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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

PROPOSED RESEARCH DEADLINES

Friday, September 22, 1989 - First draft of brief prospectus of research project due to Premier for immediate distribution to Fox, Hochstein and Reimer.

Monday, September 25, 1989 - Distribution of prospectus drafts to senior policy advisors.

Thursday, October 12, 1989 Meeting of Senior Policy Advisors - Final draft of prospectus due to Premier for immediate distribution to commissioners.

Wednesday, January 3, 1990 - First draft of research paper due to Premier for immediate distribution to Fox, Hochstein and Reimer.

Friday, January 5, 1990 - Distribution to panels.

Friday, January 19, 1990 - Redraft of research papers due to Premier for immediate distribution to Fox, Hochstein and Reimer.

Tuesday, January 23, 1990 - Distribution of research papers to senior policy advisors.

Tuesday, January 30, 1990 - Redraft of research papers due to Premier for immediate distribution to Fox, Hochstein and Reimer.

Thursday, February 1, 1990 - Distribution of research papers to commissioners.

The research schedule is geared to provide completed drafts to commissioners for the meeting tentatively scheduled for February 14, 1990. Questions:

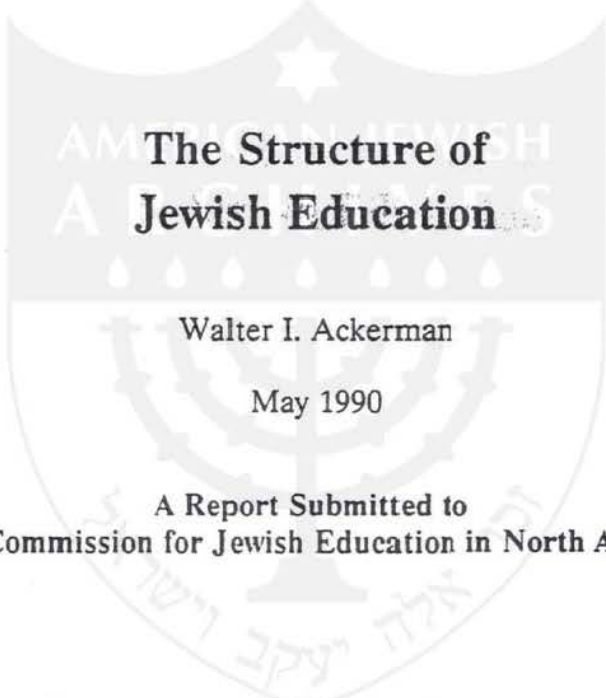
1. Should both panelists and senior policy advisors review the prospectus drafts before the October Commission meeting? Perhaps we should send panelists the papers for individual comments in addition to a meeting of senior policy advisors in early October.
2. Can the first draft of the research papers be completed by January 3rd? This is a deadline we will have to push the researchers hard to meet.
3. Do we need both steps with the panelists and senior policy advisors on the research papers? When should a policy advisors meeting be scheduled in late January?
4. Does trio of Fox, Hochstein and Reimer need to see each draft at each stage?

COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA

The Structure of Jewish Education

Walter I. Ackerman

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

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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.

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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 embrative 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

* 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 broad 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 Jewish 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.*

* 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 fundraising²¹—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.

Notes

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