

JEWISH SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOL REALITY: COUNTERING THE MISPERCEPTION OF A STUDY

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The Critique misjudges the Study's purpose and procedures, confuses cross-sectional and longitudinal research and misreads its recommendations. The Critique asks for a different kind of study. It is, in essence, a wish list of what the writer wants to see done. Basically, the Study is a comparison between avowed and achieved goals. Nowhere does the Critique fault the study in this regard. Moreover, the Study confirms that the most serious problem confronting supplementary schools is lack of parents support, inadequate Jewishness in student's homes and ineffectual instructional programming. The Critique highlights the need for dispassionate analysis of existing research.

The critique "Jewish Supplementary Schooling Misperceived" (hereafter noted as "Critique") of *Jewish Supplementary Schooling: A System in Need of Change* (hereafter noted as "Study") provides a good opportunity to demonstrate how a response to a flawed analysis of a sound research project can shed light on evaluation research in Jewish education.¹ There is hardly any research, particularly in the social sciences, that is not criticized from one point of view or another. There is something to be learned from all critical reviews of research. Indeed, there were several insightful comments made in the Critique, particularly about reporting methodology and findings. Nevertheless, the Critique is mistaken in its criticisms of a creditable research endeavor.

At the outset, it should be noted that the Study joins the ranks of other sound research that has demonstrated serious weaknesses in Jewish supplementary schooling, particularly the studies of Ackerman (1970a,b), Bock (1976), Dushkin and Engelman (1959), Himmelfarb (1974), Schoem (1979), Hamburger (1971), Hartman (1976), Heilman (1979) and Shevitz (1983). As Abraham Tannenbaum observed, "The Study represents a valid confirmation of previous research that has demonstrated clearly that Jewish supplementary education is not meeting its own expectations" (Tannenbaum, 1992). It also joins the company of significant research in general education that underscores the importance of family influence on educational effectiveness, especially Cohen (1971), Coleman (1966), Jencks (1972) and Walberg (1984).

This response will attempt to answer several questions as it counters the variety of misperceptions in the Critique: 1) What are the problems with the Critique? 2) Are the points made in the Critique valid? Which criticisms are well-grounded? Which are unwarranted? Why are they unjustifiable? 3) Does the Critique quibble with some methodological details or does it invalidate the outcomes of the Study which found alarming discrepancies between the avowed goals of Jewish supplementary education and the attainment thereof? 4) Given that the intent of the Study was to lead to the improvement of Jewish Supplementary education, what has been the impact of the Study? 5) What can we learn about research in Jewish education from the Study and the Critique? In a sense, this last question is the organizing principle of this paper.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Jewish supplementary schooling -- for sixty years the normative form of Jewish education in the United States -- is facing the most serious challenge in its history. As we prepare to enter the twenty-first century, there is universal concern in the Jewish community with its effectiveness. Yet, it is difficult for some people to acknowledge the scope and seriousness of the problems of the supplementary school.

The reason the Study was undertaken was to "describe the essential dimensions of Jewish supplementary schooling in Greater New York... identify the factors that affect educational progress...identify the major problems and challenges...[and] make recommendations regarding the improvement and support of Jewish supplementary education" (p. 57). In order to accomplish its goal, it is obvious that the Study's findings and recommendations needed to be disseminated. Dissemination was accomplished by writing a report for distribution to the Jewish supplementary school community in Greater New York. It was also made available to Jewish schools throughout the United States and Canada.

Are Jewish Supplementary Schools for Naught? The Critique claims that the Study "is likely to inherit the central position of the Himmelfarb research..." which "convinced an entire generation that supplementary schools were 'for naught'." The Study did not conclude that Jewish supplementary schools are "for naught." This term never appears in the Study. Rather, it suggests that this form of education *can* become effective if certain changes are made in the system of congregational schooling. As a matter of fact, the Study underscores the idea

and possibilities of reform in Jewish supplementary education. On page 140 there is a clear statement to this effect:

Taken as a whole, the findings are, indeed, cause for concern. They confirm what so many lay leaders and professionals have felt about this form of Jewish education. While they point to serious educational challenges and to the need for dramatic change, *they point also to the possibilities for change*. As noted in the Introduction to the Study, "given that parents are not negative, that children are not negative, and that the teachers, principals and rabbis seem willing to consider the possibility of change, we are confident that they can become involved in and affected by the right action plan that will spell out the appropriate strategies to bring about the needed transformation and that will engender adequate synagogue and community support." This is the attitude with which we must approach the difficult task of school reform.

Certainly, the above quotation from the Study in no way suggests that supplementary schools are "for naught." The Study highlights the serious challenges and suggests ways of creating conditions for effective schooling. Demonstrating the seriousness of the problem is not the same as being utterly pessimistic, as the Critique would have us believe. Nowhere is there evidence that the Study attempts "to reinforce the negative climate of opinion surrounding the supplementary schools."

THE STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Preparation of the Inventory. To address hypothesis #1, the Inventory was based upon the expectations of the principals. What better way to determine what is taught in the supplementary schools? There are no standardized tests for Jewish supplementary education. The Study showed that the written curricula generally did not reflect what was actually taught. Therefore, there was no perfect way to determine what students were taught over their school careers. It is clear that the principal plays a critical role in determining what is taught in the school. As a group, the principals represent the diversity of the sponsoring synagogues and parent populations. Their expectations encapsulate the goals of the schools. In seeking a common denominator concerning school goals there was a lengthy process through which a

consensus regarding the Inventory items was achieved. This included individualized interviews with the principals, averaging five hours. Moreover, the Bureau of Jewish Education (BJE) professional team members had many discussions beyond the formal interviews with their interviewees about the Inventory items. In addition, the principals participated in the process of the Inventory construction. When the first draft was completed, it was administered to the principals as a group. The language of each question was reviewed. Some items were eliminated. Several substitutions were made. Some items were modified. In the end, the principals approved all the items -- the easier questions and the more difficult ones. Further refinements in the language of the items took place after the Inventory was field tested in three Greater New York supplementary schools. The process of Inventory construction also included the involvement of curriculum, testing and computer specialists, especially Dr. Nathan Jaspén, professor and chairman emeritus, Dept. of Mathematics, Science and Statistics Education, New York University. The Critique is wrong to suggest that the Study tested "principal expectations rather than curricular achievement." The purpose of the Study was to determine to what extent the avowed goals of the school programs were being attained. This was done by testing curricular achievement based upon what the principals knew was being taught.

The Inventory Items. The Critique suggests that the Inventory was poorly designed because of one or more "poor or overly difficult items." Indeed, there were several difficult items, all approved by the principals as appropriate for use in the Inventory. Not all questions were of the same difficulty. The nature of a distribution of test scores is as much a function of the difficulty and discriminating power of the test items as it is a function of the ability of the group tested. The Critique is critical of the item "The highest religious authority in the days of the Second Temple was the (1) Sanhedrin, (2) Gaon, (3) Prophet, (4) Samaritan." The criticism is that "in context, the response 'Prophet' would not be utterly inappropriate, and it likely accounts for the mistaken student responses." "Prophet" may not be "utterly inappropriate," but it is the wrong answer. Knowledgeable students would have known that Biblical prophecy ended at the time of the building of the Second Temple.²

Scoring Method. The Critique is critical of the scoring method of the Inventory on Jewish Involvement. It criticizes the weighting system - the application of numerical weightings to descriptive responses. This

is a surprising criticism since the quantification of verbal responses is a time-tested method of studying attitudes.³ The suggestion that "a simple reporting of percentages of students responding to each alternative, question-by-question, would have been a more straightforward way to present these data," would have made it more difficult to develop any summary portrait of students' knowledge. In a scaling system like the one used in the Study, *on the average*, individuals with identical scores are regarded as having equal abilities.

The Critique complains about the awarding of five points for no answer in the Jewish involvement section. Indeed, no response was considered "to be a *neutral* (uncommitted/indifferent) or passive response." True, as the Critique notes, if a student would skip eight items and score at the highest level on two items, he would be rated as border line "passive/high" in Jewish involvement. However, students generally responded to all the items. There were hardly any "skipped" questions. According to the Critique, it was rather a simple matter to score "high" in Jewish involvement. Why then did the vast majority of respondents score "low/passive"? The answer clearly is they were not very Jewishly involved - a critical finding of the Study.

Cross-Sectional vs. Longitudinal Study. The cross-sectional design of the Study compares students on different grade levels at one point in time. It is not a tracking study. Rather, it aims to compare the levels of knowledge, involvement and attitudes of children exposed to differing amounts of Jewish schooling. A tracking study would require "pre-" and "post-" tests and would track the same students via a longitudinal design over a period of 8-9 years. Such a study would take at least ten years to complete. And why would we expect any significantly different results from a longitudinal study of these schools if no changes were made in the Jewish supplementary school system? The BJE Study was not meant to be a longitudinal study.

According to Jaspén (1992), "longitudinal and cross-sectional studies both have strengths and weaknesses. A longitudinal study of the lifespan of the generation of present octogenarians might discover that a substantial number succumbed in early years to diseases such as polio and tuberculosis; we would be more interested in the present incidence of these diseases. The assertion that 'Reform schools essentially teach no Hebrew at all' does not explain why there is a steep decline in conversational Hebrew after grade 3. It is a matter of interest that students in grades 4 and up have less knowledge of Hebrew than students in the lower grades, regardless of whether the study is longitudinal or cross-sectional."

The Critique is mistaken about progress in Hebrew language from year to year. Clearly, the Study demonstrates the lack of progress through the grades. One of the reasons is the lack of time spent in language learning as indicated in the discussion on "Time on Task" (p. 104-107). Not to recognize the connection between the findings about lack of progress and the conclusions drawn from them is tantamount to turning a blind eye to the facts. It should be noted, in this regard, that time spent on language learning was not used effectively, as readily observed by the teams of specialists who made 117 extended classroom visits. Footnote 3 takes the Study to task concerning the Conversational Hebrew subtest. Since when is a vocabulary test "largely unrelated to language comprehension or functioning?" On the contrary, a vocabulary test is usually regarded as one of the best measures of language comprehension.

Relating Study to Effective Schools Research. The comment about the role of the chapter on "Effective Schools Research: What Research in General Education Tells Us About Good schools" is puzzling. In the first place, less than 5% of the field research time was spent on "defining, identifying and profiling effective supplementary schools" and *not* "almost half" as purported in the Critique. Further, the Critique states that this "approach was abandoned and the results not reported." This statement is a misrepresentation of fact. The results of the profiling process are reported under the headings of "Elements of Effectiveness" on page 49 and "Profiles of Effective Supplementary Schools" on page 50. After the profiling process, it was determined by the Board Task Force, that the Study should "focus on obtaining an overall portrait of supplementary schooling rather than identifying effective schools" (p. 50). The correlates of effective schools research as well as the profiles were used as guidelines in analyzing the findings of the Study (p. 118). Undoubtedly, a full-fledged study of effective supplementary schools would be instructive. In fact, such a study is currently underway, sponsored by the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education.

THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Reliability of the Inventory. The Critique denigrates the reliability of the Inventory of Jewish Knowledge, ascribing the reliability to the homogeneity, rather than the heterogeneity, of the test.⁴ It is possible for a homogeneous test to be reliable or unreliable. Similarly, it is possible for a heterogeneous test to be reliable or unreliable. It is

usually the number of items in the test which most directly affects test reliability.

Overall Pupil Performance. The Critique quotes the Study regarding pupils' performance on the Inventory, "The findings demonstrate that in all three areas (Jewish knowledge, Jewish involvement and Jewish attitudes) pupils scored much lower (an average of 50% lower) than principals' expectations." (p.115). The Critique then notes, "This finding is then transmuted into a much broader, more critical statement that 'schools do a very poor job in increasing Jewish knowledge in all subject areas; they show no success in guiding children towards increased Jewish involvement; and they demonstrate an inability to influence positive growth in Jewish attitudes' (p.119). The Critique then claims that "these are erroneously negative conclusions." This is a groundless claim. The findings clearly demonstrate these weaknesses. To be sure, this 'transmuted' language used in the Study was suggested by the executive vice president of the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA), Dr. Jonathan Woocher, after a three and one half hour review of the Study design, process, findings, conclusions and recommendations together with the Study director, the research coordinator and two members of the Professional Study Team. This review was part of a procedure of individualized postfindings consultations with forty one 'post-findings consultants' -- ten academicians, six educational administrators of school networks, six chairpersons of regional supplementary principals' councils, four congregational rabbis, four federation professionals and eleven lay leaders representing the variety of schools in Greater New York. The purpose of the consultations was to review critically every aspect of the Study before it was published and disseminated. The names of the consultants and their institutional affiliations are listed at the end of the Study Report. Not one of the consultants felt that these were erroneous conclusions. In fact, the language of the conclusions and recommendations derived largely from these consultations. Helping refine the conclusions and recommendations proved to be a critical role of the consultants.

Instructional Personnel. The reaction of the Critique to the conclusions relating to Hypothesis #10 about the inadequacy of the preparation of the professional personnel is unjustifiable. In the first place, the Critique agrees that the reported findings show "the portrait of an untrained teacher corps, yet one willing and even able to improve." Indeed, the Study notes that they are not "irredeemably negative" as the Critique would have us believe. That is specifically the reason for the

suggestion about in-service training. The Critique notes, however, "yet, the data suggest that despite the lack of preparation, they seem to be doing a nearly adequate job." Nothing can be further from the truth. It may not be entirely their fault, as the Study carefully notes; but, clearly, they lack the necessary background to succeed in supplementary Jewish education. To suggest that the Study avoids the conclusion that, if trained, the teachers might actually do a good job misrepresents the fact. Here again, the Critique reads into the Report conclusions and recommendations never expressed -- that the Report "prefers training for family education over training for the current setting." "Training for the current setting" is what the Study recommendations are all about -- they aim to improve the school, classroom and home conditions necessary for effective Jewish education in a modern open society. The Study clearly recommends training and retraining for "effective instructional performance and family education" including "Judaic knowledge...educational methodology...curriculum development" (p. 135).

Relationship of Family to Schooling. Concerning Hypothesis #6 in the Study, during the interview process, teachers and principals were asked what they perceived to be the major deterrents to achieving their goals in school. The unanimous consensus was that the lack of parental support constituted the major obstacle towards achievement. It is mainly for this reason that the subject matter was not relevant to pupils. It did not relate to their home environment and was not reinforced by what happened in the home. This condition was strongly corroborated by the interviews of parents and students alike. Most pupils "would drop out of school, if given the chance" (p.62). They could not wait for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah to bid farewell to their supplementary school. In their interviews, the 127 parents indicated overwhelmingly that they "enroll their children in a Jewish supplementary school for Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation," and they "do not want too much Jewish schooling" for their children; also they feel they have neither the time nor the desire to become involved in the school" (p. 63). Teachers were most vociferous about the lack of parental support. This fact was not highlighted sufficiently in the Report.

The Critique glosses over information provided in the Study under the heading "Inventory Findings in Light of Interviews with Principals" (pp. 95-96). The Study notes,

After the Inventory scores were analyzed, the principals of participating schools were interviewed regarding the pupils who had the highest scores in Jewish

knowledge, Jewish involvement and Jewish attitudes ... [according to the principals] the overwhelming majority of parents of pupils with high Inventory scores are most actively involved in the school program and in synagogue/temple life. Conversely, parents of pupils who scored poorly (the norm) on the Inventory are not really concerned about the Jewish education of their children and their own Jewishness. Their relationship to the school is virtually non-existent."⁵

Prior to the post-findings interviews, the Inventory results were reviewed with respect to parents' Jewish involvement. The responses to the items about parental attendance in the synagogue and the lighting of candles in the home on Friday evenings were scanned to determine whether or not there was a relationship between pupil scores on the Inventory and parental ratings on these questions. Indeed, a connection was found. It was clear that pupils whose parents scored high on these two items had the highest aggregate scores on the Inventory. This information should have been tabulated and presented in the Study in addition to its use during the post-findings consultations. Clearly, parental feelings and Jewish behavior are reflected in the levels of pupil motivation, in pupil learning and in the scores on the Jewish involvement and Jewish attitudes sections of the Inventory as well as in Jewish knowledge.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Critique errs when it points out that the Study "deemphasizes schooling in favor of family education programs." Rather than "deemphasize schooling" the Study aims to enhance the school environment and classroom instruction. The Study stresses that the Jewish school - a voluntary program - even more than the public school, cannot be effective without supportive familial influences. It states forcefully that *"this does not imply that the classroom and school can be ignored. Not at all!!* Quality of instructional and school-wide activities are absolutely essential" (p. 124). Does this mean a de-emphasis of schooling? Let the reader judge. Family education, according to the Study, is a process which includes pupils in the schools⁶ and helps improve learning in the classroom by developing a productive learning relationship between home and school (Seeley 1981).

On Rendering the Report. If there is a flaw in the Study, it is the incomplete information it presents in the Report to the research oriented reader about the process of the Study, including the construction of the Inventory and its administration. This was the result of not wanting to burden the reader with these details which would have made the Report considerably longer. The Report was intended for a broad communal audience as well as for educational practitioners. In retrospect, this information would have been useful to the ardent or critical reader. Also, despite the cost of printing, which was a factor in the decision not to include the survey instruments, and the Inventory of Knowledge, Involvement and Attitudes, copies of all these instruments should have been appended to the Study Report even though this would have almost doubled the size of the Report. Better yet, there should have been two reports -- one for the general reader and a full technical report for researchers and for research oriented educators.

On Developing a Comparative Study. The "Introduction" to the Study notes that "in many quarters it [the supplementary school] is being compared to its more intensive sibling -- the Jewish day school." That is exactly what is happening in many places, notwithstanding the opinion expressed in the Critique. To say that the Inventory results "really tell us very little about how well the Supplementary schools are doing because we have no basis on which to decide whether the results are good or not" is to turn a blind eye to the findings which demonstrate, among others, that there is only a 10.3% cumulative increase in knowledge between the first and sixth year of school, a 4.5% increase between the second and sixth years; an actual decrease in Jewish involvement from year 2 to year 6; and a continuous decline in Jewish attitudes from year 1 to year 6.

Comparing the performance of Jewish supplementary school students to that of Jewish day school pupils and to Jewish children who do not attend any kind of Jewish school would be a derivative of this Study, but not a substitute for it.⁷

The Study (p. 114) clearly states that comparisons with the day school and non-school Jewish child population would be beneficial. They would help us understand the relative impact of Jewish schooling on Jewish children. Yet, without these comparisons, the Study findings stand on their own. The Study, after all, is a status study. To suggest that it must introduce control groups is, in effect, to change its purpose and make it a different study which may be worthy research in and of itself, but not the intent of this Study. In comparing supplementary school pupils with children not receiving any Jewish education, the

Critique notes that "supplementary schools might look a lot better than the Study suggests." In fact, it might make them look a lot worse. The small gains manifested among supplementary school students might look even smaller if some gains were manifested among those with no Jewish schooling.⁸ Comparisons between supplementary school pupils and other children can still be made in the future by administering the Inventory (with some possible changes) to the three groups of children. As noted, this would be a different study.

The Critique errs when it suggests that supplementary school Inventory items could have been added to the Yeshiva High School entrance exams, and thereby have "a basis for comparison ready at hand." This is simply a misunderstanding of both the purpose of the Study and the realities of that testing program which had no possibility of being implemented because of the nature and scheduling of the examination as well as the particular pupil population to whom it was administered.

On The Influence of Family on Schooling. The Study comprised two research approaches -- a normative or descriptive survey method and a measurement technique (the Inventory of Jewish Knowledge, Involvement and Attitudes). Using both approaches, the Study demonstrated that the family is key to supplementary school effectiveness. The findings of the descriptive research were reported anecdotally. During the Study process, the Professional Team, members of the Task Force and the post-findings consultants were satisfied with this method of reporting. Yet, it is true that the presentation should have been more rigorous and focused more on the findings of the Inventory. The informal procedures used in analyzing the findings of the Inventory to confirm the connection between Jewish family involvement and pupil performance should have been supported by quantitative data. From the proceedings of the Study and from previous agency experience, the connection between family background and achievement was obvious. Nevertheless, in addition to the informal scrutinization of the relationship of the overall pupil inventory scores to the scores regarding parental Jewish involvement which were discussed at the Professional Team and Task Force meetings and during the post-findings consultations, the scores should have been cross-tabulated and presented in the body of the Study. This can still be accomplished using the raw data. Undoubtedly, this procedure would yield a valuable confirmation of the findings.

On Jewish Educational Research. No research, certainly no educational research, is without deficiencies. Moreover, different researchers often view the same study in dissimilar, even irreconcilable ways. The current debate among demographers and sociologists about the last Council of Jewish Federation (CJF) population study is an example of this divergence. The Critique of this Study has every right to disagree with aspects of its methodology, findings, conclusions and recommendations. Indeed, the Critique points out some ways in which the Study might have been improved. However, because of its own imperfections, the Critique fails to capture the true essence of the Study. This response has attempted to shed light on some shortcomings in the Critique.

The Impact of the Study. While an examination of its impact has yet to be made, the Study has had considerable influence on the Jewish educational community, particularly in creating a heightened awareness for the need to change and to upgrade the supplementary school. Countrywide, the reactions to the Study were most favorable including salutary comments and editorials in organizational and synagogue bulletins, and letters and telephone calls from a wide variety of academic rabbinic, federation, synagogue and education leaders. For example, Dr. Shimon Frost (1988), former executive Vice-president of JESNA, observes,

The Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York and its Executive Vice President deserve the gratitude of the Jewish education profession and of the lay leadership of our educational enterprise.... While the findings of the study are not revolutionary in themselves and largely confirm the perceptions of professionals in the field and of keen lay observers, their importance lies in the fact that they derive from a well-planned, thorough and carefully executed assessment of a complex problem.... One prays that this call for action will find a response not only in Greater New York but in other communities across the continent as well.

Frost's comments are representative of the scores of reactions to the Study from Jewish educational leaders and academicians communicated to me.

Many communities have been re-examining their Jewish supplementary education systems. Moreover, many communities and individual schools have initiated Jewish family education programs. Although not

fully attributable to the Study, communication this writer and other BJE staff members have had with institutions throughout the country regarding Jewish family education bears testimony to its impact on school policy. Twenty central agencies for Jewish education ordered copies of the Study for distribution to and discussion with lay and professional leaders. JESNA's decision to sponsor a major Northeast regional conference on Jewish family education (according to discussions with this writer, Chaim Botwinick, the Study's research coordinator, and BJE lay leaders in planning the Conference) is related to the Study findings and recommendations. The Study also had an effect upon communal planning for Jewish education. In New York, the Board of Jewish Education sponsored a training program (including instructional technology) for Jewish family educators in 1989-91. Twenty-six Jewish family educators were trained during this period.

Unlike the contention of the Critique, the Study offered greater hope and promise for the future of Jewish supplementary education. The Reconstructionist Magazine (1987) underscores this hope when it notes, "The report's findings and proposals...deserve wide consideration...we fully endorse all these proposals...we hope that the BJE recommendations are taken seriously not only in New York but across the country. If they are, there is good reason to *hope* that we can reverse current trends and move Jews back towards a knowledge of Jewish life."

AIN HACHAM K'BA-AL HANISAYON: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THIS EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH EVALUATION EXPERIENCE

Using Appropriate Methodology. Research methodology must utilize the most suitable methods of data collection to achieve the purposes of the investigation and complete the research job in a scientific, applicable and valid manner. It must use the best systematic procedures to move from an initial identification of the problem to final conclusions. In this regard, according to Sarah Lee, Director of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, the Study serves as a model for the field. She writes (Lee 1987), "I commend ... the Task Force for developing such a visionary and rigorous study. The methodology ... is particularly impressive."

As noted earlier in this paper, the Study utilized a dual research approach -- a normative survey method to obtain needed information through observation and interview, and a measurement technique, a carefully developed three-part Inventory of Jewish

Knowledge, Jewish Involvement and Jewish Attitudes (reliability of .91) to obtain objective data about pupil achievement. This instrument was administered to all pupils in all grades of a stratified random sampling of forty supplementary schools in Greater New York. The findings demonstrate the value of such a cross-sectional approach. To this end, Joseph Reimer, comments, "From a research point of view, the creation and validation of the test instrument is in itself of great value. Its very simplicity and yet its reliability are to be treasured."

A tracking method might also be utilized to obtain information about pupil achievement. While significantly different than the method used in the Study, a longitudinal approach would, in all probability, yield similar results. It would deal with a more limited population and take much more time to complete.

Involving All Stakeholders. In conducting research about the Jewish educational system, it is important to involve a variety of stakeholders before, during and after the research is completed. In each stage - planning, design and instrumentation, analysis and preparation of findings and development of conclusions and recommendations - the Study is paradigmatic. At various times, it involved pupils, parents, teachers, principals, rabbis, educational consultants, program specialists, lay and professional bureau personnel, synagogue officers and trustees, synagogue school board members, regional synagogue organizational lay and professional leaders, and federation lay and professional personnel. By involving all these stakeholders, the research provides a comprehensive view of the problem or program or system being studied and assures its relevance to current needs.

Issuing Multiple Reports. The Study was a major research effort. As the Critique notes, it "was conducted on a grand scale." Moreover, as applied research, the Study was intended to impact an entire Jewish education system in Greater New York in which 40% of the total Jewish school population is enrolled. (On the North American continent, as a whole, supplementary school enrollment accounts for 60% of the total school population.) For such a research endeavor, sharing *all* pertinent information in writing is a crucial aspect of the investigation. The reporting of research of this magnitude should be geared to all possible audiences. The Study report was targeted for the general Jewish supplementary school community. It is clear however, that one unified report cannot suffice for all readers. Three documents may be necessary: 1) an overall descriptive report for lay leaders and educational practitioners. The report of this Study is an example of this kind

of reporting; 2) a technical report (in addition to the general report) including all the pertinent details of the research design, methodology, instrumentation and analysis for researchers and research oriented readers; 3) a brief executive summary for general use in the community. In presenting findings that may be controversial, the research report must be sensitive to the adherents of the system or program being studied which it aims to impact.

CONCLUDING QUERY

Considering the vast amount and variety of talent that was mobilized for the planning, design and implementation of the Study, and the fact that it is, by far, the largest scale and most elaborate investigation of its kind, a concluding question may be posed to the author of the Critique.

Assuming that some or all of the criticisms are valid, what conclusion has the Critique drawn -- that the Study may have some methodological flaws but that the overall outcomes and impact should remain intact, or that the outcomes should be entirely invalidated and the impact nullified? Let the reader judge.

NOTES

¹ The Study was not a "mere scholarly article." It was a major research effort to which a Task Force of sixteen outstanding Jewish education lay leaders and a Professional Study Team of thirteen leading Jewish educators, guided by a study director with a research background, and a research coordinator, devoted over three years of intensive activity. They were aided by several curriculum, test construction and computer consultants, especially by Dr. Nathan Jaspén, professor and chairman emeritus, Department of Mathematics, Science and Statistics Education, New York University.

² Indeed, this was one of the difficult items. The Critique is disturbed that only 9.1% of the students knew the right answer and comments that this is far below the chance response rate. In this regard, Jaspén (1992) notes, "there is nothing wrong in testing misinformation. For example, the item the number of cubic yards in 27 cubic feet is (a) 1 (b) 3 (c) 9 (d) 27 deliberately allows the student to misapply the concept that one yard equals 3 feet. When a student chooses a distractor, he is not necessarily guessing. He may be applying misinformation."

³ The weightings were suggested by Jaspén (1992) who, as a veteran developer of standardized tests in many areas of inquiry, was especially attentive to the appropriateness of the numerical weightings for each response. According to Jaspén, "for most of this century, scales have been developed to quantify fields of knowledge and abilities. Obviously, this results in an estimate. For example, imagine a scale consisting of 100 items of arithmetic ability carefully graded in difficulty. Several individuals might have each obtained identical scores, perhaps 50, by answering correctly different constellations

of items, yet each is assumed to have the same degree of arithmetic ability as measured by this test. It is hardly likely that one individual answered correctly only the 50 easiest items, while another individual may have answered correctly only the 50 most difficult items, and we generally dismiss this possibility. The alternative is to say that the first individual's ability is measured by the following 50 items; the second individual's ability is measured by another set of 50 items; and so on. In that event, it would be well nigh impossible to measure the comparative knowledge of individuals" (Jaspen 1992).

⁴ Various measures of test reliability exist, and several were calculated for the Inventory. *All were uniformly high.* Jaspen underscores that odd-even reliability does not depend on a high inter-correlation between tests, but rather on a high correlation between odd and even items. Therefore, the high reliability is in one construct. That "the Knowledge Inventory probably tapped a single, global Jewish knowledge base, rather than discrete areas of knowledge" is another phenomenon. In general, cognitive tests are positively correlated. This does not detract from the fact that a test was reliable; and it is not the reason why the test was reliable.

⁵ The Study further notes, "these findings were corroborated through the post-findings consultations. The principals who served as post-findings consultants noted that there is a definite relationship between pupils who do well in supplementary school and parental involvement in and commitment to the Jewish school. The principals stressed that parental support and family involvement in their respective schools is, in their opinion, the critical influence on pupils' acquisition of Jewish knowledge and Jewish behavior patterns" (p. 96).

⁶ In its interpretation of the Study conclusions and recommendations, the Critique makes the same error made by some people who misinterpret the finding regarding the influence of family on schooling in the landmark study by Coleman (1966). While the Coleman Study showed that students' achievement scores depended more on their family background than whether they attended a school with more or less the kinds of characteristics and resources measured in the study, it never claimed that schools are not important (see Cohen 1982). Home and school go hand in hand. The combination of good home conditions, strong family support and quality time on task is the *conditio sine qua non* for effective schooling (see Bloom 1976, 1985). For Jewish education, the Study demonstrated, this confluence is of critical importance.

⁷ With thanks to Dr. Abraham J. Tannenbaum, Professor Emeritus of Education and Psychology, Columbia University, for sharing insights regarding this item and other aspects of the Critique.

⁸ With thanks to Dr. Harold Himmelfarb, research associate, Office of research, U.S. Dept. of Education, for sharing this insight and others about the Critique.

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