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Aron, Isa, 1989-1990.

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July 20, 1989

Dr. Annette Hochstein
Nativ Policy and Planning Consultants
P.O.B. 4497
Jerusalem 91044
ISRAEL

Dear Annette,

Enclosed is a preliminary outline of my paper on professionalism in teaching. I think that the research and writing of a report of this scope could be done in 10 working days. However, I want to be clear about what is not included in this outline:

- 1) the area of training, both pre-service and in-service. I go back and forth in my mind on how relevant this is to the issue of professionalism in Jewish education. In secular education there are endless debates, and some fascinating research about when and how teachers should be trained. Yet we know that very few American-born Jewish teachers have formal training; the graduates of programs like HUC, UJ, JTS, and Brandeis tend to go into administration. Some questions about this should probably go into the information-gathering project.
- 2) details about how career ladders actually work, and the problems various school districts are having in trying to implement them. Some interesting research is currently underway throughout the U.S. However, I think that the organization of Jewish schooling is so different from that of public schools as to make much of this material irrelevant.
- 3) a discussion of recruitment, and how salary and status affect recruitment. I have only a passing familiarity with the literature in this area, and don't know whether or not it would be germane to the issue of professionalism.
- 4) issues of accreditation, and the status of accreditation in Jewish education. If this is important it too might become part of the information-gathering.
- 5) Depending on how you feel about the paper's advocating differentiated staffing, it might be nice to include a number of models of differentiated staffing in various settings. I could probably create some sketchy models off the top of my head, but

we should possibly consider offering a number of scenarios that are more elaborate.

If, in our discussions at CAJE it turns out that one or more of these items should be included, we would then have to discuss the context for their inclusion, and how much time it would take me to research each area.

I hope that my sending in this outline now will give you and Seymour ample opportunity to get feedback from a variety of colleagues and consultants. I look forward to discussing this in depth when we meet in August.

B'Shalom,



Isa

Isa Aron
July 26, 1989

NARRATIVE OUTLINE OF PAPER ON PROFESSIONALISM IN TEACHING --
DRAFT #1

I: Review of Current Discussions in Secular Education

1) Before entering into a discussion of professionalism in teaching, it is necessary to define what we mean by the term "professional." The term is used very loosely, in exhortative fashion, as the equivalent of serious, worthy of respect, and/or worthy of more pay. But teaching might be seen as being serious, worthy of more respect, and more pay without necessarily being seen as a profession.

2) Philosophers and sociologists have arrived at consensus on two criteria which differentiate professions from other occupations:

legitimacy: a job is a profession if it requires a special body of knowledge and expertise

autonomy: a professional is one who exerts control over the circumstances under which his/her service is rendered

Doctors and lawyers clearly meet both criteria; nurses have legitimacy, but much less autonomy than doctors; businessmen, conversely, have a good deal of autonomy, but there are questions as to their legitimacy (in fact, the rise of graduate schools of business can be seen as an attempt to gain legitimacy).

3) Measured against these criteria, teaching does not fare well. The prevailing assumption among most Americans is that teaching requires little or no special knowledge; in fact, most teacher certification exams focus on knowledge of subject matter, rather than pedagogy. Moreover, in response to dissatisfaction with schools, school boards have tended to reduce teachers' autonomy even further, requiring greater accountability through exams and record-keeping.

4) Attempts to upgrade the professional standing of teachers, therefore, have centered on establishing their legitimacy, on the one hand, and arguing for more autonomy, on the other. These attempts can be divided into the following categories:

- attempts to codify teacher knowledge. Research on teaching has grown exponentially in the past two decades, but the "knowledge base of teaching" has yet to be firmly established. The predominant research paradigm has been "process-product" research; many argue that this type of research has yielded only low level generalizations, that do

not go much beyond common sense. A new research paradigm, advocated by Lee Shulman, focuses more on the interplay between generic teaching skills and subject matter knowledge. This research is still too new for its results to fully satisfy the criterion of legitimacy.

- attempts to create procedures for teacher evaluation that are both more valid and more stringent. Teachers are most commonly evaluated in two ways: a) pencil and paper tests, which focus primarily on subject matter knowledge; b) observation by either principals or outside observers, which tend to be subjective and open to the charge of bias. Lee Shulman and others are currently engaged in creating a National Teaching Examination which might include analysis of cases and submission of items for a teaching portfolio as well.
- attempts to create career ladders and other mechanisms for rewarding teachers who excel. Many experiments of this sort are currently underway, but the results thus far have been mixed, at best.
- attempts to gain more autonomy for teachers by giving them a greater say in school governance. Changes in this area will be hardest to achieve, because of the prevailing trend towards bureaucratic mechanisms for accountability.

5) A small, but growing group of scholars has begun to raise questions about whether the professionalism of teachers should be our dominant concern. They point out that good teachers, teachers who make a difference in their students' lives, have qualities that go beyond knowledge and autonomy. Phillip Jackson calls this the "transformative" aspect of teaching; Nel Noddings has written about "caring." An all-inclusive term for this dimension of teaching is Dwayne Huebner's notion of teaching as a vocation.

II: How Applicable is All of this to Jewish Teachers and Jewish Teaching?

1) In thinking about applying the insights of secular educational research and scholarship to the field of Jewish education, one encounters a number of problems:

- The large majority of Jewish teachers work very part-time. Even day schools do not necessarily offer their teachers full-time employment. It may be both unreasonable and inappropriate to expect part-time teachers to have professional legitimacy and to be given professional autonomy.
- Who is responsible for Jewish education, and to whom should Jewish teachers be accountable? Samson Benderly believed that education should be a communal responsibility,

supported by and accountable to the community at large. Over time, however, education became the province of synagogues. Jewish education is a "system" in only a loose and ephemeral sense. The pendulum may have begun to swing the other direction, but it is difficult to conceive of a time when central agencies will have actual power, rather than merely influence. In the meantime, licensing and standards are ignored or circumvented when it becomes convenient to do so. A voluntary National Jewish Teacher Exam might, by power of suasion, be able to establish higher standards among full-time teachers; but this would take time, and entail considerable research, as can be seen in the next point.

- with the exception of two doctoral dissertations currently in process, there is no research at all on the knowledge base which might establish the legitimacy of Jewish teaching. If we accept Lee Shulman's paradigm, which places teacher knowledge in the context of particular subject matters, it becomes clear that teacher knowledge in secular education is not the same as teacher knowledge in Jewish education. In fact, there is every reason to believe that researching and testing for Judaic teacher-knowledge will be considerably more difficult, because of the central role of belief and values in the decision-making required for Jewish teaching.

2) Some encouragement, however, may be derived from the fact that Jewish education seems to attract teachers for whom teaching is a vocation:

- preliminary results of the LA Jewish Teacher Census show that Jewish teachers are, in general, more satisfied with their work than secular teachers are. They also come out relatively high on a number of other indexes of "vocation."
- in her pilot study, Gail Oorph found that all of the teachers she interviewed saw their teaching as a "mission."
- it would be interesting to speculate on the policy implications of this. For example, instead of focusing exclusively of in-service training, we need to think a lot more about in-service nurturing. I have a lot of things to say about this, if anyone wants to hear them.

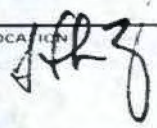
III: THE NEED FOR DIFFERENTIATED STAFFING

The degree of professionalism required to teach full-time in a day school may be very different from that required to teach 2-6 hours in an afternoon school. Given the financial limitations of the Jewish community, we need to think very seriously about promoting a number of models in which highly skilled and very well remunerated teachers work with part-time, less educated, and less experienced "trainees" and/or avocationals.

TO: Morton L. Mandel
NAME
DEPARTMENT/PLANT LOCATION

FROM: Henry L. Zucker
NAME
DEPARTMENT/PLANT LOCATION

DATE: 9/25/89
REPLYING TO
YOUR MEMO OF: _____



SUBJECT:

Mark Gurvis has reviewed the Carnegie Foundation's publication "Toward High and Rigorous Standards for the Teaching Profession" and has sent it along to Isa Aron.

INFORMATION FOR THE DIRECTOR



MEMO TO: Seymour Fox, Annette Hochstein, Virginia Levi, Morton L. Mandel,
Joseph Reimer, Henry L. Zucker

FROM: Mark Gurvis *MJ*

DATE: October 19, 1989

SUBJECT: Suggestion from Isa Aron

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In a recent conversation with Isa Aron, she revisited an issue previously raised with AH. Isa believes it would be worthwhile for Commission staff to focus, as part of the overall research design, on literature from general education on top-down planning and interventions. Apparently there is significant research based on responses to federal mandates with respect to how many localities respond, how to best implement community demonstration sites, how many are necessary, etc. She pointed to Susan Shevitz at Brandeis as the research expert in the Jewish community with the greatest expertise in this area. It might be worthwhile for AH or JR to talk or meet with Susan to get a sense of what that literature has to offer us.

1227 South Hi Point Street
Los Angeles, CA 90035

August 23, 1991

Dear Seymour and Annette,

Enclosed is a one-page "Issues and Options" outline, which I developed with Jack's help last night. I hope this will meet your immediate needs.

Jack has offered to help me revise my proposal on Monday or Tuesday next week. As soon as the revision is complete, I'll FAX it to you, though I trust I'll be speaking with you before.

B' Shalom,

Isa



CRITICAL ISSUES AND ILLUSTRATIVE OPTIONS FOR ENHANCING
RESEARCH IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Isa Aron, Ph.D.
August 23, 1991

OVERALL QUESTION: What steps (both short and long term) can the CIJE take in order to encourage and support the development of a sophisticated research capability in the field of Jewish education?

CRITICAL ISSUES

A) CONTENT: What content areas are of highest priority? What is the appropriate balance between:

- basic and applied research
- research that is derivative of research in secular education and research that is *sui generis* to Jewish Education
- short term and long term needs
- setting a programmatic agenda and encouraging the initiative of independent scholars

B) METHOD: What is the optimal mix of:

- theoretical and empirical research
- quantitative and qualitative methodologies

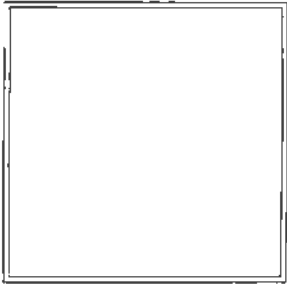
C) INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS: To what extent do we invest in:

- training new researchers, while supporting existing researchers
- creating a cadre of Jewish educational researchers, while drawing on the expertise of researchers in secular education
- individuals vs. institutions

ILLUSTRATIVE OPTIONS

- create research centers
 - a) at Jewish universities, secular universities, and/or independent entities
 - b) endowed, and/or competing for centrally disbursed funds
- endow research professorships at either Jewish or secular universities
- establish training programs for new Ph.D.s in either Jewish or secular universities
- establish postdoctoral programs for re-tooling Ph.D.s in related fields
- establish a fund for researchers (NSF or NEH model)
- offer grants (on a competitive basis) to reflective practitioners
- establish a think-tank for Jewish Education in North America
- create new mechanisms for dissemination
 - a) conferences and symposia
 - b) journals and other publishing venues

file Aron



February 20, 1990

Mr. Mark Gurvis
Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland
1750 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Dear Mark:

This is simply a comment for Isa Aron in connection with the professionalization paper.

The first few pages of Section One should, I believe, be rewritten. There is no need to deal with the literature on definitions of a profession, other than to indicate that there is one and it is quite messy. What might be said is that, for purposes of this paper, she will treat professionalization as comprising certain practical steps, and then specify them.

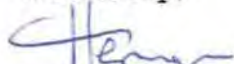
Alternatively, and as a second choice, she might wish to identify those elements central to professions on which there is general agreement, despite the morass of definitions which exist. Those elements, I believe, in addition to the "autonomy" Aron emphasizes, are:

- 1) A defined area of competence which is professed.
- 2) Acceptance by society both of the function and competence of the profession.
- 3) A base of theory and knowledge undergirding the professional expertise.
- 4) Commonly accepted standards of education for preparation and entry into the profession.
- 5) A recognized and organized professional association.
- 6) Ethical standards based on altruistic societal obligations and regulated either by the organized profession itself, by the state, or both.

She then could assess the current state of the field and what is needed.

This being said, I think it is a very good and useful paper, likely to provoke considerable discussion.

Sincerely,


Herman D. Stein

University Professor
436 Pardee Hall
Phone: 216-368-4380

Copy to Isa Aron 5/22
file Aron



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8 May 1990

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(513) 221-1875

Mr. Morton L. Mandel, Chairman
Commission on Jewish Education
in North America
4500 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44103

Dear Mr. Mandel:

Thank you so much for sending me a copy of Isa Aron's brilliant paper entitled "Toward the Professionalization of Jewish Teaching." I learned a great deal from Dr. Aron's analysis and insights, and hope that her practical suggestions will prove influential.

If I might make one brief criticism of her analysis, it is that it lacks an historical dimension. The great era of professionalization in America came, after all, at the turn of the 20th century, when in fact rabbis were professionalized. Cantors, somewhat later, followed the same route. Yet, professionalization did not work when it came to Jewish educators. Samson Benderly and Zvi Scharfstein struggled valiantly to professionalize the field of Jewish education, but the effort utterly failed. The question, to my mind, is why, and what can be learned from that failure. In this case, as in so many others, history may offer a wealth of knowledge and insight not otherwise available.

Notwithstanding this caveat, I find Dr. Aron's analysis brilliant and persuasive; it should be required reading for anyone interested in this field. Should subsequent reports issued by your commission live up to these same high standards, the Commission on Jewish Education in North America will make a very important contribution indeed.

I should very much like to read copies of your future reports, and would be indebted to you for sending them to me. Please note that as of June 4th I am moving to Brandeis University where I shall be serving as the Joseph H. and Bella R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History. My address there is Dept. Near Eastern and Judaic Studies (NEJS), Brandeis University, Waltham, MA 02254.

With all good wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Jonathan D. Sarna
Professor of American
Jewish History

JDS/nb

MEMO TO: Annette Hochstein
FROM: Mark Gurvis
DATE: April 2, 1990
SUBJECT: Isa Aron's Paper

Having had an opportunity to review Isa's paper on the L.A. teacher census, I thought I would share a couple of my own reactions. In general, I would echo Jon Woocher's concern about the limited value of the study because of its focus on only one community's data. Comparisons across Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Miami might have yielded a richer picture less subject to a single community's idiosyncracies.

I was very surprised that over half of the teachers are between 25-39 years old. I would have expected more college-age students, and more older teachers. I think it would be very interesting to look in greater depth at the 25-39 population and their characteristics.

The other item that really caught my eye was the level of satisfaction by type of school. I suspect that Orthodox day schools and Reform supplementary schools experience higher levels of teacher satisfaction because there is greater confluence between what those schools expect of their families, and vice versa. Perhaps in these schools there is general agreement on either high or low expectations, and therefore teachers are less likely to be caught in a conflict over expectations. This may, in fact, point to one of the significant differences between Reform and Conservative supplementary schools. Conservative schools may still be articulating higher expectations for observance, parental participation, religious observances, etc. than Reform supplementary schools, but are probably finding that their constituency is no more likely than Reform synagogue members to agree with such levels of expectations. Therefore, teachers in Conservative schools would experience a higher degree of dissonance between what they are teaching and the support for it in the home.

I expect to be able to share more comments from senior policy advisors on the various papers next week.

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Joseph Reimer

April 23, 1990

Dr. Isa Aron
Hebrew Union College
3077 University Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90007

Dear Isa:

The printed version of your paper is finally completed, and I am pleased to send you an initial five copies. Additional copies are, of course, available to you as needed. After we have distributed the papers to the commissioners, we will coordinate a broader release to various constituencies, including the list of people you have asked us to forward a copy of the paper to.

It has been a pleasure working with you. Please let me know if there is anything else related to this project that I can be helpful with.

Sincerely,



Mark Gurvis
Commission staff

Enclosures

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April 25, 1990

Dr. Isa Aron
Hebrew Union College
3077 University Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90007

Dear Isa:

The members of the Commission on Jewish Education are just now receiving copies of your paper, the first of the research papers we have been able to share. Thank you for the effort you have made to produce a truly fine piece of work. I am proud to be able to release the paper under the Commission's auspices, and believe it adds a significant contribution to the base of knowledge and understanding of Jewish education.

It was good seeing you in Los Angeles. Warmest regards.


Morton L. Mandel