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"Work in Progress: Research Design", October 1989.

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Work in Progress: Research Design

This research design is a working document aimed at developing a research program for the work of the Commission. This program will provide the background data for the Commission report. It is not comprehensive: major topics, such as the evaluation of programs, are not addressed. They belong on a wider research agenda that is beyond the scope of the Commission report. Such an agenda will be outlined in the report and may lead to a recommendation that a research capability on Jewish education be developed in North America.

I. Introduction

In this document, we will attempt to do the following:

- A. Review key questions that will be addressed in the final report.
- B. Identify the research needed in order to help answer these questions.
- C. Assess the feasibility of undertaking such research for the report.
- D. Recommend the research papers to be commissioned at this time.

II. Key Questions

The design will deal with key questions that need to be answered in order to make informed recommendations. The questions are presented in broad terms; they will be detailed within the framework of the actual research.

Some of these questions can be dealt with in time for the final report. Others can only be dealt with in preliminary form because of time constraints. Others yet are too broad — or the data is too scarce — to be undertaken at this time. Many of these questions will serve as a basis for the research agenda to be included in the recommendations for the final report.

We will deal with the following topics:

1. The Link Between Jewish Continuity and Jewish Education
2. The State of the Field
3. The Community
4. The Relationship Between the Community and the Denominations
5. The Shortage of Qualified Personnel
6. Training Needs
7. Jewish Education as a Profession
8. Recruitment and Retention
9. The Cost of Change
10. Best Practice
11. An Agenda for Programmatic Options

III. The Questions Detailed

1. THE LINK BETWEEN JEWISH CONTINUITY AND JEWISH EDUCATION

The Question: The Commission defines its mandate as dealing with Jewish education as a tool for meaningful Jewish continuity. This is based on an underlying assumption that Jewish education and Jewish continuity are linked. Several commissioners have raised the question of whether this assumption can be substantiated.

Research needed: Optimally, the following should be undertaken in order to deal with this question:

1. A philosophical/sociological essay should be drafted on the topic of the relationship between Jewish education and meaningful Jewish continuity.
2. Empirical studies that deal with the link between Jewish education and meaningful Jewish continuity should be undertaken or, if they already exist, reported on.

Feasibility: A philosophical approach to the issue is highly feasible. However, given the paucity of data and the time constraints, an empirical study should be held for a longer term research agenda.

Recommendation:

- R* Ask a philosopher-educator to write a preliminary essay on this topic.

2. THE STATE OF THE FIELD

The Question: What is the scope of the problem? What, in the state of the field of Jewish education, requires change? What are the opportunities for improvement and change?

Research Needed: A general statement (with data) should be offered, substantiating or disproving the notion that the field of Jewish education shows generally poor performance as regards: trends in participation; program quality; Jewish knowledge; affiliation; etc.

At the same time, the statement should illustrate positive trends that have been identified. For example: increased participation in day schools; increased visits to Israel; the trend towards Jewish education in JCCs; the trend towards adult and leadership programs of Jewish studies, and more.

The quantitative data could include: 1) enrollment figures for various types of Jewish education; 2) the number of institutions for the various forms of education; 3) general data on personnel, including the number of educators in various settings, salaries and benefits. Qualitative data should be included where available. Optimally, empirical research about the effectiveness of various programs should be undertaken.

Feasibility: It is possible to offer at this time a general summary picture — mostly quantitative — about the state of the field. The preliminary data report prepared for the first Commission meeting could serve as a basis. Very little qualitative data exists. A literature review including studies such as W. Ackerman's many assessments of Jewish education in North America, the New York BJE's study of the supplementary schools in New York, and the Miami Central Agency for Jewish Education's study on the Jewish educator should be undertaken.

Recommendations

- R Draft a descriptive essay using existing data to offer an overview of the state of the field. Data from commissioned papers should be incorporated when relevant and analyzed in a way that will highlight both the problems and the opportunities.

*R = Recommendation

3. THE COMMUNITY

The Question: What can be done to improve the climate in the community regarding Jewish education, and in turn, bring more outstanding leaders to work in Jewish education, develop adequate communal structures, and increase funding for Jewish education?

The climate in the community is often skeptical about the quality and potential of Jewish education. Many outstanding leaders do not choose to become involved with education. The organizational structures — local and national — are often fragmented and divided; some are obsolete. There are, however, clear signs of change, as expressed by the establishment of this Commission, as well as the local commissions on Jewish continuity.

There is a shortage of funding for both the personnel and programs of Jewish education. This shortage affects existing programs and deters the establishment of new programs.

Research needed: The following research would be helpful:

1. Organizational/institutional analysis: Identify the major actors in the area of Jewish education (both local and national: federations, JESNA, congregations, denominations, JCCs, BJE's, Judaica departments at universities, etc.). Who provides services, allocates resources, makes policy? Assess their relative importance, their relationships, their financial resources and patterns of resource allocation. Point out conflicts and problems as well as trends and opportunities.
2. Resource analysis: Commission a paper on the financing of Jewish education (communal and private resources). Point out trends and major changes.
3. Market study: Possibly commission a survey on attitudes and opinions of the Jewish population concerning Jewish education, including questions such as how people perceive what exists; what their own Jewish educational experience was; how they perceive the needs; what programs and developments they would want. This survey could be undertaken with one or more of three populations: communal leaders, educators, the Jewish population at large.

Feasibility: It is possible at this time to present a preliminary view of the attitudes of leadership toward Jewish education. Some data is available from demographic studies conducted in recent years in several communities and analysis could yield significant knowledge. The large-scale studies belong on the long-term research agenda.

Recommendations:

- R In addition to the papers prepared by H.L. Zucker and J. Fox for the third Commission meeting, we recommend commissioning a paper on the organizational structures of Jewish education in North America. The paper should include an historical overview pointing to major changes and evolutions along with a map of the current situation.
- R A preliminary paper on the finances of Jewish education should be considered. This might include a conceptual framework for dealing with the issue as well as an assessment of major sources of funding, communal priorities, etc.
- R Consider commissioning a survey of communal leadership's attitudes and opinions. If successfully carried out, such a survey could yield important data on the leaders of the community, their Jewish educational backgrounds, their opinions and suggestions regarding Jewish education, their view of the field, their assessment of quality and needs.
- R Use existing data from demographic studies of individual communities to assess the market for Jewish education.

4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY AND THE DENOMINATIONS

The Question: Who in the Jewish community should be responsible for setting policy and allocating resources for Jewish education? Who could convene the many actors and forces now contributing to Jewish education so that they would complement each other?

Research needed: Analysis of the respective roles of denominations, congregations, and federations as regards Jewish education. The analysis would focus on opportunities for cooperative efforts, potential changes and emerging structures.

Feasibility: Case studies of federations, congregations and current cooperative ventures could be prepared in time for the Commission report. The larger analysis belongs in the longer-term agenda.

Recommendations:

In addition to the papers on "the community" (p. 13 above) the following would be useful:

- R Case studies of federations that are increasingly involved in Jewish education — as conveners and as funders/policy-setters.
- R Case studies of congregations as context for Jewish education. The case studies would involve questions such as: How is educational policy set within congregations? Who decides? What is the potential for change, for expansion of the educational role of congregations? What is the potential of the supplementary school? What cooperative efforts could be developed between congregations (formal education), JCCs (informal education), federations (policy setting and resource allocation)?
- R Analysis of the conditions that would allow federations to take on greater responsibility while enabling the denominations and other institutions/organizations to rise to their full stature in the provision of services and resources for Jewish education. This paper should include extensive interviews with the decision-makers and the actors.

5. THE SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

The Question: What is the gap between the personnel currently available for Jewish education in North America and the needs for qualified personnel? What are the elements of the problem? What is its scope? These questions are based on the assumption that there is a significant shortage of qualified personnel in North America in all areas of education and at all levels of personnel. It expresses itself in the difficulty to recruit, train, retain, and offer satisfying jobs and work conditions.

Research needed:

1. A paper outlining the elements involved in dealing with personnel (recruitment, training, retention, building the profession), how they are inter-related and why they should be dealt with simultaneously.

2. An analytic paper indicating the scope of need for personnel versus the current situation in the following terms: shortage of personnel by categories; profiles of educators as a first step toward defining the qualitative gap; what educators know (Hebrew, Jewish studies, education, administration); data on recruitment, training, retention, career ladders, etc.; data on needs from the employers' perspective. Positive trends should also be cited, such as the emergence of a pool of qualified senior personnel, positive signs in enrollment in training programs, etc.

Feasibility: Most available data is in research form. Some surveys of teachers have been undertaken and a number of such studies are now in progress (Los Angeles, Philadelphia). Analysis of these data can provide an initial look at the personnel shortage and help define areas for further research and potential intervention.

Recommendations:

- R Gather available data from existing studies and through some direct primary data collection (e.g., a limited telephone survey to a carefully constituted sample of school principals to gather data on teachers' salaries, shortages, etc.). Use data from the options papers and from the other commissioned papers.
- R Draft an analytic essay summarizing existing and specially collected data, to offer an analysis of the shortage of qualified personnel.

6. TRAINING NEEDS

The Question: What is the gap, qualitative and quantitative, between the training currently available for personnel in Jewish education and what is needed?

Research needed:

1. What training is currently available? In what types of programs? How many students actually graduate? What is the training history of qualified educators that are currently in the field? What is the respective role of institutions of higher Jewish learning, general universities, yeshivot, training programs in Israel? What pre-service and in-service training is available for educators in the various formal and informal settings?

2. How much and what kinds of training are needed? What norms and standards should guide the training of educators?
3. What is the gap between existing training opportunities and the demand for teachers and other educators? Can existing programs grow to meet the need? What new programs need to be created? Is faculty available and, if not, what should be done to develop a cadre of teacher-trainers and professors of Jewish education?

Feasibility: Research papers on existing training opportunities and on the shortage can be prepared in time for the final report. Data concerning the training history of current good educators in the field would have to be collected. It is not clear to what extent this could be done in time for the report.

The issue of norms and standards for training Jewish educators has not yet been addressed systematically or extensively. This major question should be placed on the long-term research agenda.

Recommendations:

- R Prepare an inventory of current training opportunities.
- R Conduct a literature survey on current approaches to training in general education and compare with existing practice in Jewish education.
- R Gather data concerning the background and training history of good educators currently in the field.
- R Draft a summary paper on training needs.

7. JEWISH EDUCATION AS A PROFESSION

The Question: Some commissioners and professionals claim that in order to attract qualified personnel and offer the quality of education that is desired, it is necessary to raise the state of Jewish education to the level of a profession. Is this indeed the case? If so, what interventions are required?

Research needed:

1. A comparative analysis of general education as a profession and Jewish education as a profession should be done. Some of the elements to be considered include: salaries and benefits, empowerment, an agreed upon body of knowledge, a system of accreditation, status, professional networking.

Feasibility: A literature survey is a feasible assignment. However, little hard data on the profession of Jewish education is available. For example, there is no systematic data available on salaries and benefits. Limited data can probably be obtained from existing teacher surveys (Miami, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Boston, Houston) or can be gathered through a limited survey.

Recommendation:

- R Commission a paper to assess Jewish education as a profession as compared to general education.

8. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The Question: Are there pools of potential candidates who could be trained to work in the field of Jewish education? If yes, under what conditions can such candidates be attracted to the field? Under what conditions can they be retained?

Research needed:

1. Undertake a survey aimed at identifying and assessing potential pools of candidates from among likely populations, e.g., Judaica majors and graduates, day school graduates, rabbis, people considering career changes, general educators who are Jewish, etc.
2. Identify the conditions under which potential candidates could be attracted to the field and could be retained for a significant period of time on the job, e.g., financial incentives during training, salaries and benefits, job development and the possibility of advancement, better marketing and advertising of training and scholarship opportunities.
3. Examine the recruitment methods used by the training programs. How do the methods used to recruit Jewish educators differ from methods used by other programs (colleges, etc.)?

Feasibility: Market research would make it possible for us to identify and test potential pools of candidates. It will not be possible to do this in time for the Commission report, nor will it be possible to accurately identify the conditions for recruitment and retention. On the other hand, much could be learned from experimenting with existing hypotheses (e.g., directing systematic recruitment efforts at certain groups) and from the current experience of training programs in North America and Israel.

Recommendation:

- R Collect data on recruitment and retention from existing studies, literature, surveys, studies from general education, and extensive interviews with knowledgeable informants in training programs and educational institutions in North America and Israel. Summarize this knowledge for the report.

9. THE COST OF CHANGE

There is virtually no information on the economics of Jewish education. Such information will be of great importance as the Commission considers how to intervene to effect across-the-board change. We have not dealt with this topic at present. We will relate to it following the next round of consultations.

10. BEST PRACTICE

The Questions:

What are the good programs in the field that could be used as cases from which to learn, to draw inspiration and encouragement, and to replicate?

What vision of Jewish education will inform and inspire the report and its recommendations?

Research needed: In order to offer a representative selection of cases, a fairly extensive project should be undertaken that would include the following steps:

- Determine criteria for selecting outstanding programs;
- Define a method for canvassing the field and identifying possible candidate programs;
- Select a method of assessment;
- Assess and describe the program.

Feasibility: It may be possible to use one of many short-cut methodologies to offer a selection of best practice in the field of Jewish education. A systematic approach to this project should be on the long-term research agenda.

Recommendation:

- R We recommend that consultations be held with the researchers at their upcoming meeting and with consultants on methodology to define a method of offering best practice case studies to the Commission by the time of the final report. Such methods are feasible, but they do not offer the comprehensiveness or the depth of insight that a complete project would.

11. AN AGENDA FOR PROGRAMMATIC OPTIONS

The Question: How should the Commission intervene or make recommendations regarding programmatic options? Should specific and concrete recommendations be made? Should an umbrella mechanism be suggested that would assist interested commissioners in developing programs of implementation for specific programmatic areas?

Research needed: Expand the data gathering and analyses on the the various programmatic options.

Recommendations:

- R Develop a narrower list of programmatic options by combining topics that belong together. Outline a broad agenda for each, pointing to opportunities, needs, scope, and feasible targets for each.
- R Consider the strengths and weaknesses of an umbrella organization for dealing with programmatic options.

IV. Papers to be Commissioned

1. The Relationship Between Jewish Education and Jewish Continuity (I. Scheffler, Harvard University).
2. The Organizational Structure of Jewish Education in North America (W. Ackerman, Ben Gurion University).
3. Community Organization for Jewish Education in North America; Leadership, Finance and Structure (H.L. Zucker, Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland).
4. Federation-Led Community Planning for Jewish Education, Identity and Continuity (J. Fox, Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland).
5. The Synagogue as a Context for Jewish Education (J. Reimer, Brandeis University).
6. Approaches to Training Personnel and Current Training Opportunities (A. Davidson, Jewish Theological Seminary of America).
7. Assessment of Jewish Education as a Profession (I. Aron, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles).
8. Data Gathering, Analysis and Report on the Field of Jewish Education in North America (I. Aron, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles).