comments are appended to the memo.

Woocher -- On Ackerman:

1. In general, Jon finds the paper to be a solid, judicious, intelligent overview.

2. He suggests a 1-2 page summary or synthesis which identifies the various issues raised throughout the paper and lists them in one place. All of these issues are open discussion topics in today's Jewish education scene and it would be helpful to bring them all into one place and focus attention upon them. Examples of issues surfaced by the paper include: the role and mission of central agencies; how federations can play a most useful role in the Jewish education arena; the lack of a professional association for teachers as a block in the professionalization of the field, etc.

3. There should be consistent references to JWB throughout the paper by the organization's current title. Similarly, on page 10 the National Council for Jewish Education is now called the Council for Jewish Education.

4. On page 8 there is reference to the Association of Institutions of Higher Learning in Jewish Education having "not yet succeeded in developing its defining characteristics." The Association is so new that it is not a matter of having tried and failed, but rather of a new organization in its nascent stages. Softening the language here would help.

5. On page 9, Jon feels the situation between Jewish academia and Jewish education is more complicated than is reflected in the paper. Many Jewish academics play substantial roles in adult Jewish education, as school board members, as consultants, etc. The formal connection may be lacking, but they are connected in many ways.

6. On page 10, Jon believes the reference to CAJE falls short of the mark. CAJE is an organization, not just an annual conference, and although it is not a teacher organization, it has emerged in the last decade as the major Jewish education organization involving teachers.

Woocher -- On Reisman:

1. In general, Jon believes Bernie has done a fairly thorough job providing a conceptual framework for understanding informal education.

2. He takes some issue with the characterizations of JESNA on page 40. JESNA is funded by allocations from individual federations; it is not funded by CJF. It should not be cast simply as the coordinating council of central agencies; it's mandate goes far beyond that role. The regional conferences each focused on a different thematic area--one on adult education and one on family education.

3. Jon believes the section on camping is disproportionately thin. Given the depth with which other settings and frameworks are explored, this critically important area suffers by comparison.

4. The reference to the number of colleges in the Association of Institutions of Higher Learning in Jewish Education is not consistent throughout the paper. In some places Bernie notes twelve colleges; in others, thirteen.

cc: Virginia F. Levi
Henry L. Zucker

file Ackerman

M E M O R A N D U M

April 4, 1990

TO: Mark Gurvis

FROM: Herman D. Stein

RE: Paper from Walter Ackerman

I find this a most valuable paper. Ackerman has organized his material by various structural patterns, rather than strictly by history. This makes the time periods somewhat confusing, but not enough to mar the basic analysis.

Some Comments:

At the bottom of page 9 and top of page 10, Ackerman makes a statement which, I believe, calls for some explanation:

> The way in which Israel is used as an educational resource depends on the understanding educators have of the place and meaning of an independent Jewish state in the life of the individual and the polity. Differences on this fundamental issue, even when muted by common agreement, color the entire pattern of relationships between Jewish education in North America and Israeli agencies working in the Diaspora.

The other shoe has to drop! How is the pattern colored, etc?

On page 10, there is reference to one of the requirements of a profession -- namely, the need for "public recognition of the unique and essential service they provide." This is a point that was not included in the paper on Jewish Education as a Profession, as I have previously noted. It would be well to maintain consistency on this score between the papers.

On page 13, Ackerman refers to the lack of contact between the school and non-school settings. Benderly, however, ran a Hebrew-speaking camp (Achvah) as far back as the late '20s and '30s. There was considerable contact between the two settings, since the camp's leaders were the administrators of the Bureau of Jewish Education. The establishment of this Hebrew-speaking camp was well before the end of World War II, which Ackerman, on page 15, notes was the beginning of this and other developments in Jewish education.

I am not quite sure what Ackerman means by "encouraging individual units in the system to adopt initiatives which celebrate their uniqueness" (page 15).

While I would have preferred a different organization of the material -- more clearly by historical periods -- Ackerman has produced some excellent insights into relationships among structure, regulation, planning, and communal responsibility.

HDS:mr

Ackerman

COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA

4500 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44103
216/391-8300

TO: Friends of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America

FROM: Morton L. Mandel, Chairman

DATE: May 16, 1990

The enclosed paper on "The Structure of Jewish Education" by Walter Ackerman, Shane Family Professor of Education at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, is one of a series of background papers prepared for the Commission on Jewish Education in North America.

One of the challenges in studying Jewish education is developing a concrete working understanding of this complex field. Ackerman's paper is a clear and concise analysis of the structure of Jewish education, and how various elements relate to each other.

As with our other papers, your comments will be most welcome. Please contact me or Mark Gurvis of our staff with any reactions you would like to share.

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Ackerman

COMMISSION
ON JEWISH EDUCATION
IN NORTH AMERICA

4500 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44103
216/391-8300

TO: Members of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America

FROM: Morton L. Mandel, Chairman

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Ackerman

COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA

4500 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44103
216/391-8300

May 16, 1990

Dear Friend:

The Commission on Jewish Education in North America has been working for two years to develop recommendations that will lead to improvements in Jewish education. At its final meeting in June 1990, the Commission is expected to review a draft of its final report, which will be issued in the months to follow.

In the course of our work, we commissioned a number of background papers to strengthen the knowledge base for our work and conclusions. I am pleased to share the first two papers with you now.

The first paper is by Dr. Isa Aron of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles. Entitled "Toward the Professionalism of Jewish Teaching," the paper explores the relationship of the concept of professionalism to the field of Jewish teaching.

The other paper enclosed is by Walter Ackerman, Shane Family Professor of Education at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, on "The Structure of Jewish Education." One of the challenges in studying Jewish education is developing a concrete working understanding of this complex field. Ackerman's paper is a clear and concise analysis of the structure of Jewish education, and how various elements relate to each other.

While these and the other papers commissioned reflect the work and ideas of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Commission, each report is believed to be a valuable contribution to our knowledge and understanding of Jewish education. In that spirit, the Commission is pleased to share these papers as a service to the community. The other papers will follow shortly, and our final report, when completed, will also be sent to you.

Please feel free to share your comments and reactions on this, or any of the papers to follow, with me, our staff or the authors.

Morton L. Mandel
Chairman

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COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA

The Structure of Jewish Education

Walter I. Ackerman

May 1990

Convened by Mandel Associated Foundations, JWB and JESNA in collaboration with CJF

The Structure of Jewish Education

Walter I. Ackerman

May 1990

A Report Submitted to
The Commission for Jewish Education in North America

Walter I. Ackerman is the Shane Family Professor of Education, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva, Israel.

The Commission on Jewish Education in North America was convened by the Mandel Associated Foundations, JWB and JESNA in collaboration with CJF. The ideas expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Commission.

For more information about the Commission, contact the Mandel Associated Foundations, 4500 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44103. Tel.: (216) 391-8300.

The Structure of Jewish Education

The idea of structure suggests order; it implies a definite pattern of arrangements or relationships. Structures are consciously created according to some preconceived plan or just evolve as experience and circumstance would seem to dictate. The development of structures, whether planned or accidental, rests on the assumption that objectives can be stated with reasonable clarity and that once that is done it is possible to identify the means and steps required for their attainment. Structures are intended to facilitate the process.

The formal relationships between parts which characterize structure do not always guarantee an actual acknowledgement of interdependence. It is a commonplace of large organizations that one branch derides the efforts of another and even questions its contribution to the common endeavor. The fact of the organization, however, forces them to work together. The function of management is to bring both of them to productive cooperation.

Jewish education, by contrast, is without a compelling framework. Whether understood as formal schooling only or as a complex process in which many different agencies may participate, it is a voluntary effort consisting of autonomous units each of which is free to develop as it sees fit. In the case of the former, the school is the basic entity. In congregational schools, the dominant type, final authority for their conduct is rested in the synagogue board which acts through an appointed or elected school committee. Non-congregational schools—large day schools—have their own boards and committees which are responsible for every aspect of the school's activities. Schools and other educational agencies are, of course, subject to all manner of influence. The way in which they react to events and circumstance, however, is ultimately a matter of their own choice. Where connections do exist they are an expression of good will and almost never "required." In all Jewish communities around the world excepting Israel, the relationships between the various bodies engaged in Jewish education, when at all existing, may best be likened to those which characterize a loosely coupled federation lacking all power of enforcement.

The development of Jewish education in the United States in the last hundred years or so may be understood in some senses as an attempt to bring some order

and standardization into an area of public activity given perhaps naturally to separatism. One of the earliest examples of this tendency is the public examinations in various school subjects—Hebrew, Bible, and History—sponsored by the Young Men's Hebrew Association of New York beginning in 1875 and continuing until the end of the century. The seventy students who were tested in 1876 came from all-day schools, afternoon schools, two-day-a-week schools and Sabbath schools. While the ostensible purpose of the examinations, reported in detail in the Jewish press, was to encourage attendance at a Jewish school, its effect, intended or not, was to determine the curriculum of participating schools.[1] Thirty years later, the Central Board of Jewish Education, established in New York in 1909 by a group of professionals and lay people involved with a number of Talmud Torahs, set as its purpose the development of a uniform curriculum for all such schools in the city. It was hoped, among other things, that with the introduction of a common curriculum a youngster moving from one neighborhood to another would not have "to start all over again from the first grade." A similar reason was among the justifications offered a decade later upon the introduction of a unified curriculum in the member schools of the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools.[2] These efforts were clearly influenced by practice in American public school systems. In that model as in others, the locus of curriculum design and development is a source of authority for the conduct of educational affairs.

These efforts as well as others of similar intent were at best sporadic; they were undertaken by bodies of limited resources and a narrow base of public support. They were eclipsed by the establishment in 1910 of the Bureau of Jewish Education of the Kehillah of New York City.[3] The Bureau was the first communal office of Jewish education on the North American continent. Judah Magnes and his associates in the leadership of the Kehillah viewed the creation of the Bureau, rather than direct grants to existing schools, as the most effective use of $50,000 contributed by Jacob Schiff to the Kehillah for the "improvement and promoting of Jewish religious primary education in the city."[4] The Bureau, under the inspired leadership of Dr. Samson Benderly and the coterie of American-born young men attracted to him and the cause of Jewish education, forged a pattern of programs and activities which until this day frames the work of similar agencies subsequently established in cities all over the United States and Canada.

In the years between its establishment in 1910 and its affiliation, upon the virtual dissolution of the Kehillah in 1917, with the Federation for the Support of Jewish Philanthropic Societies, the Bureau had demonstrated the advantages of a centralized effort and, at the same time, gained a new place for Jewish education in American Jewish life. Benderly's report to the Kehillah in 1915 noted that the

Bureau ". . . directs, supervises, or cooperates with 179 schools, 521 teachers and 31,300 students."[5] Even though income from the initial gift, never-ending fundraising, and tuitions collected by the Bureau's Department of Collection and Investigation from the families of pupils in affiliated schools always ran behind the cost of the ambitious and imaginative programs designed by Benderly and his staff, the Bureau engaged in an impressive range of activities: supervision of schools, curriculum development, teacher training and licensing, production of text books and other teaching aids, a professional journal, extra-curricular activities, youth organizations, and more. These activities were rooted in a particular conception of the function of a community office of education.

Aside from emphasizing the importance of professional expertise and scientific method—concepts which were central to the campaigns for "good government" led by progressives of the time—Benderly and his associates established the principle of community support for Jewish education. In their view Jewish education, like education in general, could not be left to the partisan efforts of neighborhood groups. The perpetuation of Jewish life in the demanding circumstances of the American environment required ". . . a system of education . . . under *community control*." This position led to a structure in which the community assumed responsibility for financing ". . . experimentation, initiation, organization, coordination and general supervision. . . ." The centralized functions, almost exclusively educational, are paralleled and even dependent on the administrative tasks assigned the local community—". . . maintenance [of buildings], teachers' salaries, scholarships for children who cannot pay, and local supervision . . . and financed by tuition fees and local contributions."[6]

The "system" of education which evolved from this conception, first in New York and then in other cities, was not as embracive as would appear at first glance. Just as the federations or similar agencies did not really represent or actually reflect the full range of opinion and practice in the Jewish population, the central agencies for Jewish education did not always serve all the schools in the geographic area of their jurisdiction. Whether organized on the model of New York, or that of a central Talmud Torah with branches throughout the city as in Minneapolis, or as a federation of schools led by the Bureau as in Boston, their reach, until relatively recently, did not always extend either to Orthodox or Reform schools. Their work, reflecting the attitudes of their personnel, was by and large limited to the intensive afternoon Hebrew school whose Zionist orientation emphasized the centrality of the Hebrew language.

The spread of the idea of communal responsibility and the establishment of communal offices of education were abetted by the formation of the American

Association for Jewish Education in 1939. This "bureau of bureaus," lately reorganized as JESNA,* was intended not only to "promote the cause of Jewish education in America"[7] but also to serve as "an association of Jewish education interests in relation to the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds and to the general community (government, etc.)."[8] The surveys conducted by the AAJE are one of its more important contributions. The data gathered in the study of almost forty communities between 1939-59 remain even today an important source of information regarding the growth and development of Jewish education in the country. The method of communal self-study employed in these surveys had an effect as important as the findings themselves; thousands of people were given an opportunity to think about Jewish education and its purposes.

Today JESNA is "considered the organized Jewish community's planning, coordinating and service agency for Jewish education." It is funded by allocations from local federations and private contributions. Among other things the agency provides consultation services to communities, conducts research, disseminates information, conducts a placement service, organizes regional and national conferences for professional educators and lay leaders, works with Israeli educational agencies, operates a Visiting Teacher Program which places Israeli teachers in schools throughout North America, and initiates experimental programs. Not the least of its functions is that of advocacy for Jewish education in federation circles.

It would be a mistake to think of what has been described here as a progression evolving from some unalterable inner logic. It would similarly be an error to think of the relationship between an individual school, the local bureau and the national educational agency as in any way comparable to the hierarchical structure—neighborhood, city, district, state—which defines relationships in the public school system. A suggested alternative to the pattern we know today can be found among the recommendations of a study conducted by Dr. Isaac B. Berkson in 1935-36 in order to determine how to best use a gift of $1,000,000 contributed for the purpose of fostering Jewish religious education in New York City. According to Berkson, the primary function of the new Jewish Education Committee, the amalgam of the Bureau of Jewish Education and the lay Association of Jewish Education which resulted from the study, was research and experimentation. In his view, a central agency would best serve the community by developing a common

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* Jewish Education Service of North America

minimum curriculum for Jewish schools of all kinds; model schools would provide the setting for experimenting with that curriculum, developing new instructional methods and producing textbooks and other materials. Once the effectiveness of these methods and materials had been demonstrated, they could be introduced into existing schools.[9] Berkson viewed the school as the instrument best equipped to unite a divided Jewish community and to provide *all* Jewish children with common cultural baggage.

This way of structuring relationships between individual schools and a communal office of education was rejected in favor of the view, most clearly enunciated by Dr. Alexander Dushkin who had been invited to head the new agency, that the purpose of a central agency was to provide *service* to existing schools. Rather than developing a hroad basic program of Jewish education acceptable to all sectors of the community, a task he thought impossible in the cauldron of differences which characterized New York Jewry, Dushkin saw the mission of his agency as providing guidance and supervision to schools of all kinds in order to help them realize their own philosophies more completely. In the lexicon of Jewish education this conception became known as "unity in diversity"; more importantly, it has determined the work of bureaus ever since its initial formulation.

The position celebrates pluralism; it recognizes that schools, like individuals, have multiple loyalties. This was a matter of no small moment in the light of the rise of the congregational school after World War II, a development which structurally is significantly different from a bureau-sponsored community Talmud Torah system. These schools take direction from the educational arms of the national synagogue movements of which they are a part. The potential of conflict is obvious in a statement prepared in 1950 by representatives of the United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education and the American Association for Jewish Education: ". . . Bureaus should cooperate with the congregational schools or their groups in carrying out their programs as effectively as possible. . . . Bureaus, as central community agencies, shall at all times recognize the autonomy and the ideological integrity of the congregational schools."[10]

This and similar statements issued over the years constitute the ground upon which a delicate pattern of relationships has developed between bureaus and schools or groups of schools of a particular religious or ideological complexion. The internal organization and division of assignments among the professional staff of larger bureaus are very often derived from this sense of function. It is important to note, however, that many educators, not unlike Berkson, feel that the bureau ". . . must cease to be merely a midwife for all the groups in the community and

produce something of its own which represents the best conception of the best educators."[11]

Examples of the possible range of bureau-initiated activities may be found in reports of recently developed programs. In New York, the bureau has established both a teacher's and principal's center, a special education center, a computer resource center, and a media center.[12] In Los Angeles, the bureau has sponsored parent and family life education, holiday workshops, Sephardic Heritage Programs, programs for Iranian and Russian immigrants, special education, activities related to the professional status of educators, community-wide celebrations of Jewish education, and other activities which reflect the idea of an agency responsible to the community as a whole.[13] These listings are not intended as catalogues of activity; they are brought to illustrate the pattern of programs which evolves when an educational agency thinks of itself in one way rather than another.

It is difficult to specify the exact nature of the relationships between national agencies—commissions on education of both the Conservative and Reform movements, the National Commission on Torah Education, Torah U'Mesorah—and local activity. They are not immune to the stricture which specifies that in Jewish life the spread throughout the country of the plans and programs of national agencies depends on local leadership.[14] The key to their influence depends on more than a shared ideological commitment; they must also provide useful service. Over the years these agencies have developed characteristic modes of operation which reflect changing conceptions of their function. The first such agency, the Commission on Jewish Education of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, was originally the Board of Editors of Sabbath School Literature, then the Board of Editors of Religious School Literature, and after that the Commission on Jewish Religious Educational Literature. The present name was adopted in the early twenties to signify that the body ". . . proposed to envisage the entire field of Jewish religious education and will consider all matters pertaining thereto."[15]

The broad mandate, more or less adopted by similar agencies subsequently established, has come to include extensive textbook publication programs, curriculum development, convening regional and national conferences, professional placement services, and the definition and promulgation of statements of broad educational policy. The latter includes such items as recommendations regarding the number of days per week a school should be in session, "starting" age of pupils, and attendance requirements for Bar/Bat Mitzvah. These set a standard for individual schools at the same time as they create a common framework for member institutions.

The seemingly parallel and even interdependent and complementary pattern of activities of the bureaus and the educational commissions of the various religious groupings ought not obscure the fact that the work of each is guided by assumptions which sometimes conflict. The bureaus view the community, however vaguely defined, as the central element of Jewish institutional life; the well-being of the community dictates a policy of consensus. The religious organizations believe that the religious life and its institutional expression in the synagogue are the guarantors of Jewish continuity. Their sense of community and relationships to its institutions, however wholehearted and positive, cannot but be conditioned by the consequences of belief in a transcendent authority.

As the community office of education, the bureau is the educational agency most directly involved with the organized Jewish community and its institutions. The relationships between bureaus and federations or welfare funds, as so many others in communal life, have not always been clearly cut or exactly defined. At one time, large bureaus such as New York and Chicago, even though connected to the local federation, were responsible for raising a major part of their budget. Today some bureaus are part of the federation structure and are one of several agencies within that framework. Others are beneficiaries of the federation and independent of its administrative structure. The several patterns are generally more a function of local history than a design drawn from organizational theory. We do not know which of them results in the most effective delivery of services.

Accurate mapping of the territory of formal Jewish education requires that we identify and locate several other points of influence. Teacher training schools and programs are certainly one of them; indeed, together with schools, bureaus, and educational commissions they constitute the "core" of formal Jewish education. The most obvious connection between teacher training institutions and the day-to-day work of schools of all kinds is that created by graduates who function as teachers, principals, or in other capacities directly concerned with schooling. Little attention has been paid to yet another aspect of linkage: the role played by Hebrew Teachers Colleges or Colleges of Jewish Studies in setting standards in communities throughout the country. The entrance requirements of member institutions of *Iggud Batei Midrash L'Morim* (Association of Hebrew Teachers Colleges), now defunct, played a major role in determining the curriculum of lower schools. While from some points of view the influence may not have always been beneficial, the idea that there was a progression in Jewisb schooling which demanded mastery at one level before moving on to another was certainly positive. Current discussions of structure have generally neglected the question of standards and their significance in the educational process. The successor to the *Iggud*, the Association of

Institutions of Higher Learning for Jewish Education, has not been in existence long enough to permit an assessment of its function and influence.

While there is no argument regarding the role of the colleges in pre-service training, there is some question regarding their function, if they have one at all, in in-service training. In some communities there is a tacit agreement that the latter belongs to the bureaus. Where such questions exist, they obviously have more to do with "turf" than with education. The expansion of Jewish studies programs in major universities has led to some exploration of the possibility that their schools of education might also train personnel for Jewish education.

In addition to their specific purpose—either as training schools and more recently as centers of adult learning—the colleges perform an important symbolic function. They represent the commitment of a community to higher Jewish learning and move Jewish education out of the realm of childhood with which it is usually associated.

University programs of Jewish studies, strictly speaking, cannot be counted as part of the structure with which we are dealing here. They should be thought of as a parallel but independent entity. Even though many of the existing programs were initiated because of the interest and financial support of a local Jewish community, once established they are part of another world. Neither the appointment of advisory boards, very often nothing more than a symbolic gesture, nor the active involvement of individual faculty members in the affairs of the community changes the fact that these programs are guided by the requirements of the academy and the demands of scholarship. Indeed, attempts of the American Association for Jewish Education to become involved in the organization of the Association for Jewish Studies, the learned society of instructors of Jewish studies, were quickly rebuffed. These programs also serve a symbolic function. Placed as they are in colleges and universities, public and private, they confer a degree of social respectability on the study of Judaism which is rarely attained by ethnic schools such as the colleges.[16]

The place of Israeli agencies in the scheme described here has been a subject of much discussion, and even controversy, over the years. Criticism or praise of particular programs, more often based on personal experience than on carefully collected and analyzed empirical data, are incidental to a more basic issue. There is no question that good practice is a necessary condition of effectiveness, and that interventions by outside agencies are most successful when initiated by local constituencies and implemented with their cooperation and participation. Israeli agencies have not always observed this "rule." Poor practice, however, is not the only source of strain. The way in which Israel is used as an educational resource

depends on the understanding educators have of the place and meaning of an independent Jewish state in the life of the individual and the polity. Differences on this fundamental issue, even when muted by common agreement, color the entire pattern of relationships between Jewish education in North America and Israeli agencies working in the Diaspora.

Many of the people involved in the conduct of schools, bureaus, national agencies, and other settings concerned with formal education are members of one or another of several professional organizations. With the exception of the Council for Jewish Education, these are organized along denominational lines and sometimes by type of school within a religious grouping. The CJE was originally made up of bureau directors who saw the organization as a vehicle for promoting community support of Jewish education, developing standards of professionalism, and securing and protecting benefits for personnel. These organizations obviously serve a social function; they also provide placement services and protect members from abuses by employers. Even though they aspire to establishing Jewish education as a profession, it is doubtful that these organizations have succeeded in this regard. That achievement requires more than the efforts of practitioners to specify requirements of training, conditions of entry, and standards of performance.[17] The strivings of educators to gain recognition and status must be matched by public acknowledgement of the unique and essential service they provide. Acceptance of that kind has yet to be attained.

The existing organizations cater to principals and other administrators. In contrast to an earlier period—the first organization of Jewish educators in the United States was *Agudat Hamorim* (Teachers Association), founded in New York in 1910—there is today no effective organization of teachers in Jewish schools. The annual CAJE conference, it is true, is intended primarily for teachers; as important as that gathering is, it does not perform the functions usually associated with professional organizations. The lack of a teachers' organization is a troubling gap. The absence of such a body not only deprives teachers of an agency of advocacy; it denotes the disappearance of a sense of calling among those who are responsible for the day-to-day work of schools.

Even though they are generally not included in a schematic presentation of Jewish education, we suggest that commercial publishers of textbooks and other educational materials should be considered among the factors which give shape to practice. This is particularly so in those parts of the country distant from bureaus and the services provided in large centers of Jewish population. Teachers and principals of less than adequate preparation and of loose ideological identity very often find the commercial material more helpful than that produced by the national

commissions. The point is important we think because it notes that the formal mechanisms of Jewish education do not always satisfy the needs of the populations they are intended to serve.

What we have brought thus far may be represented as a series of concentric circles with the school at the center. The farther an agency is away from the school, the lesser its influence on teaching and learning. However, the school need not always be the intended target. JESNA, for instance, expends a great deal of effort in attempting to influence policy-makers in federations. At a certain point in its history, the United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education was concerned primarily with eliminating the Sunday School and guiding school boards to adopt standards for the three-day-a-week Conservative congregational school. The adoption of codes of practice was for many years a major concern of professional organizations. Looking at the diverse tasks undertaken by different agencies and the audience to which each addresses itself is one way of clarifying the relationship between them.

This patterned patchwork of educational activity is, as we have already indicated, less a system than a network of agencies, individuals, and institutions. The looseness of this voluntary association does not altogether eliminate centers of authority whose decisions effect others. The opinions of rabbinical authorities are binding on certain day schools. A bureau may establish standards and eligibility for schools applying for communal financial support. The workings of the enterprise depend, however, far more on influence than on authority. The adoption of a new program promoted by an agency outside the school depends largely on the skills and qualities of the personnel involved in the proposed program, the level of expertise and services provided by the sponsoring agency, and the fit between the proposal and the needs of the school. National agencies planning the introduction of new programs and practices must surely know that their success depends not on an authority they lack but on the influence they can bring to bear on local affiliates.*

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* The following, I think, nicely illustrates the distinction between authority and influence:
A number of years ago, the United Synagogue of America, the national organization of Conservative synagogues, invested considerable effort and moral fervor in a campaign against Bingo. Congregations which did not stop the gambling were threatened with expulsion from the organization. No comparable sanction was employed, or even suggested, in the case of congregations who continued to maintain one-day-a-week schools for children over eight even after the United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education had declared the three-day-a-week school the desired norm. The goodwill of rabbis and educators provided fertile ground for the efforts of persuasion of the Commission; in time the overwhelming majority of Conservative synagogues opted for the more intensive form of schooling.

The public understanding of Jewish education confines its location to the school. School people understandably adopt this position and tend to reinforce it as occasion permits. There is much to support that point of view—over the years the idea of Jewish learning has been inextricably connected with the school. As a text-centered tradition, Judaism requires the ". . . deliberate, systematic and sustained effort. . . ."[18] of a school to equip youngsters with the skills and competencies required for understanding and informed practice. The specific task of the school and the particular kind of learning experience it provides ought not, however, lead us to deny the educational potential of non-school settings. Recent social science and historical research indicates that a wide variety of agencies inform, socialize, open avenues of identification, and provide meaning. Indeed institutions of formal instruction are only one element in the configuration of instrumentalities by which ". . . a culture transmits itself across generations."[19] The influence of the family, of course, is the most prominent and powerful.

Modern Jewish communities contain, nourish, and support an extraordinary variety of non-school settings capable of educating: community centers, camps, *havurot*, membership organizations, youth movements, fundraising campaigns, synagogues, service organizations, newspapers, radio programs, television programs. These non-school settings may relate to one another because of some common interest. They may even be part of a larger organization, such as the JWB, or the umbrella organizations of the Conservative, Orthodox, and Reform denominations. On the whole, however, they are quite independent of one another and generally far removed from schools and other settings of formal education. Within limits that is not necessarily a bad thing; some degree of isolation in protection of distinctiveness guarantees a variety which can only enrich a community.

Schools and non-school settings differ from one another in many different ways.[20] The general lack of contact between the two worlds stems, in many instances, from a lack of understanding of the role of each and perhaps even disdain of one by the other. Competition for a limited pool of participants and finite resources sharpens the divide and obscures potentially complementary relationships.

A practitioner whose training has taught him/her how to move from one setting to another with competence and commitment is one way of bridging the gap and developing a fruitful utilization of the possibilities inherent in each type of setting. The idea of moving from one setting to another, back and forth and in and out, applies to teachers as well. The total educational experience, hopefully lifelong, should be seen as a process which consists of different elements—schools, camps,

retreats, Israel, and the like. At one point in life school may be the most important; at another stage the experience of a non-school setting may be more appropriate. We need also to understand how each form of education relates to and affects the other.

The creation of the connections noted above, however, are beyond the abilities and interests of individual educators. The structure implicit in the development of significant relationships requires both resources and a climate which encourages cooperation. Examples are available: a college of Jewish studies which offers courses for Jewish Community Center personnel; a bureau of Jewish education which turns to a family service agency for help in developing a family education program. I have chosen these examples deliberately—in each case the parties involved are school and non-school settings and are communal agencies supported, at least in part, by federation allocations. The federation framework is a vehicle for creating structure and encouraging relationships. Indeed, that may be its major organizational function.

Tracing the development of Jewish education in North America discloses the changing and increasingly significant role of federations. The Federation for the Support of Jewish Philanthropic Societies of New York City ". . . was organized under a plan which contemplated the exclusion of religious educational activities." That position was changed in 1917 when a special committee recommended the inclusion of religious schools among federation beneficiaries because they ". . . work . . . as moral influences in the community for bridging the gap between parents and children and for maintaining the influence of the home and the family."

That halting beginning—reflecting the attitudes of New York's established Jews of German origin toward more recently arrived Eastern European immigrants and the fear of the effect of local Talmud Torah campaigns on citywide fundraising[21]—has moved, over a period of almost three quarters of a century and through numerous controversies, from restricted funding to a pattern of comprehensive communal planning which profoundly effects Jewish education. Commissions recently established in a number of major communities—i.e. Commission on the Jewish Future in Los Angeles—are yet another manifestation of what is obviously an evolving process. Past experience clearly teaches that events in the community or the society at large very often dictate evaluation of existing patterns and the design of new modes of interaction.

The planning process, intended to rationalize organized communal activity, is clearly a mechanism which encourages the establishment of relationships. In many communities it has brought together educational agencies that had previously had

no contact with one another. At the same time it should be recognized that planning is not a "neutral" activity; it is based on assumptions not always congruent with particularistic conceptions of education. Moreover, as an activity sponsored by an organization which can function only as it achieves consensus among participants, there is the danger that planning in such a context must cater to the lowest common denominator.

The idea of centrally organized planning is, of course, an expression of the positivism which has shaped modern society. For all its advantages and even necessity, it would be well to remember its limitations. The most significant developments in Jewish education in North America since the end of World War II—the expansion of the day school movement, the increase in Hebrew-speaking camps, the spread of university programs of Jewish studies, the founding of CAJE, the rise of *havurot*—occurred outside the framework of organized and directed communal activity and planning. Similar developments in the public sector, together with suggestive findings of recent research, have led theoreticians and practitioners alike to think of planning less as a prescriptive measure than as a means of using communal resources as a lever for the inculcation of an ethic of accountability and encouraging individual units in the system to adopt initiatives which celebrate their uniqueness. In such a context the idea of structure assumes new and interesting characteristics.

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