A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING CHANGE IN JEWISH EDUCATION

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Background

Since the middle of the nineteenth-century, Jewish education in the United States has been characterized chiefly by its supplementary nature: Jewish children have attended Jewish schools a few hours each week to supplement their full-time attendance at American public schools. When Isaac M. Wise reported to the United States Commissioner of Education in 1870 "that the education of the young is the business of the State, and the religious instruction, to which we add the Hebrew, is the duty of religious bodies," he was expressing the majority viewpoint of the Jewish community of his day.[1]

During the early decades of this century, when vast numbers of Jews entered the United States from Eastern Europe, immigrant parents frequently arranged for their children to be tutored in Jewish subjects in a *heder* (a one-room school), and later in a Talmud Torah — a modernized institution which emphasized Hebrew as a vehicle for the discovery of Jewish culture. Soon congregational schools too began to advance in cities throughout the United States, in many cases replacing the communal Talmud Torah as the dominant form of Jewish education. Ben-Horin, reviewing the development of Jewish education during this period, remarks that "the first four decades of twentieth-century

Jewish education in America are marked by striking roots, by consolidation, by progressing inland and uphill."[2]

Following World War II, Jewish education entered a period of unprecedented growth and expansion. As part of the reawakening of the Jewish community following the destruction of European Jewry in the Holocaust, and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel, congregational membership increased dramatically, and so, too, did the number of Jewish schools and the number of children enrolled in these schools. As Jews moved to the suburbs, local synagogues assumed primary responsibility for Jewish education. The post-war period thus witnessed the "massive expansion of the Jewish educational network."[3]

While the 1920's and 1930's were decades of consolidation in Jewish education, and the 1940's and 1950's were decades of growth and expansion, the 1960's and 1970's were decades of change and innovation. Although Jewish education remained chiefly a supplementary and secondary enterprise for most American Jews, the inauguration of full-time programs of Jewish education provided, for the first time, an option to the supplementary patterns of education for children of all segments of the Jewish religious community — Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform.

Even within the dominant supplementary form of Jewish education, change and innovation were the hallmarks of the 1960's and 1970's. New instructional methods were developed to such a degree that values clarification, confluent education, inquiry training, and educational games became commonplace in Jewish classrooms. New settings were explored for their educational potential; weekend retreats, day-long conferences, hands-on museum experiences, and Israel trips were frequently integrated

2.   Meir Ben-Horin. "From the Turn of the Century to the Late Thirties," in Judah Pilch, ed., *A History of Jewish Education in America* (New York: the National Curriculum Research Institute of the American Association for Jewish Education, 1969).

3.   Zvi Adar. *Jewish Education in Israel and in the United States* (Jerusalem: Samuel Mendel Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora, the School of Education and the Institute for Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University, 1977) p. 157.

into Jewish educational programs. Additional educational services were made available so that children with special learning needs found programs designed to meet their needs in a number of religious schools, and fresh ideas about the role of Jewish education were developed with the result that the education of the entire family assumed a high priority in the programs of many schools.

Interest in educational change over the past two decades is also reflected in the frequent discussions on change and innovation among Jewish educators. Professional organizations have sponsored conferences focusing on the issue of change; periodicals have been published with the primary purpose of discussing innovations in Jewish education;[4] and an organization has been formed to link educators, rabbis, and concerned lay people in a network of concern for bringing about change in Jewish education.[5]

However, despite the surge of innovative activity in Jewish education over the past twenty years, there has been a serious lack of understanding of the complexity of the process and outcomes of efforts to bring about change. Others argue that the changes of the past decades have had little significant impact on Jewish schools. For example, Ackerman argues that despite all the recent educational innovations, "the majority of Jewish schools in the country have (not) become something other than what they have been in recent memory,"[6] and Schechtman wonders if the "impression (of educational change) is really justified."[7]

While overestimating the impact of educational change, many educators have underestimated the complexity of the processes

4.   Audrey Friedman. Editor's page. *Alternatives in Religious Education*, I, 1 (Fall, 1970) pp. 2–3.

5.   Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education. *Second Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education* (Rochester, N.Y.: Author, 1977), mimeographed.

6.   Walter I. Ackerman. "The Present Moment in Jewish Education,"*Midstream* (December 1972), XVIII, 10, p.8.

7.   Y. Schechtman. "Jewish Education in the United States: A Survey of Facts and Problems," *Bitfutzot Hagolah* (Spring/Summer 1967) IX, 1–2, p. 142.

by which change is developed and implemented, seeing change as both inevitable and easily manipulatable. But to date, little research has been conducted to explore the various components of the change process or to uncover the intricacies of the process. As N. L. Friedman points out, "there is no existing literature on the 'organizational sociology of Jewish education,' so the area is virgin territory for almost any aspect of intra-organizational analysis."[8]

The initial need in exploring any area of social science that has not previously been studied is the development of an over-all understanding of the issue.[9] In seeking to develop a framework for understanding change in Jewish education, we turn first to conceptualizations of change developed in the literature of general education.

Conceptual Perspectives on Educational Change

Change implies that "there is some perceptible difference in a situation, a circumstance, or a person between some original time t_0 and some later time t_1."[10] While this widely-held definition seems to imply that change can be portrayed as the difference between two snapshots, in fact it is more helpful to look at change as a series of frames in a motion picture. This on-going process has been elucidated from the perspectives of several fields of inquiry, notably social psychology, sociology, and anthropology. The insights developed by these disciplines have been adapted in order to shed light on the process of change in education.

Social psychology suggests that since schools are composed of individual people, changing an educational organization requires changing the ways· people behave. As Corwin explains, "(1)

8.   Norman L. Friedman, "Religion's Subsystem: Toward a Sociology of Jewish Education," *Sociology of Education*, XLII, 1, (Winter 1969), p. 111.

9.   Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Adeline Publishing, 1967).

10.   Egon G. Guba. *A Model of Change for Instructional Development*, paper presented at Educational Media Conference, Indiana University, June 1968, p. 1.

institutions are the reflections of the people who operate them, and consequently (2) institutions can best be changed by changing the people responsible for managing them."[11] Social psychologists have operationalized this view of change by developing a number of approaches to changing individual behavior (e.g. individual therapy, group therapy, sensitivity training) with the goal of thereby changing the educational organization in which the individual functions.

In contrast to this perspective, the sociological view of change is based on the idea that the structure of an organization is of paramount importance. Only changes in structural arrangements can bring about the changes in individual behavior that are required for significant educational change to take place. As Watson explains, "The structures of a system largely determine the patterns of interaction which take place within it; and these, in turn, form the attitudes of participants."[12] The assumption of the sociological perspective on change is thus that official organizational charts represent how organizations function, so that changes in organizational charts lead directly to significant changes in people's behavior.

Anthropology offers a perspective which focuses on "change in culture," defined as changes in a group's shared ideas and behavioral norms.[13] Rather than focusing on changing individuals or altering structures, this view suggests that modifying environmental demands on the individual results in changes in the patterns of individual behavior.[14]   In reviewing these various

11.   Ronald G. Corwin. *Education in Crisis: A Sociological Analysis of Schools and Universities in Transition.* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), p. 327.

12.   Goodwin Watson. "Towards a Conceptual Architecture of a Self-Renewing School System." In Goodwin Watson, ed., *Change in School Systems* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1976) p. 107.

13.   Francis A. J. Ianni. "An Anthropological Perspective on Change." In Michael Brick and A. A. Bushko, editors, *The Management of Change* (New York: Community College Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1973) — (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No..ED 079 861).

14.   Seymour B. Sarason. *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974).

perspectives on change, Baldridge and Deal note that "the goal of this discipline-based research ...is to advance the development of the discipline" and not to elucidate the process of educational change.[15] Each discipline does, however, illuminate one facet in the process of educational change by identifying a single element in the school which can be addressed when seeking to understand or bring about change. Yet no single discipline provides a broad enough perspective to deal with the wide range of possible patterns of educational change.

Theories of Educational Change

The vast majority of conceptual perspectives on the process of educational change take the form of theories that seek to outline the specific progression of stages in the process of change. Most of these theories can be grouped into three families: problem-solver theories, social-interaction theories, and research-development-and-diffusion theories.

The problem-solver family of theories shares a perspective based on a model of change developed by Lewin.[16] He outlines the phases of change as "unfreezing" (realizing the need for change), "moving" (implementing the change), and "freezing" (fixing the new behavior). Following Lewin's paradigm, the problem-solver theories focus exclusively on processes within the school as it is changing.

The basic process of unfreezing, moving, and freezing has been elaborated in various ways, but all the variations begin with the educational organization sensing the need for change. The need for change is then articulated as a problem, and once the problem has been stated explicitly, a search for solutions begins. On the basis of information gathered both from within the school and

15.   J. V. Baldridge and T. E. Deal. "Overview of Change Process in Educational Organizations," in J. V. Baldridge and T. E. Deal, editors, *Managing Change in Educational Organizations: Sociological Perspectives, Strategies and Case Studies*, (Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing, 1975), p. 5.

16.   Kurt Lewin. *Field Theory in Social Science* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1951).

from the outside, a solution is chosen from among several possible alternatives. This solution is then tested and evaluated.

The focus of the second family of change theories, the social-interaction theories, is the process of diffusion, whereby a single educational innovation spreads to a large number of schools. The unit of analysis in social-interaction theories is the individual educator or school receiving new ideas. The primary concern is the delineation of the stages that the individual goes through in making a decision to adopt an innovation based on the information received.

These theories are rooted in the anthropological tradition of the study of the spread of cultural traits and in the rural sociological tradition of the study of the spread of agricultural innovations. Ryan and Gross, in their pioneering work in rural sociology, outline the steps in the process of adoption of innovations as awareness, conviction, acceptance, and complete adoption.[17] Rogers expands on this model and describes the steps as awareness of an innovation, interest in it, evaluation of its appropriateness, trial of the innovation, and adoption of the innovation for permanent use.[18] Most of the social interaction theories of educational change follow Rogers' paradigm.

The research-development-and-diffusion (RD&D) theories differ sharply from the other perspectives by viewing the invention of new ideas as an integral part of the change process. The RD&D models outline a four-step process of change: (1) *Research* is basic scientific inquiry; its objective is the advancement of knowledge; (2) *Development* is "the identification of operating problems and the formulation of solutions to those problems"[19] (3) *Diffusion* is aimed at creating "an awareness and (providing) opportunities for assessment of the invention";[20] and

17.   B. Ryan and N. C. Gross. "The Diffusion of Hybrid Seed Corn in Two Iowa Communities," *Rural Sociology* (March 1943), VIII, pp. 15–24.

18.   E. M. Rogers. *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York: Free Press, 1962).

19.   Egon G. Guba. "The Process of Educational Improvement." In R. G. Goulet, ed., *Educational Change: The Reality and the Promise* (New York: Citation Press, 1968), p. 137.

20.   *Ibid.*

(4) *Adoption* is the process of adapting an invention to a local situation and installing it there. The major features of the theories within the RD&D family are the rational sequence of events, the division of labor, the emphasis on planning, and the defined audience or target group.

The three families of theories outlined in the literature on educational change are each useful in illuminating one aspect of the process of educational change, and can therefore be helpful in understanding one aspect of change in Jewish education. The problem-solver theories are useful in exploring what takes place *within* an educational organization as it is undergoing change; the social-interaction theories emphasize the interaction among educators and among schools; and the research-development-and-diffusion theories suggest that change must be viewed as a total process which begins with the invention of new ideas and continues until those ideas are adopted by schools.

However, none of these theories alone is sufficient for a full understanding of the complexities of change in Jewish education. First, the theories assume that change is inevitable; they do not allow for the possibility that an innovation may *not* be adopted by a school. Second, each theory assumes that all change efforts can be understood as following a single, linear pattern of events. None of the theories accounts for the fact that different change efforts follow different patterns. As a result, these theories tend to be prescriptive; they outline what proponents see as an ideal series of stages through which schools *should* proceed as they change. And finally, none of the theories addresses the question of whether or not a change in a school has a significant impact on the lives of students and teachers.

A Framework for Understanding Change in Jewish Education

Since neither the discipline-based perspectives on change nor the linear theories of change oulined in the literature are fully adequate for understanding the complexities of the process of educational change, a different framework has been developed to shed light on change in Jewish education.[21] This framework draws on

21.   Michael Zeldin. *Change in Jewish Education: the Development of a Compre-*

the insights of the models and perspectives described in the
literature on educational change, but goes beyond them in terms
of scope and flexibility. The view of change portrayed in this
framework emerged from a close scrutiny of several case studies
of change projects in Jewish schools, and was refined by compar-
ison with data gathered from dozens of other change efforts. The
framework is thus "grounded" in the complex realities that char-
acterize educational change in Jewish schools.[22]

In contrast with other theories of educational change, this
framework does not purport to prescribe what educators should
do to facilitate successful change projects in Jewish schools.
Rather, by focusing on the crucial aspects of the process of
change, this framework seeks to enable both observers and prac-
titioners to understand better the successes and failures of change
projects undertaken in Jewish schools.

In seeking to understand a particular change effort, the practi-
tioner or observer must look at five factors — awareness of the
need for change, the plan for change, the impetus for change, the
impact of change on the school, and the effects of change on
students and teachers. All of these factors are present in every
effort to bring about change in a Jewish school, but in each effort,
they appear in a unique configuration.

The *awareness of the need for change* is a necessary component
of any change effort, for it establishes the climate in which change
can take place. The awareness that some change is needed is
wide-spread in Jewish schools and has been articulated by stu-
dents and educators:

> Boredom, repetition, irrelevance, regurgitation of facts without a
> future, and stagnation have become synonymous with classroom
> Judaism ...We are in need of a radically new lesson plan for Judaism.[23]

hensive Theory. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Southern Cali-
fornia, 1979.

22.   Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory.*

23.   D. Kahn. *Religious Education Turns Me Off.* (New York: National Federa-
tion of Temple Youth, n.d., mimeographed) pp. 1,3.

> Unless religious schools change, we will turn off so many youngsters
> that the very survival of Judaism is endangered.[24]

An atmosphere which encourages change must be accompanied by an awareness within an educational organization of the specific areas of the school which need to be changed. Lipnick, for example, reporting a case study of educational change, notes that "the Hebrew school, the most intensive Jewish education offered by (the congregation) was generally acknowledged to be the least successful of all the departments."[25] In another case, the problem of poor Saturday attendance created an awareness within a congregational school board that a change of school hours was needed.

While frequently nothing more happens after the awareness of the need for change is articulated, at times the awareness leads directly to the development and implementation of a *plan for change* — the idea for a new educational project. While each Jewish school plans for change independently, the interaction among schools and professionals is an important influence on the development of plans for change.

In many cases, the idea for a change is borrowed from another school — either Jewish or public. The spread of the "Conference Plan" — a program of Jewish education in which weekly classes are replaced by a series of day-long or weekend conferences spread throughout the school year — illustrates how ideas for change are borrowed from other Jewish schools and then adapted to meet the needs of individual schools. While the idea for a Conference Plan — in several variations — was invented independently in various schools, its widespread use is the result of borrowing from a single model. The Conference Plan, conceived at Temple Micah in Denver, received widespread attention when a description of the program was published in 1969.[26] Other

24. Friedman, *Alternatives in Religious Education*, (Fall, 1970), p. 2.

25. B. Lipnick, *An Experiment That Works in Teenage Religious Education.* (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1976), p. 1.

26. Audrey Friedman. *The Temple Micah Conference Plan* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1969).

communities soon adopted the idea and established Conference Plans in their schools. By 1975, approximately one hundred congregations had adopted some variation of the Conference Plan.[27] While the original plan involved nine weekend conferences a year, each conference lasting for 5½ hours on both Saturday and Sunday, the variations adopted by other schools included: weekend morning classes supplemented by two camp weekends, monthly day-long conferences supplemented by two camp weekends, monthly sessions stretching from Friday night to Saturday night, weekly one-hour sessions supplemented by six Friday night to Saturday night sessions and two weekend retreats, and monthly retreats in the fall and spring with weekly classes during the winter months. It appears that each school borrowed the idea from the single source and then adapted the idea to develop a plan for change designed to fit local circumstances.

Another source of ideas for change in Jewish schools, ideas developed in public schools, has been widely documented. Among the changes that have taken place in Jewish schools over the past generation that were borrowed from public schools are: new methodologies in language instruction, novel patterns of instruction including programmed instruction and the open classroom, new patterns of organization including the use of specialist teachers and departmentalization of the school, curriculum reform in which curricular materials are developed by teams of educators and academicians, and fresh approaches to education including humanistic education.[28]

Rather than borrowing plans for change from other schools, local school personnel often develop ideas independently. A principal or teacher may create a curriculum or devise an idea for classroom organization by himself or herself, even though the idea may already be in use in other schools. One educator who developed a plan for an open school reported that he "came up with this plan from my head."

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27.   Audrey F. Marcus. "The Conference Plan: Eight Years Later," *Pedagogic Reporter* (Spring 1975) XXVI, 3, pp. 3–5.

28.   George Pollak. "Back to Basics," *Jewish Education* (Winter, 1977) XLV, 4, pp. 5–9, 48.
Leon H. Spotts. "Jewish Education and the Public Schools — The Debt and the

The relationship between the plan for change and the aware-
ness of the need for change is a complex one; there is no single
pattern which characterizes all change efforts. While in some
cases, the awareness of the need for change in a school leads
directly to the search for ideas to implement, just as often, the
success of a program in one school stimulates an awareness of the
need for a similar change in other schools. Thus, while plans for
change and awareness of the need for change are both part of the
pattern of all change efforts, the relationship between the two
may be very different in different change projects.

The third element in the change process, the *impetus for
change*, is the force which triggers the implementation of a plan
for change. In some cases, the awareness of the need for change
can become so intense that it alone serves as the impetus for
change. In these cases, awareness of need serves more than to
establish a climate for change; awareness alone leads to the
development and implementation of a plan for change.

More frequently, the impetus for change in Jewish schools
originates from sources external to Jewish education, especially
from developments in the public schools. The attempt to estab-
lish year-round Jewish schools illustrates how public school
developments can play the role of impetus for change in Jewish
education. In the early 1970's, several public school systems
began to consider the idea of year-round schooling with vaca-
tions for students and teachers staggered throughout the year. In
communities where such a plan was under consideration, Jewish
schools began to plan to change their programs to meet the
anticipated situation. In one city where the public schools consid-
ered such a plan and then voted it down, the Jewish schools which
had been planning to implement certain educational changes did
not put their plans into action. In contrast, in Miami, where the
all-year plan was adopted by the public schools, the central

Danger," *Jewish Education* (Winter 1967), 3, pp. 122–134.
Jack Dauber and William Cutter. "Confluent Education in the Jewish Setting,"
Journal of Jewish Communal Service, (Fall, 1972), XLIX, 1, pp. 58–65.
Walter I. Ackerman. "Jewish Education — For What?" *American Jewish Year
Book* (1969), LXX, pp. 3–36.
Jack J. Cohen. "New Trends in Jewish Education." In Judah Pilch, ed., *A
History of Jewish Education in America* (New York: the National Curriculum
Research Institute of the American Association for Jewish Education, 1969).

agency for Jewish education implemented a plan whereby students could spend one "quinmester" studying in Israel.[29]

Personal motivation may also serve as the impetus for change in Jewish education. For example, in describing the establishment of a liberal Jewish day school in Cleveland, the rabbi who was most active in the drive to establish the school writes, "My initial motive was purely personal. My first-born son was going to enter the first grade the following fall."[30] In another case, the educator in a religious school associated with a temple was moved to establish a program for gifted students in the upper grades of the school the same year his own gifted child was entering junior high school.

Impetus is a key, often overlooked, factor in understanding the process of change in Jewish education. The observer seeking to understand a change project must therefore attempt to identify the impetus for change in order to understand the success or failure of the project. Without an impetus — whether from an intense awareness of the need for specific change, from trends in society, or from personal motivations — no change in Jewish education can take place.

One way to determine the success or failure of an effort to bring about change is to assess the *impact of the change*, the institutional change in the educational system which results when plans for change are put into practice. The impact may include the introduction of an element which is new to an institution or the substantial modification of an existing element in an institution's educational program. Changes may have an impact on the following facets of Jewish schools:

The *goals* and/or *philosophy* of a school can change. For example, the new statement of educational goals of the Reform movement represents a substantial shift from earlier policy.[31]

29. Richard K. Goldstein. "Greater Miami High School Quinmester Program in Israel," *Pedagogic Reporter* (Fall, 1974) XXVI, 1, pp. 18–20.

30. Mordecai Schreiber. "The Agnon School of Cleveland: The Unlikely Birth of a Day School," *Central Conference of American Rabbis' Journal* (April, 1970) XVII, 2, pp. 66–79.

31. "Commission on Jewish Education of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations — Central Conference of American Rabbis," *Goals of Reform Jewish Education* (New York: Author, 1975).

New *approaches to teaching* can be introduced. For example, values clarification, confluent education, inquiry training, and educational games have come into use in Jewish classrooms.[32]

New *curricula* can be developed along with new curricular materials.

The target *population* of Jewish schools can be expanded. For example, there has been an emphasis recently on providing Jewish education for the handicapped, mentally retarded, and learning disabled.[33]

The environment for learning can be extended beyond the classroom. For example, hands-on experiences in Jewish museums have become part of the educational scene.[34]

Structures, including schedules, facilities, and organizational arrangements, can be altered.

New *technology* can be used in the classrooms of a school.

Changes in *personal practices* pre- and in-service *training* can be effected.[35]

It is important to note that an educational change can have an impact on a single facet, or it can bring with it changes in many facets. For example, a shift in the days on which a school meets may have an impact only on structure, while the establishment of a Jewish day school in a congregation may bring in its wake changes in philosophy, goals, curriculum, learning environment, structure, personnel, and training. It is also important to note

32. S.A. Gertman. *And You Shall Teach Them Diligently: A Study of the Current State of Religious Education in the Reform Movement.* (New York: National Association of Temple Educators and Union of Hebrew Congregations, Department of Education, 1977).

33. J. Alper and V. Reibes. "A Survey of Jewish Special Education Programs in the United States." Unpublished masters thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles, 1977.

34. *MUSE News.* Los Angeles: Hebrew Union College, March 1979 (mimeographed).

35. See for example: William Cutter. "Rationale for Graduate Professional Training in Jewish Education at Hebrew Union College in California," *Jewish Education* (Fall 1974) XLIII, 3, pp. 7–10, 20.

that changes which are directed at one particular facet of a school may have an unintended impact on other facets as well.

Another way to assess the results of a change project is to look at the *effects of the change* on the behavior and attitudes of students and teachers. The effects include short-term effects on both students and teachers as well as long-range effects on the future religious lifestyle of students. The effects of change can be demonstrated by research comparing a group of students experiencing an educational change project with a control group, but unfortunately, there has been a "dearth of well-designed empirical studies comparing the results of different educational efforts."[36] It is important to note that even if the implementation of a plan for change has an impact on an educational system, it may or may not have an *effect* on students and teachers.

In sum, assessing the success or failure of a change project in a Jewish school requires looking at both the impact on the school and at the effects on students and teachers. Understanding what led to these outcomes requires looking at the awareness of the need for change, the plan for change, the impetus for change, and the relationship among these elements.

Conclusion

This framework for understanding change in Jewish education makes a rather modest claim: By looking at five factors, an observer or practitioner can gain a better understanding of whether an attempt to bring about change in a Jewish school has succeeded or failed, and can gain insights into the reasons behind the success or failure. While this view of change does not seek to direct the actions of a practitioner striving to bring about change in a school, the more thorough understanding of the change process provided by this framework can lead to more thorough and successful planning for educational change.

36. Paul Weinberger. "The Effects of Jewish Education," *American Jewish Year Book*, LXXII (1971) pp. 230–249.