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MEF. Tammivaara, Julie, and Roberta L. Goodman. "On Professional Development for Educators in Jewish Settings", 1996.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the American Jewish Archives website.

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2/1/96

Done

Robin,

Enclosed are three documents:

- (a) a cover memo
- (b) a letter from me to Julie
- (c) a paper by Julie and Roberto

Please send copies of the cover memo only to Alan, Nessa, Bill, + Annette. Please send copies of all three documents to Gail, Barry, and Ellen.

Many thanks,

Adam

February 1, 1996

To: Gail, Barry, Ellen

From: Adam

CC: Alan, Nessa, Bill, Annette

Re: Paper by Julie and Roberta on professional development

Enclosed please find (a) a copy of the paper by Julie and Roberta on professional development which we commissioned, and (b) a copy of my comments on the paper, which I sent to Julie by e-mail.

The paper is disappointing, as I explain in my comments. I think it could be worthwhile, and I try to indicate what needs to be done in my comments. I focused on how the research they have reported elsewhere should be incorporated in this paper. Because the paper is about professional development, I am asking Gail, Barry, and Ellen to read it as well, and to comment on its potential contribution to our knowledge about improving professional development in Jewish education, assuming the research base is woven into the paper as I have indicated.

(I am circulating this memo to Alan, Nessa, Bill, and Annette, so you'll know what's up, but I don't think you should bother reading the paper at this point.)



February 1, 1996

Julie,

I was happy to receive your paper on professional development. I will circulate it within the CIJE community as we have planned. I'm writing today to give you my immediate reactions, because they may have some bearing on the other paper you are writing.

I read the paper carefully on the same day I received it, because my first glance showed that the paper is very different than what I expected, and what I think we had agreed upon. What we had discussed was to be a research paper, largely based on the chapter on professional development from your Baltimore report, which would have two main elaborations: it would be placed in the broader context of professional development, and it would add evidence from the Milwaukee study, where such evidence was relevant. This paper indeed has a broader context, but it not only lacks any clear evidence from Milwaukee, but most of the evidence from Baltimore has been removed.

Julie, you did some terrific research on this topic, but your research is absent or muted in the paper. In your Baltimore report, I found two penetrating insights. One had to do with workshops as isolated learning, and the other related to teachers' views of learning as a concrete experience. I learned that in-service education as it is typically practiced has limited potential to improve the lives of teachers and the quality of their teaching, because it is fragmented and haphazard rather than part of a coherent program of professional growth. Ironically, teachers do not realize that what they like best about some in-service experiences (hearing something that can put to immediate use) contributes to fragmentation by focusing on the short term. These powerful findings deserve a prominent place in the current paper.

As I comment about specific points in the paper, I will try to show how your insights and evidence can be incorporated.

In the introduction to the paper, the point made in the second paragraph is a good one, but the material from Henry is a bit abstract. I like the use of the policy brief to point towards a need for change. You might want to distinguish that work, with dealt with quantity, from your work, which focuses more on quality.

After the introduction, you need a section to describe the study you carried out: how you interviewed educators in two communities as part of the CIJE study of educators, that among other topics you elicited in-depth information about their perceptions of professional development, and that is the subject of the current paper. After this section, you will be prepared to deploy the material from pp. 41-54 of the Baltimore report (and any related information from Milwaukee) in support of the arguments you are making in the rest of this paper.

Section on "context": Here I urge you to weave in the evidence from Baltimore to generate and/or support your views. The section on "Educators in Complex Organizations" moves much too quickly through your information (p.4-5). These important findings are presented in an impressionistic and undocumented way, and therefore I found them to be unconvincing. Instead, this material should be elaborated, with more details on specific evidence to support and illustrate your points.

I had the same reaction to the section on "conceptual thinkers." Your evidence from Baltimore fits this point well; wouldn't this be a good place to bring in the issue of learning as a concrete experience? I think it's consistent with what you are saying here, and it would help you set up the argument about the need for planning and the need to meet teachers' individual needs. (For theoretical support here you could also draw on Philip Jackson's *Life in Classrooms*.)

Section on "Planning": The CIJE assertions (p.7) do not contribute here, and I found them to be an unnecessary distraction. They have no standing in and of themselves. The issues that follow need to be conceptually or empirically grounded. I urge you to drop this introduction -- especially assertion #1 which was already discussed earlier in the paper -- and instead use your evidence about perceptions of professional development to generate assertions #2, 3, and 4. For example, in the section on "Identifying needs," you could write about how professional development in the communities you studied often fails to identify needs, and explain why that is a problem. In the section on "Developing plans" you could document the typical lack of planning and the fragmented nature of professional development (i.e. workshops as isolated learning experiences), and use that to make the case for coherent planning.

I did not find the "Example" helpful. It is not supported by any material you give, and it distracted me from the main flow of the paper.

In the section on "Providing for professional development" and the introduction to "Providing for reflection," I found the ideas plausible and interesting, but would like to see more specific information to support the case you are building.

At the end of the paper, you discuss five specific strategies for professional development: peer coaching, PAL, mentoring, reflective practice, and teachers as researchers. This needs to be set off as a separate section. In my view it would be fine to include it if it were linked specifically to problems and needs that were identified earlier in the paper through conceptual development and empirical support.

I will obtain responses from others among the CIJE staff and advisors, and will forward them to you by early March. Please revise the paper in light of my comments and the others to come. I would like to obtain your revision one month after you receive the last review. If that is not possible, please indicate the date by which I may expect your revision.



If you wish to delay sending me the paper on teacher power so you can address the thrust of my present comments in the first draft of that paper, please let me know the date by which I may expect to receive it.

Sincerely,  
Adam

P.S. Here is an excerpt from my e-mail message of April 28, 1995, describing the work upon which we agreed:

After long and persistent efforts, I am pleased to say that CIJE would like to commission you to write two research papers, one on "teacher power" and the other on "teacher in-service." The papers are to be based largely on the corresponding chapters in "The professional lives of Jewish educators in Baltimore," but we are asking for two additional features: (1) Data from the Milwaukee "professional lives" study are to be incorporated as appropriate; (2) The studies are to be placed in the context of other research on their topics so they can speak to a broader audience (but still within the world of Jewish education).



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*On Professional Development for Educators in Jewish Settings*

By

Julie Tammivaara, PhD and Roberta Louis Goodman, MA, RJE

January 1996

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The professional development of educators, both directors and teachers, in Jewish preschools, religious schools, and day schools are the focus of this essay; however, educators in other Jewish settings may find some of our thoughts helpful. We begin with a brief discussion of the context in which most Jewish educators are located and will keep this in view as we continue by discussing aspects of professional development of school personnel. By *professional development*, we refer to intentional educational experiences offered to or initiated by educators after they have secured a teaching or administrative position in a school.

Why should educators' professional development concern us? There are two compelling reasons. First, educators are participating in an occupation that is sensitive to what Jules Henry has called the "paradox of the human condition."<sup>1</sup> It is the task of any living culture to conserve it even as members change it. Cultures that do not change die; cultures that change too rapidly also die. Always, Henry argues, we must be *more* sure of surviving than of changing. Striking a balance between conservation and adaptation requires a constant and complicated calculus that often must get worked out in the school classroom. As the vocational, technological, and sociological aspects of a culture shift, so do the demands and needs of pupils. What should be changed? What should remain the same?

To illustrate this point, consider the kind of teacher appropriate for a turn-of-the-century neighborhood supplementary school or Talmud Torah. Two-parent families were the norm and most mothers spent their days in the homes, which had no television or computers. Teacher worked to *supplement* the Jewish education children were receiving in their homes and, in many cases, took the responsibility of assisting newly-arrived children as they grappled with the mysteries of American culture. The

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<sup>1</sup> Jules Henry. *Culture Against Man*. New York: Vintage, 1965, p. 183.

requirements of such a teacher were different from the kind of teacher suitable for pupils today, many of whom may have but one custodial parent, lives a twenty-minute ride from the school, and must pursue religious education in the face of a huge variety of extracurricular activities and the attractions of multimedia offerings. For many of these children in all three school settings, the Jewish education they receive at school is the only form of Jewish education they receive. Supplementary schools are no longer an accessory to home-based Jewish education but the main source of it.

The needs of Jewish educational clientele are not the only thing that changes. As time progresses, science and other scholarship enable us better to understand the way people learn, and this also affects the teaching profession. New discoveries expand the knowledge base and new interpretations transform it. Again, the question arises: what do we keep and what do we change? To keep current and to be able to weigh the alternatives, educators are obliged to continue to learn to continue to teach effectively.

A second reason to be concerned with professional development among educators in Jewish school settings relates to the level of preparation our educators bring to their work. In a study of three large and reasonably strong Jewish communities in the United States,<sup>2</sup> researchers discovered that overall, one-third of the Jewish teachers had received degrees or certificates in education, one-tenth had earned degrees in Jewish studies and 19% had received degrees or certificates in both. The teachers in the remainder of the pie—one-third—held *no degrees or certificates in either area*. The pattern is somewhat different among the three types of school settings, but nonetheless, lack of formal training before entering the profession is problematic in all. School directors, who are typically drawn from the ranks of teaching staffs, are similarly unprepared for their profession.

These two reasons, then, the dynamic nature of human cultures and the relative unreadiness of educators to assume their professional responsibilities argue for the importance of attending carefully to the professional development of educators in Jewish school settings.

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<sup>2</sup> CIJE. *Policy Brief: Background and professional training of teachers in Jewish schools*. New York: Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, 1994.



## **Jewish Educators in Context**

We want to recognize three things in this section. First, the educators upon whom we are focusing are adults, second, they are enmeshed in complex organizational settings that extend well beyond the classroom or school, and, third, educators hold particular world views that give meaning to their lives and the work they do. The first point is relevant to the *structure* of learning in the context of professional development, the second is relevant to the *content* of that learning, and the third informs their *practice*.

### **Educators as Adults**

Jewish educators are adults whose learning in all realms is influenced by their stages and phases of growth as human beings.<sup>3</sup> Educators cannot be separated from their own personhood and learn effectively; attention to the development of a school's teachers and director is essential to creating a nurturing and challenging learning environment for pupils. What we are suggesting is this: learning and growth, both personal and professional, begins with the self. As Levine has written,

The more you know about yourself, the better able you are to model effective learning, support the growth of others, and create a climate conducive to individual and group growth.<sup>4</sup>

Several adult developmental theories give insight into how educators understand themselves, their work, and their worlds. These theories anticipate and identify the preoccupations, assumptions, motives, and interpersonal styles of individuals. As people continue to develop, so too must professional development be viewed as a continuous activity.

Any approach to professional development should integrate an understanding of how adults learn. Although best known for his work focusing on the child learner, scholars in the field of adult education draw upon John Dewey's philosophy for much of their theory and practice, particularly in the United States. Central to Dewey's theory of progressive education is the "organic connection between education and personal experience."<sup>5</sup> Adult education, it is therefore asserted, should draw upon the rich

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<sup>3</sup> Sarah Levine. *Promoting Adult Growth in Schools: The promise of professional development*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. xv.

<sup>5</sup> John Dewey. *Experience and Education*. New York: Collier Books, 1938, p. 25.

reservoirs of the adult learner's experiences and emphasize experiential and interactive learning as distinct from instructor-centered learning.

Writers in the field of adult education offer two concepts to distinguish adult learning from child learning. The first, *critical or reflective thinking* refers to the practice of acknowledging and pondering the assumptions that underlie our own and others' ideas and actions and, in doing so, generate alternative ways of thinking and living.<sup>6</sup> This practice need not necessarily lead to abandonment of current practices, but ensures that from among available options, we are conscious of what they entail and are in a position to make informed choices.

Jack Mezirow extends the concept of critical thinking to encompass what he has termed *transformative learning*. Transformative learning

involves a particular function of reflection: reassessing the presuppositions on which our beliefs are based and acting on insights derived from the transformed meaning perspective that results from such reassessments.<sup>7</sup>

Transformative learning touches the deep and underlying meaning structures that shape a person's beliefs, give rise to their feelings and thoughts, and guide their actions.

Professional development planners should therefore keep in mind the fact that their learners bring with them ways of thinking based upon years of experience. New ideas and new concepts will not be meaningfully incorporated in the absence of critical reflection. New pieces must be shaped to fit existing frames or, more drastically, new frames for making meaning must be constructed. Professional development activities must accommodate this reality and provide for it.

### **Educators in Complex Organizations**

In our work with Jewish educators over the past four years, we have been struck time and again by how narrowly both teachers and directors define their organizational world. Both tend to look downward [or inward, depending upon the metaphor in use] and seldom upward [or outward]. Specifically, teachers define themselves in terms of their classrooms, and directors define themselves in terms of their schools. In discussing important issues such as power or collegiality or purpose, educators seldom

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Brookfield. *Developing Critical Thinkers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Jack Mezirow. "How critical reflection triggers transformative learning." In *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*, Jack Mezirow, ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p. 19.



venture beyond the perimeter of their schools. They seem either unaware or uninterested in the web of relationships available to them or integral to their positions that are outside the physical space in which they work. We have encountered supplementary school teachers who are unaware of the individual or individuals who teach their pupils the year before they receive them and those who will receive them the next year, not to mention what these other individuals have taught or will be teaching the pupils. We have encountered day school teachers who teach Jewish studies who are completely unaware of what or whom is involved with their pupils in the area of secular studies and vice versa. We have met Hebrew teachers who operate independently from both faculties. Sometimes these faculties are so separate that they never meet together in one room at the same time in the course of a school year and may have completely different sets of rules for pupil behavior. We have met preschool teachers who are unaware of the developmental theories in use for the ages preceding or following upon the one for which they are responsible. In the larger context, preschools are largely disconnected from the supplementary schools or day schools into which their pupils will matriculate. Similarly, supplementary and day school teachers seldom are acquainted with the personnel and philosophies of the preschools that feed their schools. Most teachers and a surprising number of directors are unaware of the function of education committees, and an equally surprising number have no meaningful relationship with rabbis. Educators' distance is even greater from federation personnel who, nevertheless, have much to say about the working conditions of educators.

Despite this lack of awareness, the preponderance of Jewish schools are located in complex structures that include parents, education committees, rabbis, central agency personnel, evaluators, federations, researchers, and colleagues both within and outside their particular setting. Not being aware of or ignoring the full context within which they are enmeshed, robs Jewish educators of participation in the larger political structure and thus their ability to participate in decisions central to the work they do. It renders them passive recipients of others' decisions.

In considering professional development at the communal level, then, we are of the opinion that learning should be guided by an appreciation of teachers and administrators as adult learners and should encompass the full panoply of their working



lives, including attention to their connectedness with other schools served by their pupils and the full range of participants in their working context.

### **Educators as Conceptual Thinkers**

Educators are notoriously resistant to the notion of theory. In their assessments of professional development activities, one common complaint is that the workshop or course was “too theoretical.” When pressed to explain, they will answer that the ideas were too abstract and they did not learn a new strategy or technique that could be immediately incorporated into their classroom or school.

This attitude has frustrated instructors, who are persuaded—rightly so, we believe—that sensitivity to theory is essential to good teaching and a fundamental aspect of the educated person. After many discussions with educators, we are becoming convinced that the way practitioners use the word “theory” and how academicians use it are different. We are also convinced that teachers do not operate atheoretically, but their theories in use, for the most part, are tacit.

One way of making sense of educators’ perspectives on theory is to interpret their assessment of material being “too theoretical” as meaning not that it is abstract, but that its abstractness has not been connected to the real-life meanings of the learners. Theory that remains ungrounded in educators’ “real” world experiences is not seen as useful, and educators are right to reject it. If theory is a lens through which learners can make sense of the world and sharpen our understanding of it, then the connection between theory and lived experience is crucial. Instructors who fail to provide opportunities for this connection to occur lose the attention of their students.

Having set the stage by sharing our point of view, we shall shift our focus to examining the specifics of professional development for the educator in Jewish school settings. We will begin with a discussion of planning for professional development, then move to a discussion of providing for professional development, and end with a presentation of some models of professional development.

### ***Planning for Professional Development***

At a CIJE-sponsored institute for principals and directors in Jewish preschools, supplementary schools, and day schools held in October, 1994, the following was asserted:

Professional development must be approached from four interconnected premises:

- ◆ Educators have life-long professional needs that should be viewed within a framework that is progressive;
- ◆ For progression to be realized, educators' professional needs should be assessed on a regular basis;
- ◆ A school's developmental plan should take into account the professional development of its faculty and staff; and,
- ◆ Professional developmental plans of individual teachers and administrators should harmonize the individual's personal needs with the needs of the school or schools in which the educator works.

We have already addressed the first point: that educators are adult learners living in dynamic cultural contexts that require educators to continue to learn to maintain their effectiveness. The second point is germane to this section: educators' professional development needs should be identified and planned for on a regular basis.

### ***Identifying Professional Development Needs***

The work of educators is multi-faceted. Educators work from a knowledge base in one or more areas. From this store of knowledge, they must make decisions about what to include in their lessons and what should be excluded. They must devise means of conveying what they know and inspiring learners to thirst for more knowledge. Alternatively, they might see their work as a journey toward knowledge and wisdom, in which case they must persuade their pupils to join them on the trek. They must work from a point of view; this requires they at least have one and better, know what it is. Their work should be about something, that is, have purpose. Educators work in a social context that minimally consists of themselves and their pupils or themselves and their teachers. They must therefore attend to the quality and strength of relationships with other people. Ideally, this constellation of relationships also includes colleagues, superiors the clergy, lay people, and parents. To be able to claim their part in conversations about their work that matter, they must be skillful in knowing what would benefit them in their work and how to persuade others to their point of view.



We have noted that many educators in Jewish schools—most of them, in fact—lack comprehensive formal training in their chosen profession. Even if they had been trained, however, we now recognize that such training is at best a starting point, not a terminus. To be an educator is to be in a constant state of becoming. While we might identify ourselves as educators by saying, “I am a teacher,” or “I am a director,” in fact the best that can be said is that “I am *becoming* an educator.” The implication for professional development is clear: ongoing, continuous growth is essential.

Professional development activities take the form of three goals. For the especially unprepared, professional development can be seen as *remediation*. What is being remediated is skill at some minimal level in the areas considered central to Jewish education. This may be pedagogical, content-related, political or interpersonal. Professional development activities can also be undertaken to obtain *credentials* in the form of degrees, licenses, or certificates. More generally, development is pursued as a natural concomitant to one’s identity as a professional; a necessary adjunct to one’s *evolution* as an educator. Whatever the aim, and all three have merit, a sensible course of action depends on careful auditing of needs, both individual and school-wide.

Taking stock of one’s strengths in the panoply of skills and aptitudes inherent in the educational endeavor is the first step toward intentional and coherent growth. Deciding upon where one is and where one might head should be a function of both the individual and others, be they administrators or other superiors, and colleagues.

### **Developing Professional Growth Plans**

While most Jewish educational communities offer their educators opportunities for professional development, we are not convinced that there is a good fit between what educators need and what offerings are made. A typical scheme seems to be this: professional development staff ask individual teachers and administrators—usually through a paper and pencil survey—what they would like to learn more about. From the returns, the professional development staff designs workshop offerings aimed at the most oft-mentioned topics. In summer or early fall, the menu of workshops or short courses is announced and educators are invited to sign up for them. Educators calculate their interest in a workshop with the time, place and length of the professional development activity, and they make their choice[s]. In our experience with five large Jewish educational communities, these choices are seldom the result careful assessment of an educator’s developmental needs, of collaboration with other



educators, and even less often take into account the needs of the school or schools in which the educators work. There are exceptions, but choices tend to reflect discrete, short-term needs, rather than fit into a sustained, long-term professional development plan. For example, a particularly disruptive class one year might lead a teacher to choose a class in behavior management the next; the presence of a special needs pupil one year might lead to signing up for a special needs workshop the next; and so on. While a certain amount of flexibility is desirable, logic dictates that getting in touch with oneself, one's vocational context, and the purposes of the school in which one works should yield an idea of professional development that extends beyond the next six months.

In the absence of assessment and planning for professional development, workshop and course experiences are reduced to discrete instances of learning, and educators are left to integrate them into their teaching or administering on their own. Of course, all learning is subject to such integration. There is a meaningful difference however between accommodating a new piece into a crazy quilt scheme of pedagogy or subject matter and doing so with the guidance of a consciously acknowledged conceptual scheme. In the former instance, professional development activities add up to a "bag of tricks;" in the latter, they can contribute to a vital and enriching practice that is coherent and filled with implications for next steps. To achieve a coherent idea of one's practice requires self-reflection and criticism in concert with others' with whom one's work must articulate.

How can planning for individual professional development be realized? There are undoubtedly many ways of accomplishing this, and it is not within the scope of this essay to detail them. There are some key actions, however, that characterize professional development planning.

First, educators need an opportunity to reflect upon the purpose that drives their practice. What is it they are trying to accomplish, both inside and outside their classroom or school? From an articulated purpose, they can begin to build a conceptual framework, the scaffolding that supports the purpose of their work. Within this framework, they can then assess where they are strong and where they need to be stronger. Some needs may be short term and relatively easily achievable; others may require longer-term investments of time and energy. In collaboration with colleagues

and supervisors, educators can develop blueprints of their professional growth against which successive years of practice can be examined.

### **An Example**

To illustrate the idea of a conceptual framework, we will draw upon another aspect of the principals institute mentioned above. At the same institute, Dr. Terry Deal and Dr. Ellen Goldring, both of Vanderbilt University, suggested four ways of framing our thinking about organizations. One's roles and responsibilities, they argued, can be conceived or "framed" in at least four different ways: symbolically, politically, structurally, and as human resource. These frames are both "windows on the world and lenses that bring the world into focus."<sup>8</sup> The frame one chooses to conceptualize an organization affects how one defines its problems, one's role in it, and the range of appropriate responses to it.

Those who use a **symbolic** frame, see organizations as places where drama is realized. They are attuned to the idea of vision and inspiration and appreciate the importance of rituals, drama or personal charisma to foster common or shared meaning among an organization's constituents for events, objects or goals. They are likely to see difficulties as problems of difference, that is, people understanding the same thing in various and incompatible ways. They will attempt to redress problems by trying to promote an ambiance of shared meaning.

Educators who use **political** frames will see the school or classroom in the context of power and influence. When they develop an agenda, they will seek to establish a network of allies to form a coalition that would be helpful in achieving their aims. They live in a world of conflict and scarce resources. **Structuralists** emphasize the importance of clarity and well-developed management systems. They are concerned with role definitions, task allocations, and focused attention to tasks that need to be accomplished. Problems arise from people not attending enough to who they are and what they should be accomplishing. Drawing others' attention to organizational charts and definitions is a way of smoothing rough spots. Finally, there are those who see themselves and their colleagues as a **human resource**. These people, and in the field of education they are the most numerous, emphasize the need for strong interpersonal relationships. They are "people" people, who value participatory approaches to problems and do not like to think in terms of authority or



uni-lateral decision making. Problems are likely to be analyzed as the function of personality conflicts and are thus largely unsolvable. Depending upon which frame one uses, Bolman and Deal point out, problems will be defined differently and adherents will look to different courses of action for their solution.

These four frames are not inherently good or bad. Using any single one to interpret a multiplicity of situations, however, is likely to be counter-productive. Not only is it the case that different problems are best addressed with different frames, a given situation may best be handled by looking at it through two or more of these lenses. Bolman and Deal would go further by insisting that "each perspective contains ingredients that are essential to an integrative science of organizations."<sup>9</sup>

These "blueprints" serve as important guides to choices; however, they should not be writ in stone, so to speak, but they should be open to adaptation to unanticipated circumstances, opportunities, and constraints. Because the world is somewhat unpredictable and one's foresight cannot be perfect, regular reviews of professional development plans are necessary. The recognition of the need for professional development plans leads to the next step: establishing space and time for knowledge and understandings to emerge.

### *Providing for Professional Development*

Writings about educators are replete with references to "isolation" as a seemingly inherent property of those who work in schools. Teachers are isolated in individual classrooms and administrators are isolated from their peers in other schools. To the extent this is a challenge for those who work in public education, it is even more so for educators in Jewish supplementary schools and most day schools. Supplementary school teachers are typically contracted for a specified number of contact hours with pupils. Implicit in this arrangement is the idea that their work begins and ends inside the classroom. While it is expected they will prepare for their classes and occasionally encounter parents or their director, such contact is not presumed by the nature of their contracts, if indeed they even have a contract. Directors are loathe to impose faculty meetings on teachers and teachers are often loathe to attend them. Most supplementary schools do not have "teachers' lounges" and if they do, the

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<sup>8</sup> Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal. *Reframing Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 316.



truncated time teachers spend in supplementary schools ensures few would likely use it to talk about their work. Workshops and courses provide educators with a space to meet and develop a network of colleagues, but our observation is that this occurs seldom, as educators focus on the content of the workshop and not upon connecting with others. If the workshop is short, requiring little interaction among participants, the possibility for networking is further constrained.

The naturally-occurring opportunities for teachers connect in many day schools is not much better. While day schools offer full-time employment where supplementary schools do not, the proportion of teachers who are actually full time is quite small. Among all day school teachers in a mid-sized Jewish community [25,000] only one-third are employed full time. The majority are in the same position as the supplementary school teacher in that they are contracted for a specific number of contact hours for which they are expected to be present. These teachers do not “hang around” outside their classroom time to discuss their work with colleagues. The one setting where there is time and opportunity for collegial interaction seems to be the preschool, where, depending upon the physical design and philosophy of the school, collegial relations are quite possible. This is especially the case if the school has an open classroom design. Nap time, of course, provides a space for teachers to meet and discuss their work.

What all this means is this: if educators are to be expected to grow in knowledge and understanding of the work they do, communities must consciously provide them with space, time, and opportunities to do so. The definition of being a professional in the field of Jewish education needs to be expanded to include educators’ professional growth and development.

A separate but related notion harks back to our earlier discussion of educators as adult learners. If adult learning necessarily entails reflection and critical thinking, then avenues for doing so must be established both within and outside the physical confines of the school. Again, this can be done in a number of ways; in the following section, we will detail five ways developed in the field of education.

### ***Providing for Reflection and Critical Thinking***

We noted earlier that the structure of Jewish school organizations, in the main, do not encourage collegial reflection on practice. Teachers’ schedules typically do not

provide for preparation periods where colleagues can meet together and most teaching contracts do not insist that teachers interact with one another on a regular basis. Administrators, of course, are often the only individual in their category in their school, so they too are isolated from potential colleagues. If we take seriously the discoveries of those who study adult education, then schools must begin to provide space for educators to reflect alone and together on their practice.

In the past several years, a number of different strategies for providing educators with opportunities for observation, discussion, and reflection on their work have been advanced. In this section, we will discuss some of these, recognizing that the inventory is not exhaustive, and even if it were, other strategies can be developed to suit individual school or communal needs.

### **Peer Coaching**

Peer coaching is a "process where teams of teachers regularly observe one another and provide support, companionship, feedback, and assistance."<sup>10</sup> As an ongoing partnership of pairs of teachers, peer coaching not only can help teachers increase their skill in specific areas of competence, but provides a space for them to reflect on practice, engage in meaningful dialogue about their work, and deepen collegial relationships.

Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers were the first to use peer coaching as a professional development strategy. They were interested in developing a way to apply theoretical ideas learned in workshop settings to classroom practice. Their own research revealed marked increase in application rates when theoretically-based techniques taught in workshops were supported by practice, feedback, and reflection. The 80% success rate dropped to 20% without the support of practice, feedback, and reflection.

Peer coaching not only incorporates the practice-feedback-reflection sequence but allows teachers to contextualize learning occurring outside the classroom. Partners, who generally teach in the same school, can work together to translate learning to the specific configuration of their own school. Having a partner to share in critical thinking about one's teaching can facilitate and broaden understanding. Teachers who participated in a peer coaching experience in one of the CIJE Lead

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<sup>10</sup> S. W. Valencia and J. P. Killion. "Overcoming Obstacles to Teacher Change: Directions from school-based efforts," *Journal of Staff Development*, 9:2:170.



Communities reported additional benefits of this process, including learning from one another by observing the other's teaching.

The process is somewhat more complicated than it might appear of the surface. In broad strokes, peer coaching involves learning theoretically-based skills in a workshop format; selecting skills to be practiced; consulting with one's partner about the selected skills; an observation session; and a consultation consisting of a dialogue based on the observation. There are several fairly sophisticated skills embedded in this process; observation is more than looking and consultation is more than talking. While early efforts will necessarily be more rudimentary than later ones, teachers need to learn how to observe and learn what constitutes appropriate questions, suggestions, and affirmation for the consultative sessions.

Peer coaching also requires attention to logistics. To perform the observations, teachers need to be freed from classroom duties; that is, substitutes must be available if partners share the same teaching schedule. Time must also be built into the process for the pre- and post-observation consultations. For this process to work, expectations for the additional but richly rewarding time teachers will have to spend on the job should be made clear, even to the point of including this expectation in annual contracts. For further information on peer coaching and the other professional development strategies discussed in this section, refer to the references at the end of the essay.

#### ***Peer-Assisted Leadership Program***

The Peer-Assisted Leadership Program [PAL] was developed specifically for principals to improve their leadership effectiveness. In form, this program is similar to peer coaching in that principals undergo a training program in leadership and are paired with a colleague. Instead of classroom observation, principals observe one another by "shadowing" each other for extended periods of time. Consultations in the form of feedback and reflection are built into the process. The goals of this program are consistent with those of peer coaching in that improved program outcomes are expected. By working in partnership with principals from another school, participants gain a deepened sense of collegiality, reducing the isolation they often experience. The original program was developed at the Far West Laboratory in San Francisco; it has been adapted for use by Jewish educational directors.

## Mentoring

Mentoring also involves pairing professionals, but unlike peer coaching or the peer-assisted leadership program, the mentor and her partner are presumed not to be equal. In the mentoring relationship a more experienced educator is paired with a less experienced educator. According to Michael Zeldin,

Mentoring is aimed at the deliberate induction of novices into a profession. Novices learn the skills and techniques of the profession, and they practice them under the guidance of an experienced professional. They are encouraged to reflect on their own development, both in terms of what they are learning and how they are growing.<sup>11</sup>

The path a protégé follows with a mentor begins with dependence, continues into independence, and ends in a state of interdependence.

Heroic myths are replete with instances of mentoring and one, *The Odyssey*, provides the character whose name is bestowed on the process. In these heroic myths, the pattern of training novices is fairly fixed. It begins with the elder or more experienced partner engendering trust in the novice. This is followed by the issuance of a challenge, the provision of encouragement, and the offer of a vision. Mentoring in the context of inducting novices into a profession follows a similar outline. For a mentoring relationship to work, the novice must trust and believe credible the mentor who will guide him. The novice is then challenged to acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding that will enable him to take his place as a professional. Along the journey, the mentor encourages the novice's efforts, assisting him when he falters. When the novice is sufficiently knowledgeable, the mentor can help the novice envision the profession into which he aspires to enter.

As with the case with the techniques described above, the foregoing description is deceptively simple. Age and years of experience do not guarantee a mentor will be wise. Effective mentoring, as with most things of value, involves a combination of art and science. For example, the mentor must determine when to lead and when to let go; when to lend a hand and when to withhold it. She must not only have an explicit vision for her own practice, but be generous enough to permit another to envision a different future.

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Zeldin. "The Promise of Mentoring." *In Touching the Future: Mentoring and the Jewish professional* edited by Michael Zeldin and Sara S. Lee. Los Angeles: Hebrew Union College, 1995, p. 16



## Reflective Practice

Reflective practice as elaborated by Donald Schon is less a strategy for professional development, than a perspective on professional training. Having surveyed the actual practices of a variety of professionals, he was led to conclude that the nature of pre-professional programs emphasized a rational instrumental approach to knowledge at the expense of the kind of dialogic, reflective stance that, in fact, successful practitioners must use to confront meaningful issues in their work. The “indeterminate, swampy zones” of practice are fraught with problems that do lend themselves to clean formulaic remedies.<sup>12</sup> Professional issues, he says, belong in the domain of art, rather than science. He proposes the concept of artistry as a way of knowing that is rigorous, but distinct from technical rationality.

Schon identifies three types of knowledge within the domain of artistry: knowing-in-action, reflection-in-action, and reflection on reflection-in-action. Knowing-in-action refers to

the sorts of know-how we reveal in our intelligent action—publicly observable, physical performances like riding a bicycle and private operations like instant analysis of a balance sheet. In both cases, the knowing is in the action. We reveal it by our spontaneous, skillful execution of the performance; and we are characteristically unable to make it verbally explicit.<sup>13</sup>

Knowing-in-action is tacit and unexamined. It works as long as the required response is “within the boundaries of what we have learned to treat as normal.”<sup>14</sup>

Reflection-in-action comes into play when our routine ways of handling a problem are no longer sufficient. Reflection-in-action raises questions about the assumptions behind our knowing-in-action. Failure leads us to immediate experimentation upon which we reflect. Reflection opens us to explicit understanding of our assumptions and, perhaps, to play out similar situations we have vested with the same [now] faulty assumptions. For the teacher, reflection-in-action arises when a particular way of handling a routine classroom event, say calling a class to order, suddenly doesn't produce the expected result. The reasonable request in a formal but modulated voice fails to bring the fifteen individuals to collective attention. Perhaps,

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<sup>12</sup> Donald A. Schon. *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987, p. ?.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 28.

the teacher thinks, raising the voice will succeed. If not, perhaps lowering the voice will bring about pupils' attention, and so on until the goal is achieved. The problem is framed and re-framed until the problem is dispatched.

The third aspect of artistry is reflecting on reflection-in-action. This step involves being able to articulate or describe the process of reflection-in-action. It entails a review of the process and a search for a pattern in the situation such that new sense can be made of it. When a lesson or a technique fails, reflection foregrounds its defining aspects so underlying structures can be revealed and understood. Teachers should be prepared to reflect on their reflection-in action and, in turn, help pupils do so.

Among educators, reflective practice is the kind of activity commonly heard in teachers' lounges during preparation periods, lunch periods or other breaks. It is the kind of activity that lends itself to relatively short-term, as well as long-term, gatherings in both formal and informal settings.

### **Teachers as Researchers**

In the past two decades, a small group of educators have been advocating the somewhat radical notion that research need not be restricted to the academy. Most prominently, Susan Lytle and Marilyn Cochran-Smith argue and have demonstrated that teachers can engage in "systematic, intentional inquiry [...] about their own school and classroom work."<sup>15</sup> They, along with Douglas Campbell, see teacher research as a way of developing professionally. When teachers engage in research in their own settings, they are empowered to address real, contextually-based issues and gain the confidence to overcome organizational constraints that limit their ability to learn from their own experience. Lytle and Cochran-Smith write

Teacher research is a powerful way for teachers to understand how they and their students construct and re-construct the curriculum. By conducting inquiry on their own practices, teachers identify discrepancies between their theories of practice and their practices, between their own practices and those of others in their schools, and between their ongoing assumptions about what is going on in their classrooms and their more distanced and retrospective interpretations. Inquiry stimulates, intensifies, and illuminates changes in practice.<sup>16</sup>

In a similar vein, Campbell sees teachers as researchers as

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<sup>15</sup> Susan L. Lytle and Marilyn Cochran-Smith. "Teacher Research as a Way of Knowing," *Harvard Educational Review*, 62:4:450.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 458.



a process of inquiry for making tacit knowledge more consciously available for critical reflection, and for locating answers to specific instructional problems within teachers themselves, as well as from colleagues.<sup>17</sup>

The teacher-as-researcher notion rests on three assumptions about educators, according to Campbell: [1] teachers already know a great deal about teaching both from their classroom experience and professional development activities; [2] teachers lack sufficient time, resources, and rewards for doing the critical reflection needed to make their knowledge useful to their practice; and, [3] the organizational nature of schools constrains teachers' ability to critically examine their work. These three premises result in teachers' knowledge remaining largely unspoken, implicit, and parochially-embedded in the particulars of their own classrooms. Because this knowledge is unspoken, it cannot be reflected upon. Not only are educators thus deprived of the wisdom to be gained from understanding the deeper structures of their work, they are also deprived of knowing that they belong to a community of professional that share their world.

Generally, teacher research is accomplished in groups. Teacher research groups can be organized on a grade level, a subject area level, an institutional level, or a communal level. To be successful, teachers need technical support in how to do inquiry and moral support for critically examining long-held assumptions and views about their teaching. By working in groups, teachers can learn about how other teachers conceptualize their work: what is problematic for them, how they think about the problems of teaching, how they struggle to resolve difficulties. The goal of teacher-based research is three-fold: to learn about conducting inquiry, to practice it, and to apply the results to their own work.

### Summary

Writing from an adult education perspective, we have presented the case for continuous professional development of educators in Jewish school settings. We have noted the importance of remembering the complexity of the organizational context within which educators work and the [usually] tacit conceptual frameworks they use to

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<sup>17</sup> Douglas Campbell. "Collaboration and contradiction in a research and staff-development project," *Teachers College Record*, 90:1:102.

make sense of their work. We have noted the usefulness of taking stock or auditing educators' current skills and perspectives periodically to plan for individual and collective professional development. We argued for the explicit preparation of plans for professional growth, both short-term and long term. Finally we pointed out the need for schools and communities to provide space and support for professional development by including such efforts as part of educators' routine identities as professionals. In conclusion, we described five strategies for professional development.

Since the workshop is the most common form of professional development activity, we did not spend time in discussing them. This should not be taken to mean we do not think this format important. Workshops are ideal settings for acquiring some kinds of knowledge central to education. They are especially useful for learning about skills that one can then practice and reflect upon and in gaining access to alternative conceptions of educational practice. In some Jewish educational communities, workshops are being offered to individual schools as well as on the communal level, reflecting a trend visible in the general educational community. On the other end of the spectrum, we are seeing a possible increase in the number of regional and national workshops or institutes available to Jewish educators. We applaud these trends, as each format, whether site based or communal, local or national has much to offer educators. It is important that learning be grounded in one's local experience, but it is also instructive to know what others are doing and expand one's professional network.

Another aspect of professional development slighted in our discussion is the importance of thinking about different levels of development, as well as different categories. In our experience, many of the offerings tend to be aimed at entry level professionals, leaving those in more advanced stages of development without resources. As they plan for professional development, communities should take the varying levels of experience and expertise into account and provide for all. This may mean extending one's thinking about resources beyond the periphery of local communities or tapping the resources of area post-secondary institutions. Some of these, for example the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies and Spertus College in Chicago, have developed distance education programs that educators are finding useful.



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