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Studies in Memory of **Mordechai Bar-Lev**

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# Towards Building A Profession: Characteristics Of Contemporary Educators In American Jewish Schools

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Ever since Jewish education confronted modernity on the shores of North America early in the twentieth century, reformers have dreamed of a "profession" of Jewish education. One advocate of change was Emanuel Gamoran, a student of John Dewey at Teachers College, Columbia University, and the first director of education for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Reform Movement in the U.S. In his first year on the job he wrote (1924, p.5):

"Very few people today would think of entrusting their legal affairs to anyone but a lawyer who had received special training entitling him to engage in his professional activities. Still less would people permit anyone who had not received a long and arduous course of training followed by a period of practice in medicine to minister to their physical ailments. Yet those who are entrusted with the responsibility of molding the character of the young – of developing the Jews of tomorrow – are too often people who present no other qualification for their task than that of availability."

The dream of professionalizing Jewish education has been expressed repeatedly over the years (e.g., Aron, 1990; Chipkin, 1936; Pilch, 1969; Schoolman, 1966 [1960];). This long-sought ideal gains renewed importance in today's educational arena, as recent initiatives and research in general education have linked teacher training and professional development with improved student learning (e.g.,



McLaughlin and Oberman, 1996). A changing paradigm in education that is focusing on "teaching for understanding" in contrast to "teaching for the transmission of knowledge" provides the impetus for the widespread redesign of both preservice teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional development work with teachers (Cohen, Talbert, and McLaughlin, 1993; National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1996). These initiatives are reinforcing the importance of staffing schools with professional educators who possess knowledge, skills and commitments to implement critical changes in education.

In 1991, the Commission on Jewish Education in North America declared that building the profession of Jewish education is essential for improving Jewish education in North America. The Commission's manifesto, *A Time to Act*, envisioned strategies for building the profession, including better recruitment, expanded training facilities, intensive in-service training, improved working conditions and career opportunities, and empowerment for educators. How should we prioritize among these strategies? Which efforts are most likely to bear fruit? To reach effective decisions, we need to answer three questions: (1) What do we mean by "building the profession"? (2) What are the professional characteristics of teachers and leaders in the Jewish schools of today? (3) Which strategies offer the best chance of building the profession?

We respond to these questions with evidence from research on Jewish educators in the United States. One source of data is a survey of 77 educational leaders and 982 teachers carried out by the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, the successor to the Commission, in collaboration with three communities: Atlanta, Baltimore, and Milwaukee. In 1993, all educational administrators and all teachers of Jewish subjects in the day schools, supplementary schools, and pre-schools in these communities were targets of the survey. Response rates were 77% for educational leaders and 82% for teachers. As a supplement to the surveys, 125 educators in the three communities responded to in-depth interviews. Gamoran, Goldring, Robinson, Tammivaara and Goodman (1998) and Goldring, Gamoran, and Robinson (forthcoming) provide more information about the CIJE

Study of Educators, and many of the computations and interviews reported in this paper are drawn from those reports.

The second source of evidence is the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) of 1990-91, carried out by the U.S. Department of Education. This national survey of public and private schools included teachers and principals in three categories of Jewish day schools: Torah u'Mesorah schools, Solomon Schechter schools, and "other Jewish" schools (schools sponsored by communities and other movements). Response rates for SASS were over 80%. Our tabulations for this paper are compiled from published data reported in *Private Schools in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1990-91* (McLaughlin, O'Donnell, and Reis, 1995).

## JEWISH EDUCATION AS A PROFESSION

After considering an extensive academic literature on professionalization, Aron (1990) argued that three criteria are essential for thinking about Jewish education as a profession. These criteria of a profession are:

- (1) Specialized technical knowledge: that is, particular knowledge held by members of the occupational group, formally transmitted through training institutions.
- (2) Collective control over conditions of work: the ability to regulate the boundaries of the occupational group, and to determine collectively the structure of tasks, rewards, advancement, and so on.
- (3) Commitment to the occupation: the view of the occupation as a "calling," that is, a career to which one is devoted over the long term.

Although many writers argue that Jewish education does not meet these criteria, the most interesting starting point is to recognize the weak degree to which education *in general* meets these criteria. Despite the formal preparation of educators, which is nearly universal in the United



States (Choy, Henke, Alt, Medrich and Bobbitt, 1993), education in general and teaching in particular has a weak base of specialized knowledge. When teachers talk with one another, they rarely use specific technical language (Jackson, 1968). A non-educator sitting in the teacher's lounge would have little trouble following the conversation. Contrast that situation with the resident's room of a hospital, where an outsider would have difficulty keeping up with the medical talk. The field of medicine provides another sharp contrast in the area of occupational control: unlike the certification of doctors, which is regulated by a medical board, educators have relatively little role in certifying teachers or principals. Entry into educational occupations is controlled by the state, not by educational practitioners. However, the degree of control at the work site is very high in education, insofar as teachers have substantial autonomy within their classrooms (Gamoran, Porter, and Gahng, 1995). Finally, educators tend to exhibit occupational commitment. Although "burnout" is often cited as an important problem, and educational administrators change jobs with regularity, turnover tends to be within the field of education, not an exit from the occupation. Overall, the weak links between education and the criteria of professionalization, at least compared to occupations such as law and medicine, have led some writers to refer to education as a "semi-profession" rather than a full-fledged profession (Etzioni, 1969).

All of the limitations of education as a profession are evident for Jewish education as well. Still, our analysis of data on Jewish educators will show that the differences between Jewish and general education relative to the criteria of professionalization are differences of degree, not of kind. That is, like general education, Jewish education is not a full-fledged profession – but it has many important aspects of professionalization which should not be ignored. To make this case, it is useful to reflect on the features of Jewish education which are usually considered to be its distinctive aspects in contrast with general education. First, Jewish education lacks a centralized authority structure (Ackerman, 1990; Aron, 1990). Schools are typically attached to congregations or communities; many day schools are affiliated with national organizations, but the governance of each school is

localized at the school site. Yet public education in the United States is also highly decentralized; not as decentralized as Jewish education, but principals and teachers have substantial autonomy within their spheres of work, and federal and state authorities provide broad latitude for diversity within their regulatory functions (Borman, Cookson, Sadovnik and Spade, 1996). Second, Jewish education lacks a base of technical knowledge. As noted above, however, weak technical knowledge is a pervasive feature of education in general. Third, one would not find a consensus on goals within Jewish education, particularly when comparing across the various constituencies of Jewish education. Yet the same is often said about education in general: competing and even conflicting goals are an endemic feature of education (Cuban, 1990). Fourth, most Jewish educators work part-time in the field, whereas general education usually involves full-time work. Nonetheless, there are reasons to see the difference in hours of work as one of degree rather than kind. Even full-time educators do not usually work *year round*. Although the proportion of teachers who work part time in general education is small, it is growing (Choy *et al.*, 1993). Moreover, our evidence will show that a sizeable number of Jewish educators work full time during the school year, particularly in day schools, and among educational administrators, in various types of settings.

In contrast to this list of similarities, there is one way in which Jewish education differs dramatically from general education: the absence of regulation over entry into the occupation. In Jewish education, "availability" is still a chief criterion, as Gamoran (1924) noted long ago, but in public education, state certification is almost always required. When we consider the implications of the evidence for building the profession of Jewish education, we will need to keep in mind this crucial distinction from general education.

Some scholars claim that efforts to build Jewish education as a profession cannot bear sufficient fruit in recruiting and developing a teaching force for Jewish education. Aron (1988) argued that Jewish schools, especially supplementary schools, could not pin their hopes on recruiting and training a professional core of teachers. Aron recommended that policies should focus on Jewish teaching as an



"avocation" rather than a profession. The term avocation refers to "a quasi-religious calling and a task one does for love, rather than for the necessity of earning a living" (Aron, 1997, p. 434). In practice, the idea of avocational teaching commonly refers to recruiting congregants, often parent volunteers, to teach in the religious school because they have shared values and commitments with the religious school. These values and commitments are then supplemented with specific training to prepare avocational teachers to work in the classroom (see Feiman-Nemser, 1997). As Dorph and Feiman-Nemser (1997) pointed out, for parent volunteers with limited time and limited background in Jewish content or education, "the distinction between preservice and in service teacher education made no sense." The volunteers' development "...needed to be situated in the context of their ongoing work with students" (p. 460). An avocational teacher model suggests that the recruitment and preparation of teachers is primarily a local matter.

In this paper we take up the question of whether professionalism and part-time teachers are inherently incompatible. The avocational model points out the difficulty of recruiting trained teachers for part-time work. Yet it is worth examining more closely the levels of preparation that currently exist among teachers, including those in supplementary schools, and it is important to examine the nature of teachers' commitment to their work. To the extent that teachers exhibit occupational commitment in the field of Jewish education, it may be possible to enhance their professionalism despite shortages of formal training.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTEMPORARY JEWISH EDUCATORS

In examining the data, we focus on two issues: whether it is reasonable to speak of Jewish education as a "profession," as defined by the criteria above; and if so, which strategies are best suited to improving the quality of Jewish education as a profession. We present the evidence organized according to the criteria of professionalism: specialized knowledge, control over working conditions, and career commitment.

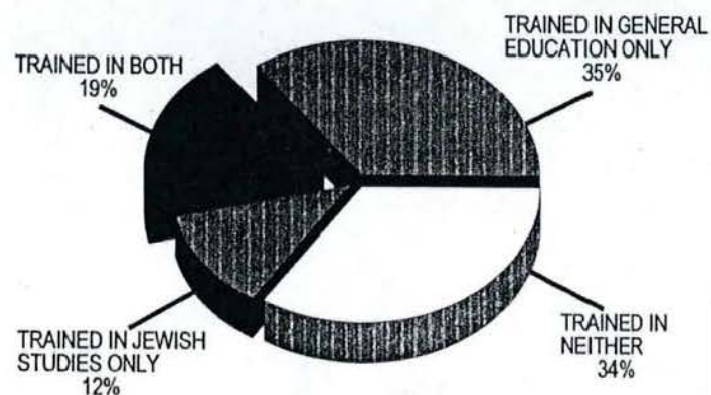
## Specialized Knowledge

On the one hand, educators in Jewish schools have less specialized knowledge than their counterparts in general education, at least as measured by indicators of formal training. On the other hand, a large proportion of educators have some formal training for their roles, a finding that perhaps speaks against the view of Jewish education as avocational.

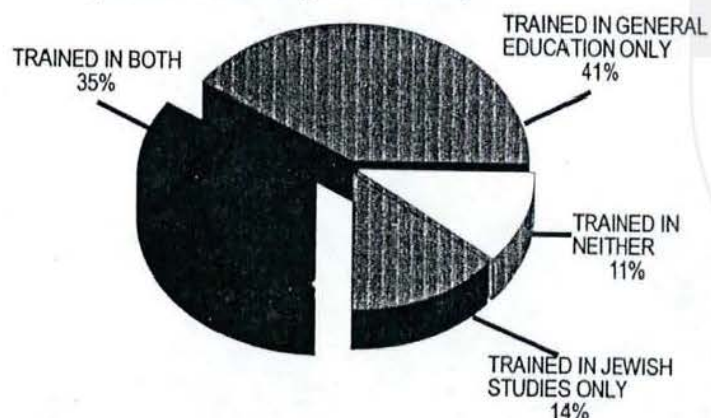
*Pre-service preparation.* If teaching were a profession, one would expect to see specialized knowledge in two areas: pedagogy, or methods of teaching, and subject matter. According to the CIJE Study of Educators, over half of the teachers surveyed reported a degree in education, either from a university or a teacher training institute. This figure included 60% of day school teachers, 46% of supplementary school teachers, and 61% of pre-school teachers (Gamoran *et al.*, 1998). Findings for day schools from the SASS were comparable: 64% of Torah u'Mesorah teachers, 70% of Schechter teachers, and 52% of teachers in other Jewish schools were certified in education (McLaughlin *et al.*, 1995). (The SASS data include general studies teachers as well as Judaica teachers, whereas the CIJE data refer only to teachers of Jewish subject matter.)

In contrast to the substantial numbers of teachers trained in education, fewer have formal preparation in Jewish subject matter. According to the CIJE survey, only 31% overall are certified in Jewish education or have some sort of degree in Jewish studies, such as a college major or rabbinic ordination. About half the day school teachers had this level of training, but the figures were much lower among supplementary and especially among pre-school teachers (Gamoran *et al.*, 1998). Figure 1 shows that overall, almost two-thirds of the teachers were formally trained in education, Jewish studies, or both; this included 19% trained in both, 35% trained in education only, and 12% trained in Jewish studies only. At the same time, 34% of the teachers did not have formal preparation in either field of knowledge.





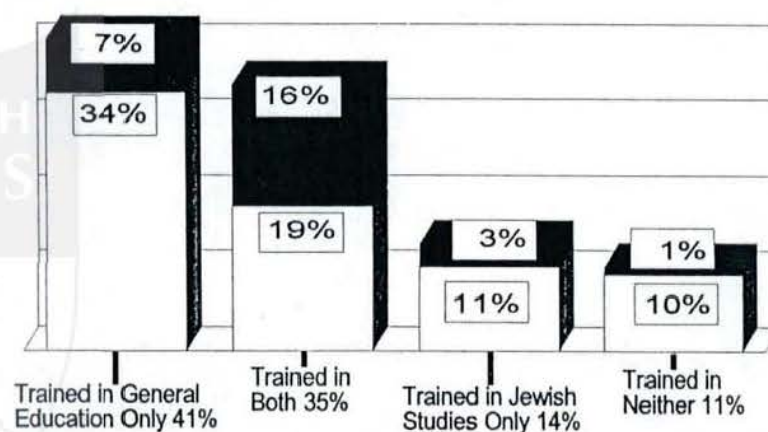
**Fig. 1:** Teachers' Preparation in Education and Jewish Studies (Source: CIJE Study of Educators)



**Fig. 2:** Educational Leaders' Preparation in Education and Jewish Studies (Source: CIJE Study of Educators)

Compared to teachers in Jewish schools, educational leaders, for example, school principals, had even more professional preparation in education and Jewish studies. Figure 2 shows that 35%, almost twice the proportion of teachers, had formal training in both fields, and only 11% lacked all formal training in these areas. However, professional preparation for administrators includes a third area – administration or

leadership – and in this field, the leaders of Jewish schools are deficient. Only 27% overall have a degree or certification in administration, and as Figure 3 shows, less than half of those trained in both education and Jewish studies had a degree or certification in administration as well. Thus, the leaders of Jewish schools do not have the full extent of professional preparation, but they have many of the important components.



**Fig. 3:** Educational Leaders' Preparation in Administration (Source: CIJE Study of Educators). Note: Darkened portion of each column indicates those trained in administration, white portion indicates those not trained in administration.

If we focus only on rates of advanced degrees, the SASS data indicate that principals of Jewish schools are more professionalized than those in other private schools, but less trained than public school principals. (Whereas the CIJE Study of Educators included persons in leadership positions such as vice principals and department heads, the SASS administrator survey included only principals.) Almost all public-school principals, over 98%, have an advanced degree – usually a Masters degree. Figures for Torah u'Mesorah, Schechter, and other Jewish day schools are 88%, 79%, and 73%, respectively. This



compares favorably with a figure of 66% for all private schools (McLaughlin *et al.*, 1995). Like teachers, then, the principals have substantial professional training, although they have less professional preparation than their counterparts in public schools.

*In-service workshops.* In public education in the United States, amounts of required professional development vary widely from state to state. Some states have no specified amount for ongoing professional development, whereas other states require a specific amount of professional development to maintain a teaching and/or administrating license. For example, the State of Wisconsin requires 180 hours of workshops, or 6 college credits, over a five-year period, for maintaining educator licenses. By this measure, Jewish schools hold low standards for professional development. Table 1 shows the average number of workshops that teachers and administrators reported for a two-year period in the CIJE Study of Educators. The figures range from a low of 3.8 workshops reported by day school teachers, to a high of 6.2 workshops reported by pre-school teachers. If we assume that a typical workshop lasts three hours, that adds up to about 29 hours of workshops over five years for day school teachers, or less than one-sixth of the Wisconsin standard. Interestingly, the relatively high figure reported for pre-school teachers probably results from external requirements. Most pre-schools are certified by their states, and certification requirements often include a mandated number of hours for in-service professional development. Gamoran *et al.* (1997) found higher numbers of required workshops reported by teachers in state-certified pre-schools, compared to teachers in uncertified pre-schools.

Table 1

Average Number of Workshops in a Two-Year Period

Setting	NUMBER OF WORKSHOPS	
	TEACHERS	LEADERS
DAY SCHOOL	3.8	4.4
SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOL	4.4	5.6
PRE-SCHOOL	6.2	5.4

Source: Adapted from Gamoran *et al.* (1994).

In contrast to quantity, the *quality* of professional development in Jewish education appears comparable to that in general education. As in general education, workshops in Jewish schools and communities are usually isolated events, disconnected from one another and lacking opportunities for follow-up and integration with teachers' practices (Fullan, 1991; Gamoran *et al.*, 1998). Teachers tend to regard workshops as helpful if they offer a new tool that they can immediately apply in the classroom, but there is no conception of professional development as a long-term process of growth. Thus, in-service work in Jewish education is less extensive, but has the same limitations with regard to professionalism as in general education.

### Control over Working Conditions

Jewish education, like general education, lacks an all-encompassing professional guild that regulates entry into the occupation, as in law and medicine (Aron, 1990). Also comparable to general education, there are a variety of professional organizations for Jewish educators, such as local principals' councils, the National Association of Temple Educators (the Reform movement's principals' group), the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE), and so on. These groups provide collegial networks, opportunities for sharing information, and sponsor conferences, of which the largest and most important is the annual CAJE conference, which is attended by thousands of Jewish educators from across North America (Gamoran *et al.*, 1998).

Unlike general education, however, entry to specific jobs in Jewish education is not regulated, either by a professional organization as in law or medicine, or by the state. Interviews from the CIJE Study of Educators revealed that teachers, in particular, often fall into their jobs almost accidentally, with little prior thought. One teacher in a supplementary school explained:

Well, basically, I got recruited through a friend. I have a friend who was teaching here and she said it was fun and great and a good thing to do. She thought I might like doing that. My first reaction, of course, was, "Who am I to be teaching?" I have no formal education as a teacher and certainly not of Judaica or



Hebrew. And she just said from what she knew that I knew, I had all the qualifications. I had no experience in Jewish education, but my friend persuaded me. And so just indirectly, and luckily, I became involved in Jewish education.

This entry pattern results in a total lack of preparation among some teachers, and partial lack of preparation among others. It contrasts with general education, where years of planning and preparation are normally necessary to obtain a teaching job. Still, it is interesting to observe that most teachers in Jewish schools have some relevant professional training. Although supplementary teachers, rather than teachers in day schools or pre-schools, tended to relate the "accidental" entry experience, the proportion of teachers with formal training in education was only moderately lower in supplementary schools (46%) compared to teachers in day schools and pre-schools (60% and 61%, respectively).

*Autonomy of teachers.* Teacher empowerment is a common theme in educational reform efforts (Gamoran, Porter, and Gahng, 1995). Generally, we find that teachers in Jewish day schools have similar or better opportunities to influence their schools and to control classroom activities as do teachers in other contexts. According to the SASS, teachers in private schools report higher levels of control and influence than teachers in public schools, and teachers in Jewish day schools fit the private-school mold. For example, on a scale of 1-6 with 6 as high, public school teachers rated their influence over school curriculum policy as 3.6, whereas private school teachers perceived more influence, with an average of 4.3. The comparable figures for Jewish teachers were 4.1, 4.7, and 4.3 for those in Torah u'Mesorah, Schechter, and other Jewish day schools, respectively (McLaughlin *et al.*, 1995). Supplementary teachers likely experience less influence over school policies, because they have few opportunities to participate in decision-making processes at the school level (Gamoran *et al.*, 1998; but see Aron, 1990, for smaller differences between supplementary and day school teachers in reported influence). In any case, supplementary school teachers, like Jewish day school teachers and teachers in other educational contexts, do exercise substantial control over activities within the classroom.

The pattern of findings on control is both ironic and promising. The irony is that Jewish teachers have so much say in their working lives, yet many are poorly prepared to exercise that autonomy, particularly in terms of Jewish content knowledge. Yet the findings are also promising in that if the professional knowledge of teachers could be enhanced, they would have opportunities to put their knowledge into practice.

*Rewards from work in Jewish education.* By considering the nature of rewards and satisfaction from work in Jewish education, and through comparisons with general education, we obtain another glimpse into the possibility of professionalism in Jewish education. The most salient rewards for Jewish educators are intrinsic, just as in general education (Gamoran *et al.*, 1998; compare with Lortie, 1975). Jewish educators enter and remain in the field because they enjoy working with children, and because they are committed to teaching Judaism. Equally comparable to general education, some aspects of extrinsic rewards are lacking. Findings from the SASS indicate that salaries for day school teachers compare favorably with those of teachers in other private schools, but they are far below the typical public-school teaching salary. This pattern, along with the findings for autonomy noted above, is consistent with the research literature which claims that teachers in private schools trade off lower salaries for more control (Chubb and Moe, 1990). Interestingly, salaries for day school principals (in contrast to teachers) are much closer to the levels of the typical public-school principal than the average private-school principal. These results appear in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
Salaries in Jewish Day Schools and Other Schools

School Sector	Average Salaries, 1990-91	
	TEACHERS	PRINCIPALS
TORAH U'MESORAH	\$19,273	\$43,624
SCHECHTER	\$19,354	\$52,774
OTHER JEWISH	\$15,911	\$42,612
ALL PRIVATE	\$18,713	\$25,562
ALL PUBLIC	\$30,751	\$49,603

Source: Adapted from McLaughlin *et al.* (1995).



In the CIJE Study of Educators, teachers and educational leaders were asked whether they were satisfied with their salaries. Not quite half of the day school teachers said they were somewhat or very satisfied, but over two-thirds of the day school leaders said they were (see Table 3). This pattern seems consistent with the findings from the SASS, both in the comparison to public-school salaries and in an absolute sense.

**Table 3**  
Satisfaction with Salaries

Setting	Percentage Very or Somewhat Satisfied	
	TEACHERS	LEADERS
DAY SCHOOL	49%	68%
SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOL	75%	64%
PRE-SCHOOL	37%	66%
TOTAL	56%	64%

Source: Adapted from Gamoran *et al.* (1998) and Goldring *et al.* (forthcoming).

The group with the highest level of salary satisfaction was the supplementary school teachers: three-quarters said they were somewhat or very satisfied (see Table 3). By contrast, only 37% of pre-school teachers reported that level of satisfaction. Whereas levels of satisfaction among teachers differed substantially across the three settings, satisfaction levels among the leaders were roughly similar, with about two-thirds of the leaders satisfied on average in each setting.

Perhaps the sharpest departure from professional working conditions for Jewish educators is in the area of fringe benefits. Among educational leaders who work full time (i.e., 25 hours per week or more), only 73% reported that health benefits were available to them, and just 64% said they could receive pension benefits from their work in Jewish education. The failure to provide benefits is even more severe with regard to teachers: Of those working full time, only 48% reported access to health benefits and 45% had pension benefits

available. The lack of benefits for teachers partly stems from the failure of some institutions to provide benefits to teachers who work as much as 25 hours per week, and partly it is the consequence of teachers reaching 25 hours of weekly work in Jewish education by combining two or more part-time jobs. Among those working less than full time, of course, a minority of leaders and very few teachers had access to health or pension benefits.

*General satisfaction.* For teachers in Jewish day schools, the SASS provides a gauge of overall satisfaction, which we may compare with teachers in non-Jewish schools (McLaughlin *et al.*, 1995). A composite scale based on three questions (Do you like teaching? Do you look forward to coming to school each day? Does teaching have more advantages than disadvantages?) was scored 0-10 with 10 as high. On this scale, public school teachers averaged 7.7 and private school teachers responded with 8.4. The average scores for teachers in Jewish schools were 8.3 in Torah u'Mesorah, 8.4 for Schechter, and 8.7 for other Jewish day schools. In relative terms, teachers in Jewish schools are more satisfied than the norm; moreover we regard satisfaction scores of over 8 on a 10-point scale as indicating a high level of satisfaction in an absolute sense as well.

In the CIJE study, educational leaders across all settings were generally very satisfied with the amounts of time they spent on the various activities that compose their working lives. For example, 63% reported that they were satisfied with the amount of time they spent on curricular issues. Educational leaders were equally satisfied with the amount of time they had to spend on school administrative issues (fund raising, marketing, etc.). Tellingly, they were least satisfied with the time they spent on training staff: forty-nine percent of all educational leaders indicated dissatisfaction with the amount of time devoted to this activity. Although we can not be certain about the interpretation of this finding, it is most likely, given the limited background and training of teachers, that the educational leaders would prefer to spend more time working with teachers.



### Career Commitment

Jewish teaching is overwhelmingly a part-time occupation. In the CIJE study, 72% of the teachers worked fewer than 25 hours per week in Jewish education; this included 98% of supplementary teachers, 57% of those in pre-schools and 53% of those in day schools. For early reformers, this situation was inimical to professionalization. Rather, full-time work was the *sine qua non* of professionalism. Schoolman (1966 [1960], p. 180), for example, stated that "Jewish teaching can and must be made a full-time profession that will command life-time commitment by creative personalities." Today, however, it is no longer self-evident that part-time work and professionalism are incompatible. Many workers, particularly women and particularly in the field of education, are able to establish a professional commitment within the context of part-time work (Hochschild, 1989). Rather than assuming that a part-time occupation cannot be professionalized, it is worth enquiring about the professional commitment of Jewish educators.

In a survey of teachers in Jewish supplementary and day schools in Los Angeles, Aron and Phillips (1988) had asked respondents whether their work was best described as a career, something that provides supplementary income, or something done for satisfaction. These categories reflected an assumption that a "career" is separate and distinct from something done for supplementary income or the satisfaction of the job. But in fact the categories are not mutually exclusive, and teachers had a great deal of difficulty selecting only one response (Aron, 1997). Mindful of these difficulties, the CIJE survey focused more narrowly on the question of whether respondents saw their work in Jewish education as a career. ("Do you think of your work in Jewish education as a career?") A response of "yes" to this question, we maintain, indicates a commitment to Jewish education that offers the potential for professionalism, regardless of the number of hours worked per week.

Overall, 59% of teachers and 78% of educational leaders said they view their work in Jewish education as a career. Even among supplementary school teachers, of whom almost all work part time,

44% responded "yes" to the career question. Table 4 provides a breakdown of responses to this question by hours of work. Only among those working 1-4 hours per week did a minority respond affirmatively (32%). Among teachers working 5-12 hours per week, 63% responded yes. The highest proportion was among teachers working 13-24 hours per week, of whom 76% viewed their work in Jewish education as a career; the proportion was slightly lower (69%) among those working in Jewish education 25 hours per week or more.

Table 4  
Teachers' Career Perceptions by Hours of Work

WEEKLY HOURS OF WORK IN JEWISH EDUCATION	PERCENT RESPONDING "YES," JEWISH EDUCATION IS THEIR CAREER
1-4 Hours	32%
5-12 Hours	63%
13-24 Hours	76%
25 Hours or More	69%
TOTAL	59%

Source: CIJE Study of Educators

Almost all the educational leaders who responded to the CIJE survey viewed their work in Jewish education as a career. The figures for day, supplementary, and pre-school leaders were 100%, 91%, and 93%, respectively, with an overall average of 95%. These leaders have expressed a strong professional commitment, regardless of their part-time or full-time status.

Commitment to work in Jewish education also comes through in the substantial longevity of Jewish educational careers. Experience in the field is admittedly a double-edged sword: On the one hand, it may indicate that persons who have found their "calling" remain to continue their fine work; but it could equally indicate that their work becomes stale and uninspired. We make no attempt to distinguish among these interpretations purely from data about experience. However, we contend that high levels of experience indicate a high degree of commitment to the occupation, which again offers a potential



for the development of a profession. According to the CIJE study, teachers exhibit substantial experience in Jewish education, with only 6% in their first year at the time of the survey, and 38% having had more than ten years' experience when they responded (Gamoran *et al.*, 1998). Educational leaders reported even more experience in Jewish education, as 78% had been working in the field for more than 10 years. However, only 31% had spent more than 10 years in educational leadership, and only 55% had even as much as 6 years' experience as leaders.

Data from the SASS suggest that principals of Jewish schools have roughly similar levels of experience, both in teaching and as principals, compared to principals in public and other private schools (McLaughlin *et al.*, 1995). As Table 5 shows, principals of Schechter and other Jewish schools had slightly less experience in their current schools and slightly more experience as principals of other schools, compared to principals in non-Jewish schools, hinting perhaps at more turnover in these categories in Jewish schools. Principals of Torah u'Mesorah schools exhibited similar levels of experience in other schools and more years on average as principals in their current schools, compared to the other Jewish and non-Jewish categories.

**Table 5**  
Experience of Principals

School Sector	YEARS TEACHING	YEARS AS PRINCIPAL	
		CURRENT SCHOOL	OTHER SCHOOL
TORAH			
U'MESORAH	8.5	9.3	3.6
SCHECHTER	9.6	4.0	4.6
OTHER JEWISH	9.6	4.7	4.4
ALL PRIVATE	9.4	5.5	3.2
ALL PUBLIC	10.5	5.7	3.6

Source: Adapted from McLaughlin *et al.* (1995).

According to the CIJE study, educational leaders in supplementary and pre-schools as well as those in day schools reported substantial

prior teaching experience. Eighty-one percent of the educational leaders had taught in a Jewish day, supplementary or pre-school and 61% had worked in general education before assuming their leadership positions in Jewish education.

Findings on career orientation and experience provide evidence of professional commitment or, at a minimum, the potential to develop professional commitment. Among educational leaders, most are full-time, think of themselves as having a career in the field, and indeed have followed career paths from teaching to leadership. Among teachers, a majority are experienced and career-oriented, even among those working part time as Jewish educators.

### Summary of Research Evidence

What conclusions can we draw from the research evidence? First, specialized knowledge among Jewish educators is weak, even weaker than in general education. Whereas general educators are professionally trained in pedagogy and subject matter, most teachers in Jewish schools are missing one or the other of these key ingredients, if not both. Principals are much more likely to be trained in education and Jewish content, but most lack formal preparation in educational administration. Still, professional preparation is not entirely absent, and there is much to build on, especially in the case of principals.

As in most areas of education, Jewish teachers have substantial control within their classrooms. Day school teachers influence school policies, even more than do teachers in public education. Day school salaries are low for teachers, but not for principals, compared to public education. Surveys on satisfaction point to pre-school teacher salaries as an area of special concern. In addition, many Jewish educators – even those who work full time – lack access to benefits that are the norm in American society. In these aspects of working conditions, the degree of professionalization is lower in Jewish than in general education, but not fundamentally different. The one crucial distinction is in the lack of regulation over entry into the occupation of teaching.



Finally, Jewish educators show signs of professional commitment. Even though teachers are mainly part-time, many are career oriented and levels of experience are high. On the basis of these findings and in light of the partial professional preparation of almost two-thirds of the teachers, we reject the contention that the part-time, unregulated nature of Jewish teaching means that there cannot be a profession of Jewish teaching (Aron, 1990). Teachers now in the field of Jewish education offer a rich base on which to build an increasingly professionalized work force, uniquely suited to Jewish education. Educational leaders show strong evidence of professional commitment, including almost universal career commitment and long years of experience in the field. These findings also suggest that a base exists on which a profession of Jewish education can be built and enhanced.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR BUILDING THE PROFESSION

To determine the essential strategies for building the profession, we begin with the facts, and consider the alternatives. We recognize the value of all the strategies listed in *A Time to Act* (recruitment, training, in-service, salaries/benefits, career tracks, and empowerment), and it is not our purpose to reject any of them. At the same time, it is crucial to establish priorities for action, and that is the policy thrust of this paper.

#### *Implications for Teachers*

What are the key facts about teachers? First, they work part time. Second, there are a great many of them – perhaps as many as 30,000 teaching positions in Jewish day schools, supplementary schools, and pre-schools in North America.<sup>1</sup> Third, the professional training of most teachers ranges from partial to none, as only 19% are trained in both pedagogy and Jewish content. Fourth, teachers exhibit substantial commitment and stability in their work as Jewish educators.

Given this evidence – part-time work, a large number of teachers, lack of content knowledge, and commitment – what strategy should have the highest priority? The vast scope of the problem makes pre-

service training of professional teachers an impractical solution for the large scale. In our view, however, this does not preclude building a profession of Jewish education that includes part-time as well as full-time teachers. The strong commitment of teachers and the partial professional training of most provides a base on which to build, a base that is stronger than many observers have previously assumed.

The most promising strategy for building the profession under these circumstances, we believe, is extensive, ongoing professional development for teachers who are already in the field of Jewish education. Professional development as a reform strategy turns the “accidental” entry of teachers from a weakness into a strength. It takes advantage of the diverse backgrounds of teachers in Jewish schools, including the educational training of many who had not intended to become teachers in Jewish schools. It also encourages tailoring of professional development to the particular needs of Jewish educators in the field. Whether part-time or full-time, teachers in Jewish schools are likely to respond favorably to high-quality professional development, in light of their commitment to their work. Financial incentives for teachers and their schools are likely to enhance the favorable response (Gamoran *et al.*, 1997). Viewed in this light, the avocational “calling” that leads many teachers to Jewish schools is not incompatible with professional commitment and standards. Indeed, our emphasis on professional development for teachers is consistent with the conclusions, if not the conceptual analysis, of the avocational model (Aron, 1997; Feiman-Nemser, 1997). In the avocational model as in our analysis, existing knowledge and commitment to Jewish teaching can serve as the foundation for enhancing teaching quality through teacher learning.

To implement a strategy of professional development for teachers, educational leaders could work with each teacher to devise an individualized growth plan tailored to that teacher’s particular needs and constraints. At present, many educational leaders are dissatisfied with the amount of time they have to work with teachers. Our proposal would no doubt require more time than is currently available, so additional resources may be needed to support educational leaders in their teacher development efforts. Moreover, to bring about meaningful



growth, schools and communities need to organize opportunities for professional development that improve on past efforts. Instead of one-shot, isolated workshops, and a fragmented approach, high-quality professional development would be coherent, sustained, focused on teachers' specific needs, and rich in Jewish content (Gamoran *et al.*, 1994; Holtz, Dorph, and Goldring, 1997). This approach is consistent with current thinking about professional development in general education. Increasingly, educators are recognizing that high-quality professional development is an essential element in the effort to raise standards for curriculum, teaching, and learning. Teacher professional development was added to the list of national goals for the U.S. education system, and a variety of writers stress the need for coherent and content-rich professional development in general education (e.g., McLaughlin and Oberman, 1996).

#### *Implications for Educational Leaders*

For principals and other educational leaders, the facts are different. First, most principals work full time. Second, the total number of principals is much smaller, probably around 3,000.<sup>2</sup> Third, current levels of professional training are much higher among principals than among teachers. Almost 90% of the educational leaders in the CIJE study are formally trained in at least one essential field. Still, half lack formal preparation in Jewish studies. For both symbolic and substantive reasons, this is a glaring weakness. Of course, a principal cannot be trained in all areas of educational subject matter. But for a Jewish school, it would seem essential that the principal carry specialized knowledge in Judaica, the area of the school's primary mission. Moreover, the need for leadership in teacher development calls for educational leaders who are well versed in Jewish content areas. Finally, a large majority of educational leaders lack formal training in administration.

The more manageable number and relatively strong base of formal preparation, the sizeable proportion of full-time positions and the overwhelming career commitment of principals, point to a combination of recruitment and pre-service training as the primary strategy for

building leadership within a profession of Jewish education. This strategy could have four main components:

- (1) Building on existing institutions that train principals for Jewish schools, the administrative component of the training curricula could be enhanced. In addition, the enrollment of these institutions could be substantially expanded, through investments in the institutions and by publicizing the demand for well-trained educational leaders.
- (2) Standards for educational leaders could be established and disseminated. These standards would recognize three essential components of formal training (education, subject matter, and administration), and would emphasize the importance of Jewish studies for the leaders of Jewish schools.
- (3) Professional working conditions, including health and pension benefits and, especially for pre-school directors, better salaries, would improve recruitment prospects and bring Jewish schools in line with the norm for professions in America.
- (4) Professional development is essential for principals as it is for teachers; first as a short-term response to the lack of formal preparation among many current leaders, and ultimately in the long-term as a component of professional growth that is central in any profession.

The goal of these reforms would be that within one generation – say, by the year 2020 – the leaders of all Jewish schools in North America will be fully prepared for their work and engaged in on-going professional development. Because the number of leaders is not very large, and because the vast majority of leaders already have at least part if not most of this preparation, this is a realistic and manageable goal towards which future initiatives should be directed.



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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The number of teachers in Jewish schools has increased over time, but current estimates are difficult to pinpoint. In 1927, Benderly (1949 [1927]) estimated there were more than 10,000 teachers in American Jewish schools. By 1959, the estimate was 18,000 (Schoolman, 1966 [1960]), and a similar estimate was given in the late 1970s (Ackerman, 1989). The SASS of 1990-91 estimated close to 10,000 teachers in day schools, but this figure included secular as well as Jewish studies teachers. A 1987-88 census of Jewish schools in the United States estimated about 40,000 positions overall, but this figure also included general studies teachers in day schools. The CIJE study counted 1192 teachers of Jewish subjects in the day, supplementary, and pre-schools of Atlanta, Milwaukee, and Baltimore. Relative to the number of Jews in the populations of these communities, that figure would extrapolate to over 35,000 teachers across North America, but the estimate may be too high because the systems of Jewish education may be especially developed in those cities. Including all three types of schools (day, supplementary, and pre-schools), it is nonetheless reasonable to estimate conservatively that there are around 30,000 Jewish teaching positions in Jewish day schools, supplementary schools, and preschools in North America.

<sup>2</sup> The SASS enumerated 511 day schools in the United States. A 1987-88 census of Jewish schools in the United States found 532 day schools, 138 preschools, and 1800 supplementary schools (JESNA, 1992). *A Time to Act* estimated a larger number of day schools (800) but a similar number of supplementary schools (1700). Even taking the higher number from each report, and allowing for expansion during the 1990s, the total number of positions for principals is probably around 3,000.

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