
BACKGROUND AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS IN JEWISH SCHOOLS: CURRENT STATUS AND LEVERS FOR CHANGE

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Abstract

This paper presents a secondary analysis of data from a survey of teachers in the Jewish schools of three communities. Previous findings had shown that only 19% of teachers have professional training in both Jewish content areas and in the field of education, and despite incomplete professional backgrounds, little professional growth was required of teachers. What can be done to enhance and expand professional growth activities for teachers in Jewish schools? Analyses reported in this paper examine three possible "levers" for changing standards for professional growth: state licensing requirements for pre-schools, state requirements for continuing education among professionally-trained teachers, and community incentives for training of supplementary school teachers. Results indicate that pre-school teachers in state-licensed pre-schools and supplementary school teachers who were paid for meeting a professional growth standard reported that they were required to attend more in-service workshops, compared to other teachers who were not subject to these conditions. In addition, standards for the quantity of in-service were higher among teachers who have stronger Judaic backgrounds and who are committed to a career in Jewish education.

INTRODUCTION

A new two-year study of Jewish educators in three North American communities offers a striking assessment of teachers' preparation and professional development in day schools, supplementary schools, and pre-schools. (Gamoran et al. 1994)

In the world of secular education, professional development for teachers is increasingly recognized as an important element of educational reform (Sedlak 1987). In fact, adequate opportunity for professional growth was recently added to the list of national goals for U.S. schools (Borman et al. 1996). What is the status of professional growth for teachers in religious education? In this paper, we explore this question for the case of teachers in Jewish schools, including day schools, supplementary schools (afternoon and/or weekend), and pre-schools.

Recent research at the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE) shows that only a small proportion of teachers in Jewish schools in three communities are formally prepared in both Jewish studies and in the field of education (Gamoran et al. 1994). Here, we present selected findings from the CIJE research. In addition, we provide new findings by exploring mechanisms that may raise standards for the quantity of in-service teacher training in Jewish schools. These levers include state licensing requirements for pre-schools, state requirements for continuing education among professionally-trained teachers, and community incentives for in-service training of supplementary teachers.

BACKGROUND

In 1990 the Commission on Jewish Education in North America released *A Time to Act*, a report on the status and prospects of Jewish education. The report concluded that building the profession of Jewish education (along with mobilizing community support for education) is essential for the improvement of teaching and learning in Jewish schools. This conclusion rested on the best available assessment of the field at that time: "well-trained and dedicated educators are needed for every area of Jewish education. . . . to motivate and engage children and their parents [and] to create the necessary educational materials and methods" (49). In response, the Commission created the CIJE, whose mandate includes establishing three Lead Communities in North America, and working with these communities to serve as demonstration sites for improving Jewish education.

What is the current state of the profession of Jewish education in these communities? What mechanisms are available to improve it, and how will we know whether improvement in the profession training of teachers fosters better teaching and learning? These questions

cannot be addressed fully—in particular, no data are available on the links between training, teaching, and learning—but this paper begins to address the issues by examining the current professional backgrounds of teachers in Jewish schools as well as considering potential levers for increasing teacher's professional development activities.

PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Modern conceptions of teaching emphasize formal, specialized preparation (for example, Sedlak 1987). This preparation typically involves training in both pedagogy and subject matter, as well as in the links between the two (Shulman 1987). Moreover, teachers are expected to maintain their subject matter and pedagogical skills through continuous professional development. As Aron (1990, 6) explained, teachers need “to keep pace with new developments in their field. The knowledge base of teaching has grown and changed. . . . Therefore, it would be imperative for veteran teachers to have mastery of this new body of information, skills, and techniques.” In Jewish education, where many teachers lack formal preparation for their work, professional development is not a matter of keeping pace, but of getting up to speed.

In public education, the profession of teaching is regulated by certification at the state level. Although exceptions are made, generally states require formal preparation in the field of education, including study of content knowledge and pedagogy, for teacher licensing. In addition, many states require a set amount of professional development over a fixed period of time for the renewal of one's teaching license. In Jewish schools, because of a shortage of certified teachers, it is often not possible to hire only teachers who are formally prepared in their fields. Hence, the question of professional development becomes especially salient.

What circumstances lead to higher standards for the quantity of in-service activities among teachers? On the one hand, schools with teachers who are more professionally oriented may be able to place greater demands for professional growth of teachers. A staff that is trained for Jewish education, holding degrees in education and in Jewish content areas, and viewing Jewish education as a career, may create the kind of community that allows professional norms to flourish, including more extensive professional development.

On the other hand, even without a highly professional staff,

there may be conditions that can increase the amount of professional development activity. In this paper we examine three possible mechanisms, or levers for change, which may lead to more in-service workshops. The particular mechanisms we explore were not chosen on theoretical grounds; rather, they are the mechanisms we encountered in a study of three Jewish communities.

We found that communities and schools varied in their policies and in the conditions associated with policies about staff development. This type of "natural experiment" can yield important information about the prospects for increasing the demands for professional growth activities in Jewish education. In the secular arena, in-service workshops are already part of the professional culture of teaching (Sedlak 1987). In the world of Jewish education, a combination of incentives and requirements may lead to higher standards for the quantity of professional development.

The possible levers we encountered were as follows:

(1) *State certification for pre-schools.* Most of the pre-schools in our study are licensed or certified by the state, and certification requires a set amount of staff development for teachers. For example, in one state teachers had to take 18 hours of in-service per year for a school to maintain its certification. Other states had different requirements, but all demanded some level of in-service among teachers to maintain certification. Consequently, one may expect to find higher rates of in-service training among pre-school teachers compared to other teachers, and we reported this pattern in our earlier work (Gamoran et al. 1994). Here we test this interpretation by comparing in-service training in the pre-schools that are not certified to those that are. We expect to find higher rates of in-service required in state-certified pre-schools.

(2) *State in-service requirements for re-licensing.* The communities we studied are located in three different states. One state requires that licensed K-12 teachers engage in 180 hours of workshop training over a five-year period in order to be re-licensed. Another state requires 100 hours of in-service over the same period. The third state has no such mandate. Are Judaica teachers in Jewish schools responsive to these mandates? Even if teachers on average are not affected by these requirements, one may expect that teachers who are professionally trained would keep up with licensing requirements.

(3) *Federation incentives for supplementary teachers.* In one community, the Jewish federation (communal institution for

fundraising and program support) provides an extra incentive to encourage in-service attendance among supplementary school teachers. Teachers who attend at least 4 workshops in a year (3 for those who teach only on Sundays) receive a special stipend. In addition, supplementary schools in which at least three-quarters of the teachers meet the in-service standards receive funds from the federation. Thus, the incentive program encourages not just individual but school-wide professional growth. If these incentives are effective, we would expect to find that supplementary school teachers reported more required workshops in this community than in the other two.

DATA AND METHODS

Data from this paper are drawn from two data sources: A survey of teachers, and intensive interviews with a sample of teachers and other educators. The surveys and interviews were conducted in the three CIJE Lead Communities: Atlanta, Baltimore, and Milwaukee, in 1992 and 1993. All Judaica teachers in day schools, supplementary schools, and pre-schools were asked to respond to the survey, and a response rate of 82% (983/1192 teachers in total) was obtained. Formal in-depth interviews were carried out with 125 educators, including teachers and education directors of day schools, supplementary schools, and pre-schools, as well as central agency staff and Jewish educators in higher education. The survey and interviews covered a wide variety of issues, such as teachers' background and training, earnings and benefits, and careers of Jewish educators. Only matters of background and formal training are addressed in this paper.

Statistical Methods

For the most part, we combine data from all three communities for our survey analyses. Despite some differences between communities, on the whole the results were far more similar than they were different. Also, our results are largely consistent with surveys carried out in other communities, where comparable data are available (Gamoran et al. 1996a). Moreover, in this paper we will explicitly examine some of the more salient differences across communities. Finally, whereas the data will mainly be aggregated across communities, we will generally break down the data by setting: day school, supplementary school, and pre-school.

We present both descriptive and analytic results. The descriptive results are cross-tabulations of background and training variables by setting. The analytic results derive from ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions aimed at sorting out predictors of the extent of required in-service training.

The analyses rely primarily on survey responses. Information from interviews helped us frame our analytic questions—in particular, they allowed us to discern the levers for change examined in the regressions—and they helped us understand the survey findings more thoroughly.

Variables

Most variables indicate aspects of teachers' backgrounds and experiences. These were drawn from surveys. Others provide information about the settings in which teachers work. These came from survey administration records.

Workshop attendance. The dependent variable for this study derives from teachers' responses to the questions, "Were you required to attend in-service workshops during the past two years? If so, how many?" Only teachers who were required to attend at least one workshop are included in the analyses, and first year teachers are excluded because of the two-year time frame implied by the question. This resulted in an effective sample size of 726 teachers. About 15% of teachers who were required to attend workshops failed to indicate how many, and these are treated as missing and excluded from the analyses, resulting in a sample of 574 teachers, or 85% of the eligible cases. On average, teachers in our sample said they were required to attend 4.75 workshops over a two-year period. (Means and standard deviations of all variables are listed in the appendix.)

Ideally one would like to know how many workshops teachers actually attended, whether required or not, in addition to how many were required. Unfortunately this was not asked in the Lead Community surveys. Future versions of the survey will include an additional question that addresses this distinction (Gamoran et al. 1996b).

Background variables. We employed several measures to take account of differences among teachers in their professional backgrounds. Teachers indicated their years of experience in Jewish education. To allow for possible non-linear effects, we divided experience into four categories: 5 years or less, 6-10 years, 11-20 years,

and 21 years or more. An additional category indicates persons with missing data on experience. (We used this strategy of dummy categories for missing data for all independent variables in the regression analyses.)

Teachers also responded to questions about how much schooling they had, what their majors were, and whether they were certified in Jewish education. For this study, we defined "training in education" as a university or teachers' institute degree in education. We defined "training in Jewish studies" as a college or seminary degree in Jewish studies, or as certification in Jewish education.

We used two measures to indicate teachers' professional orientation. First, we asked whether teachers think of their work in Jewish education as a career. Second, we asked teachers about their plans for the future, and from this item we constructed a single indicator for teachers who said they plan to leave Jewish education in the near future. Presumably it would be possible to demand more in-service work from teachers who are oriented to Jewish education as a career, and are not planning on leaving the field.

Finally, teachers reported their sex, and this is indicated by a dummy variable with 1 = male and 0 = female.

Context and policy variables. Dummy variables are used to distinguish among teachers in day schools, supplementary schools, and pre-schools. Teachers who taught in more than one setting (about 20% of all respondents) are counted in the setting in which they taught the most hours.

For pre-school teachers only, we created an indicator to distinguish among schools that are certified by the state and those that are not (certified = 1, not certified = 0). For supplementary school teachers only, we created an indicator for the one community with an incentives program for in-service workshops (incentives program = 1, others = 0). For all teachers, we created indicators of the amount of in-service required for re-licensing: 180 hours and 100 hours are compared to the reference category of no in-service requirement.

RESULTS

First we present descriptive information on teachers' professional backgrounds in education and Judaica. Then we examine possible mechanisms for raising levels of required in-service training in Jewish education.

Descriptive Results

What sort of professional training in Jewish education characterizes teachers in the three communities? Overall, Table 1 shows that only 19% of teachers in Jewish schools are formally trained in both education and in Jewish studies. Thirty-five percent were trained in education but not Jewish studies, and another 12% were trained in Jewish studies but not education. This leaves a significant minority—34%—with no formal preparation in either field.

Table 1 further shows, not surprisingly, that day school teachers more often have training in Jewish studies than teachers in other schools, and that day school and pre-school teachers more often have professional backgrounds in education than teachers in supplementary schools (combine rows 1 and 2 in Table 1). However, the greater proportion of teachers trained in education in day and pre-schools reflects one- and two-year degrees from teacher training programs as well as university degrees in education. If non-university programs were excluded, day school and pre-school teachers would have formal backgrounds in education similar to that of supplementary teachers.

Further analysis shows that the dearth of formal training is not compensated by extensive in-service education. Table 2 shows that (excluding first-year teachers) day school teachers were required to attend an average of 3.8 workshops during the two-year period, supplementary teachers averaged 4.4, and pre-school teachers were required on average to attend just 6.2 workshops over a two-year period.

TABLE 1.
Professional Training of Teachers in Jewish Schools

	Day School	Supplementary School	Pre- School	All Schools
Trained in Education and Jewish Studies	35%	13%	9%	19%
Trained in Education Only	24%	32%	50%	35%
Trained in Jewish Studies Only	25%	11%	3%	12%
Trained in Neither Education Nor Jewish Studies	16%	44%	38%	34%

TABLE 2.
Average Number of Workshops Teachers in Jewish Schools
Were Required to Attend

	Average Number of Workshops in the Past Two Years
Day Schools	3.8
Supplementary Schools	4.4
Pre-Schools	6.2
All Schools	4.8

Note: Figures include only those teachers who said they were required to attend workshops, and exclude first-year teachers.

Clearly, the infrequency of in-service training is not adequate to make up for deficiencies, nor even to maintain an adequate level of professional growth among teachers who are already professionally trained. What can be done to raise standards for the quantity of in-service training?

Analytic Results

Table 3 explores background differences in required workshop attendance. The first column shows a trend for experience that is roughly linear, with teachers who are more experienced reporting more workshops. In addition, one can see in the first column that controlling for sex and experience, pre-school teachers still reported 2.36 more workshops than day school teachers (the reference category), and supplementary teachers reported .66 more workshops on average. Thus, the pattern that emerged in Table 2 is maintained in multivariate analyses.

The second column presents results for the same model with the additional effects of pre-service training. Teachers with formal preparation in education did not report more in-service workshops, but teachers who are trained in Jewish studies reported that they were required to attend 1.02 workshops more than teachers without such training. The third column of Table 3 shows that teachers who think of Jewish education as their career reported more workshops and teachers who plan to leave the field reported fewer workshops

TABLE 3.

Differences among individuals and settings in number of workshops teachers reported they were required to attend.

<i>Independent Variable</i>			
Sex (Male=1)	-.61 (.39)	-.74 (.39)	-.86* (.39)
Experience 6-10 years	.48 (.35)	.45 (.35)	.16 (.35)
Experience 11-20 years	.81* (.37)	.67 (.38)	.26 (.39)
Experience 21+ years	1.02* (.43)	.69 (.45)	.34 (.45)
Trained in Education		-.02 (.29)	-.11 (.29)
Trained in Jewish Studies		1.02** (.33)	.60 (.34)
Jewish Education is a Career			1.30** (.94)
Will Leave Jewish Education			-1.00* (.50)
Pre-school	2.36** (.36)	2.76** (.39)	2.65** (.38)
Supplementary School	.66* (.33)	.98** (.35)	1.19** (.35)
Constant	3.37** (.37)	2.89** (.43)	2.54** (.44)
R ²	.09	.10	.13

*p < .05 **p < .01

Notes: Metric regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. N=574 teachers. Equation also includes controls for missing data on sex, experience, training in education, training in Jewish studies, career, and plan to leave Jewish education.

than other teachers. Note also that the initial effects of experience appear to diminish in the second and third columns of Table 3. This pattern suggests that more experienced teachers reported more workshops because they tend to be better trained in Jewish studies and more oriented to a career in Jewish education, two conditions

that are obviously connected to longevity in the profession and apparently related to in-service standards as well.

Does the higher rate of reported workshops among pre-school teachers reflect state licensing requirements, as the interviews led us to conclude? To further probe this interpretation, we present in Table 4 the results of a regression that is restricted to pre-school teachers, and which includes an indicator of state-certified pre-schools. As Table 4 shows, teachers in certified schools reported 3.35 more workshops, a substantial difference considering that the average for pre-school teachers was 6.2 (see Table 2). As in the full-

TABLE 4.
Differences between certified and uncertified pre-schools in the number of workshops teachers reported they were required to attend.

Independent Variable

Experience 6-10 years	-.81 (.82)
Experience 11-20 years	-.84 (.94)
Experience 21+ years	-.74 (1.18)
Trained in Education	.09 (.67)
Trained in Jewish Studies	.59 (.95)
Jewish Education is a Career	1.53* (.75)
Will Leave Jewish Education	-1.76 (1.18)
Certified Pre-school	3.34** (1.00)
Constant	2.74* (1.17)
Adjusted R ²	.08

*p < .05 **p < .01

Notes: Metric regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. N=169 teachers. Equation also includes controls for missing data on experience, training in education, training in Jewish studies, career, and plan to leave Jewish education.

sample analysis, career-oriented pre-school teachers reported more workshops, and those planning to leave reported fewer, although the latter coefficient is not statistically significant due to the smaller number of cases when the sample is restricted to pre-school teachers. (Sex is excluded from the pre-school analysis because all but one of the pre-school teachers are female.)

Do state requirements for re-licensing of trained teachers encourage higher levels of required workshops? Table 5 indicates the answer is no. This analysis, restricted to day school teachers, shows that teachers in states requiring 180 hours or 100 hours of workshop training for re-licensing did not report more workshops than teachers in the state without a fixed workshop requirement. The second column of Table 5 shows that even day school teachers who are formally trained in the field of education did not report more workshops when they worked in states that required many hours of workshops for re-licensing. These results may indicate that day school Judaica teachers do not see themselves as bound by the norms of the general teaching force in the state.

Finally, did the federation-sponsored incentives program encourage higher rates of required workshops? The regression reported in Table 6, restricted to supplementary teachers, shows that teachers who encountered the incentives program reported an average of 2.52 more workshops than supplementary schools in the other two communities, where such federation programs are not in place.

In additional analyses (not shown), we relaxed sample restrictions that excluded first-year teachers and those who said no workshops were required, and conducted a logistic regression analysis to distinguish between those who said no workshops were required versus those who said at least one was required. (The logistic procedure is required for a dichotomous outcome, as explained by Agresti 1990.) These analyses produced the same pattern of results about levers for change as did our OLS regression on the quantity of workshops required: teachers in certified pre-schools were more likely to report that workshops were required, as were supplementary teachers with special in-service incentives, but state licensing requirements for K-12 teachers were unrelated to whether any workshops were required or not.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that teachers in three Jewish communities have relatively little formal preparation for their work in Jewish

TABLE 5.

Differences in the number of workshops day school teachers were required to attend in states with different professional growth requirements for relicensing.

<i>Independent Variable</i>		
Sex (Male=1)	-1.07* (.45)	-1.05* (.46)
Experience 6-10 years	1.62* (.64)	1.61* (.64)
Experience 11-20 years	1.12 (.62)	1.11 (.62)
Experience 21+ years	1.61* (.67)	1.62* (.67)
Trained in Education	-.32 (.42)	.21 (.49)
Trained in Jewish Studies	.23 (.49)	-.20 (.53)
Jewish Education is a Career	-.25 (.57)	-.24 (.58)
Will Leave Jewish Education	-.65 (.94)	-.60 (.95)
180 Hours Required for Re-License	-.08 (.54)	-.11 (.92)
100 Hours Required for Re-License	-.36 (.48)	-.03 (.76)
180 Hours X Trained in Education		.03 (1.14)
100 Hours X Trained in Education		-.51 .93
Constant	3.26** (.66)	3.19** (.68)
Adjusted R ²	.05	.04

*p < .05 **p < .01

Notes: Metric regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. N=176 day school teachers. Equation also includes controls for missing data on sex, experience, training in education, training in Jewish studies, career, and plan to leave Jewish education.

TABLE 6.

Number of workshops supplementary school teachers were required to attend in a community that offered incentives for attendance, compared to other communities.

<i>Independent Variable</i>	
Sex (Male=1)	-.13 (.46)
Experience 6-10 years	.58 (.42)
Experience 11-20 years	1.11* (.49)
Experience 21+ years	.84 (.57)
Trained in Education	-.06 (.37)
Trained in Jewish Studies	.81 (.44)
Jewish Education is a Career	1.19** (.38)
Will Leave Jewish Education	-.53 (.57)
Community Incentives for Workshops	2.52** (.35)
Constant	2.17** (.35)
Adjusted R ²	.30

*p < .05 **p < .01

Notes: Metric regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. N=229 supplementary school teachers. Equation also includes controls for missing data on sex, experience, training in education, training in Jewish studies, career, and plan to leave Jewish education.

schools. Moreover, they are not typically held to high standards for professional development. However, it appears there are policies that may raise the quantity of in-service. Teachers who are trained in Jewish studies and who are oriented towards a career in Jewish education reported more required workshops. This finding suggests that standards for professional development could be raised by recruiting teachers who are committed to the profession. Better re-

cruitment is an appropriate goal, but it remains a major challenge in light of the relatively small number of opportunities to obtain formal preparation for teaching in Jewish education (Davidson 1990).

Teachers in certified pre-schools reported substantially more required workshops than teachers in other pre-schools. Could this type of policy be implemented in supplementary schools, and in the Judaica divisions of day schools? Where would certification standards come from? One answer is from the community level—the federation or central agency might certify schools whose teachers engage in specified levels of professional growth. For this certification to be meaningful, however, it must be accompanied by some sort of rewards. Parents of pre-school children take certification into account when choosing a school, but this logic does not hold when one is choosing a supplementary school. However, it may be possible to raise parents' expectations so that they seek out supplementary schools and day schools with higher standards for professional growth. In addition, other incentives such as financial support might induce schools to seek communal certification.

Although certification of pre-schools made a difference, re-licensing requirements for K-12 teachers did not. In one sense these results may reflect the particular question we asked on the survey, which concerned required workshops instead of any workshops teachers may have attended. Teachers who are meeting individual re-licensing standards may not have thought of the workshops they attended as required. Another interpretation of the results is that rewards and sanctions aimed at individuals are ineffective, but incentives for schools have more impact, as in the case of pre-schools.

Finally, supplementary teachers reported more workshops in the community that had an incentives program. This finding suggests that incentives for both individuals and schools affect teachers' professional growth in a positive way. Hence, we conclude that incentives for individuals can be effective, if the incentives are meaningful (for example, a cash stipend, as in this case).

This paper addresses only the quantity of in-service education. The question of quality is at least as important, if not more so. Although one-day workshops are common in secular education, their effectiveness as a tool for professional development has been questioned. It is essential to consider recent ideas about creating more effective opportunities for professional growth (for example, Sparks 1995), at the same time as one thinks about raising the amount of in-service to which teachers are held.

The CIJE's ultimate hypothesis is that building Jewish education as a profession is critical for improving teaching and learning in Jewish education. This paper does not answer that question, but it addresses two crucial concerns along the way: What is the state of the profession? What can be done to improve it? By exploring three potential avenues for reform, we are furthering the broader endeavor. The results of this study suggest two mechanisms—community incentives and certification of schools—that can increase the professional growth activities of teachers in Jewish schools.

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APPENDIX

Means and Standard Deviations of Variables

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Number of Workshops	4.75	3.31
Sex (Male=1)	.15	.36
Experience 2-5 years	.27	.44
Experience 6-10 years	.31	.46
Experience 11-20 years	.25	.43
Experience 21+ years	.15	.36
Trained in Education	.54	.50
Trained in Jewish Studies	.32	.47
Jewish Education is a Career	.62	.49
Will Leave Jewish Education	.07	.26
Day School	.31	.46
Supplementary School	.40	.49
Pre-school	.29	.45
Accredited Pre-school	.26	.44
Missing Sex	.01	.11
Missing Experience	.02	.15
Missing Trained in Education	.04	.19
Missing Trained in Jewish Studies	.04	.20
Missing Career	.02	.14
Missing Plans to Leave	.05	.22

Note: N = 574 teachers.