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### CONCEPTIONS OF THE STUDY OF JEWISH TEXTS IN TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## CONCEPTIONS OF THE STUDY OF JEWISH TEXTS IN TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Elie Holzer

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The proliferation of the study of Jewish texts in settings of teachers' professional development poses a challenge for teacher educators. What is the study of these texts to provide for teachers? What would be ways for these texts to be studied in order to contribute to the education of teachers? This paper presents four conceptual approaches of current practices and discussions as to the role of the study of Jewish texts in teachers' professional development. Three approaches are mainly concerned with the questions of *what* teachers should know and do not pay enough attention to, and, one of the key questions of teacher education, *how* teachers may learn. A fourth possible approach is therefore presented. It draws on recent development in the field of teacher education, calling for the investigation of teaching and learning by teachers. It describes what would be the conditions so as to have the study of Jewish texts become a "site" for the investigation of teaching and learning. This approach seeks to integrate some of *what* teachers should learn with *how* they may learn it and attempts to show what might be a role of the study of traditional texts in the context of professional development.

The study of classical Jewish texts occupies a crucial place in Jewish religious tradition. Throughout the centuries, these texts have served a variety of purposes, for example as sources of legal religious behavior, moral guidance, or spiritual inspiration. Moreover, the activity itself of studying these texts has received the status of a central and fundamental religious ritual.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore not surprising to find that the study of Jewish texts also plays an important role in Jewish teacher education programs.

Texts in general are perceived as records that convey information, ideas, concepts etc. In teachers' professional development there seems

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<sup>1</sup>I would like to thank Professor Barry W. Holtz and Dr. Gail Dorph for their insightful comments to an early draft of this article. I had the opportunity to work out a number of these ideas in the context of being a faculty member at the Mandel Foundation in New York. My thanks to Ms. Miriam Heller for the editing work.

<sup>1</sup>See for example Maimonides, Laws concerning the study of *Torah*, 1:8.

to be an implicit assumption that the study of Jewish texts will provide types of knowledge that will have an impact on the teachers. In this paper, I intend to present and discuss one possible conceptual map of ways teacher educators conceptualize the role and the purpose of studying Jewish texts in the context of teacher education.<sup>2</sup>

To do so, I will organize the discussion of the various conceptualizations around three questions that a teacher educator might ask in planning professional development for teachers.

The first question pertains to the *rationale and purpose* underlying the study of Jewish texts in the context of professional development. Why Jewish texts at all? For what purpose are texts studied? What is it that can make the study of Jewish texts beneficial in the context of professional development? What is it that teacher educators hope teachers will learn from text study?

A second question pertains to the choice of Jewish *texts*. Which *genre* of texts should teachers study? What knowledge do these texts hold that is important for teachers to study? How is the study of these particular texts meant to serve the purposes that were identified?

A third question pertains to what I will call the *pedagogy* of teacher education, which refers to the ways teachers may learn in the context of professional development, and more specifically, ways they learn to teach. How are the teachers to be engaged in the study of these texts in the context of professional development? These would be ways of learning that would not only facilitate the intellectual assimilation of these texts but would also engage the teachers in ways of thinking and learning that will promote good future teaching.

Looking at the work of teacher educators in the field and examining some of the literature produced by Jewish educators of Jewish education, there seem to be three different models to the study of Jewish texts in professional development.

Model 1: “Jewish texts for *Torah Lishma* study.” Teachers study texts in order to be engaged in the activity of study and in order to add to their general Jewish knowledge.

Model 2: “Jewish texts for subject matter knowledge.” Teachers study texts in order to increase their knowledge of the discipline they are expected to teach. This is not a simple idea. I will present three variations on what it means to know more content knowledge.

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<sup>2</sup>In this article, “teacher education” is to include both pre- and in-service education.

Model 3: “Jewish texts for meta-educational knowledge.” Teachers study texts in order to deepen their knowledge of goals of Jewish education and the normative values that should be embedded in the practice of Jewish education.

Although each of these models contributes to the education of teachers, none of them places the pedagogy of teacher education at the center of Jewish text study. I will therefore offer a fourth model, the study of “Jewish texts for investigating teaching and learning,” which attempts to integrate the study of Jewish texts with some important elements of teachers’ learning to teach. Finally, I will conclude with a few critical reflections inviting further research.

For each of the models that I will describe, I will present the way it addresses the three questions outlined above. The following chart is a representation of the way we will organize our discussion:

	<b>1. Rationale and purpose</b>	<b>2. The Jewish content and its texts</b>	<b>3. The pedagogy of teacher education</b>
<b>Model 1: Jewish texts for Torah Lishma study</b>			
<b>Model 2: Jewish texts for subject matter knowledge</b>			
<b>Model 3: Jewish texts for meta-educational knowledge</b>			
<b>Model 4: Jewish texts for investigating teaching and learning</b>			

**FIGURE 1.** Three questions about the use of Jewish texts in four conceptual models

### MODEL 1: JEWISH TEXTS FOR TORAH LISHMA STUDY (THE STUDY OF TORAH FOR ITS OWN SAKE)

Why should the study of Jewish texts take place in the context of teacher education?<sup>2</sup> Often, the teacher educator will offer the following rationale: lifelong study is a central Jewish value, therefore every member of the community should be involved in Jewish study. The same applies to teachers; each time they gather they should dedicate time to some Jewish text study, no matter what the professional agenda of their gathering. The purpose of the study is to foster this important Jewish value among Jewish educators. Teacher educators will also stress the purpose of the study of Jewish texts as a way for the teachers to become more Jewishly knowledgeable.

Since in this approach the study of Jewish content for its own sake is what drives the study, the question of what Jewish content a *teacher* needs to know is not specifically addressed. Consequently, no explicit thought is given to the *genre* of texts that should be studied.

Sometimes a teacher educator will incorporate the study of a text that is related to the theme of the teacher education program. For example, if the program deals with the education of special needs children, one could begin with the study and discussion of a text about the value of providing learning opportunities for each child. In such a case, the text that is studied is not meant to be taught by the teachers, nor does it necessarily help teachers think about their practice of teaching.

In these settings, a variety of pedagogies might be used, although *Hevruta*, study in pairs, seems to be very much in vogue. It seems that the main reason for the popularity of *Hevruta* study is that it encourages interaction among the participants. It is not because of any specific way in which this form of text study contributes to the learning of *teachers* in particular. That is, no serious reflection is invested in the question of what sort of learning is this intervention fostering and what may be its relevance to the teachers' work, which is about helping others to learn.

To summarize: in the "*Torah Lishma*" model, the study of Jewish texts is not explicitly thought of through the lens of professional development, i.e. that it should make a difference in the teachers' practice. We will find this very premise at the heart of the second model.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>On various understandings of Torah Lishma see Lamm (1989). In the context of Jewish education see Holtz (1990) 211-244 and Rosenak (1995) 231-234.

## MODEL 2: JEWISH TEXTS FOR SUBJECT MATTER KNOWLEDGE

In this model the teacher educator thinks of the teachers' study as making a difference in the teachers' actual teaching. It assumes: a) the more Jewish subject matter teachers know, the better they will teach, and b) Jewish subject matter is learned through the study of Jewish texts.

There are at least three variants as to what to "*know more*" could mean: a) to know more content knowledge, that is, to know the subject matter that the teachers will be expected to teach, b) to know substantive and syntactic structures of the discipline, that is, to know the subject matter in different ways, and c) to know more methods to teach the subject matter.

### *Content Knowledge*

In this approach the teacher educator's rationale is that teachers need to know more of the subject matter they teach. In this case, to know more means first and foremost to know more about what are considered to be facts and important concepts of the subject matter.<sup>4</sup> One of the typical reasons given for this rationale is that teachers need to be able to provide answers for questions students ask. As Lee Shulman has shown, this was a widely accepted conception of teacher education in the 19th century (Shulman 1986).

In this case, the texts that are studied directly connect to what teachers are expected to teach. At the very least, the teacher educator will consider that a particular area of content is to become a part of the teachers' knowledge base even if it is not meant to be taught in the near future. For example, teachers who are to teach the book of Genesis may have a study session on only one portion of Genesis, learning some classical interpretations they might not have known beforehand.

As in the *Torah Lishma* model, in most cases, the teacher will be a scholar or a Rabbi, not a teacher educator. This is because the scholar and the Rabbi are perceived as those who have greater content knowledge. The pedagogy of teacher education will not be the focus of their concerns. In the minds of the scholar or the Rabbi, as in the teacher

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<sup>4</sup>I allow myself to use the general expression "knowledge of subject matter" in the context of this short summary only. For an example of what the expression may entail, see Wilson (1991).

educator's mind, nothing needs to be specially adapted in the ways these texts ought to be learned even though in this case the learners are future *teachers* of these same texts. Rather, they will tend to engage the teachers in the same way that they engage any adult learners.

Finally, let us note that in some cases, this approach reflects a view of the teachers by which the disciplinary subject matter is not considered to be problematic in nature, like for example allowing different ideological approaches. The subject matter is essentially perceived as a fixed collection of facts and concepts that must be learned before they can be applied in teaching (Ball 1988); (Florio and Lensmire 1990); (Grossman 1990); (Leinhardt and Smith 1985). In the course of the text study, this perception is not challenged, neither by what the teachers are learning, nor by the ways in which they are engaged in the learning of these texts.

### *Substantive and Syntactic Knowledge*

More recently, researchers have begun to question what we actually mean when we say that teachers should know more subject matter. Grossman, Wilson, and Shulman, using categories originally created by J. Schwab, suggest three types of subject matter knowledge that are needed for teachers:

*Content knowledge*: facts, concepts, and procedures within a given discipline.

*Substantive knowledge*: the knowledge of the explanatory frameworks or paradigms that are used both to guide inquiry and to make sense of the data in the discipline.

*Syntactic knowledge*: knowledge of the ways by which new and valid knowledge is brought into the discipline. These are the canons of evidence and proof within the discipline. For example, the study of physics involves scientific inquiry, the study of literature involves literary analysis. In other words: the syntactic structures are the means by which new knowledge is introduced and accepted into the discipline (Grossman et al. 1989); (Schwab 1964).

According to this view, the knowledge of the subject matter required in order to teach is not the same as knowledge of the subject matter *per se* (Shulman 1986); (Wilson et al. 1987).<sup>5</sup> The ways a teacher

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<sup>5</sup>An interesting critique of Shulman's distinction between the knowledge of subject matter knowledge by the scholar and by the teacher can be found in McEwan & Bull (1991).

grasps the subject matter is no less critical for teaching than his or her level of content knowledge. Therefore, the need for teachers to know more does not include only content knowledge but also certain types of knowledge *about* the subject matter.<sup>6</sup>

This school of thought emphasizes the need for teachers to learn the various paradigmatic approaches to the discipline they are teaching, assuming that these will have an impact on the ways they teach, the ways they think about teaching, and the ways they might help students to learn these disciplines (McDiarmid et al. 1989).

If we are to apply this view to the context of our discussion, in addition to help teachers gain content knowledge the purpose of the study of Jewish texts in professional development is to have teachers learn different forms of the substantive and syntactic structures of the discipline. In this case, the texts that will be studied are those that convey different forms of substantive and syntactic structures. In the case of Bible, these texts might be extrapolated from scholars representing different approaches to the study of Bible, e.g. Uriel Simon (as a literary approach), Umberto Cassuto (as an historical approach) and Nechama Leibowitz (as a mediator of classical commentaries).<sup>7</sup> Teachers will therefore study these commentaries extrapolating the substantive and the syntactic elements that are implicit in each of these approaches.

In this case the fact that multiple approaches to the subject matter are studied helps create a more variegated understanding of the subject matter itself. The idea that there is no absolute subject matter, but rather subject matter as understood via a particular disciplinary lens becomes an important part of the teachers' knowledge. This understanding has consequences for the teachers' learning and for their practice of teaching (Dorph 1993).

At the heart of this view lies the question: what should a teacher know in order to *teach* the subject matter better. There does not appear to be an explicit concern for the pedagogy of the learning of teachers in this approach either. The pedagogical question would in-

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<sup>6</sup>Pamela Grossman has developed the concept of "orientation" to capture both the concepts of substantive and syntactic structures, see Grossman (1990). For an excellent discussion of the limitations of Grossman's approach for Jewish Education, see Holtz (1999).

<sup>7</sup>On the knowledge of substantive and syntactic structures see Schwab (1964); Lukinsky (1970). For the teaching of Bible see Dorph (1993); Dorph (2000). For the teaching of Talmud see Gribetz (1995). For a discussion about the substantive and syntactic meaning of religious statements, see Holzer (2000).



investigate ways of learning these various approaches to the subject matter that would itself produce an impact on the teachers' teaching. However, the approach conventionally used is grounded in an academic view, which stresses the importance of multiple approaches to each discipline. Yet, it seems that if this is not to become a survey of different subject matter approaches only, there is a need to pay more attention to the ways teachers may learn, so that the knowledge of various substantive and syntactic forms of the subject matter will effectively impact their teaching of the subject matter. This impact might be experienced in teachers' ability to listen and understand students' question as well as in their ability to represent difficult concepts in a variety of ways. One should therefore not underestimate the question of transfer of theoretical knowledge to the practice of teaching.

### *Methods Knowledge*

Sometimes, a slightly different conception of knowing more subject matter is found in professional development. To the question "what should a teacher know more of," the answer will be: "the teacher should know particular methods of teaching aspects of the subject matter." In this view, the rationale for studying texts in the context of professional development is that teachers need not to know content only, but also methods of teaching that content. The purpose of this kind of study is to provide teachers with hands-on, pedagogical useful experiences (which teachers usually do appreciate). In teaching Bible for example, this might include sessions in which teacher educators demonstrate methods of teaching a specific chapter, a specific story, or a specific part of the text.

Even though this approach is not aimed at increasing the teachers' subject matter knowledge *per se*, we may say that since it embodies subject matter knowledge, like for example in the demonstration of a model lesson, it actually reflects one more form of developing teachers' knowledge of the subject matter. Usually the teacher educator is considered to be a very experienced and creative teacher; someone who has proven to be "successful" in the classroom, who might have developed creative and innovative approaches for the teaching of specific content.

As in the view of the study of texts for "content knowledge," the Jewish texts that will be studied in the professional development session will be texts that teachers are expected to teach. But, in this view (the "methods knowledge"), the fact that these texts are studied by

future *teachers* of these very same texts creates a particular way to engage the teachers in the study of these texts, namely, through the modeling of methods by which these texts might be *taught*.

In a first analysis, it seems that this view does take very seriously the question of the pedagogy of teacher education: “what kind of study will lead to good *teaching*.” We found a first attempt to take this question seriously in the “substantive and syntactic knowledge” view, but we recall that the answer that was offered took the form of a different type of *content* knowledge, namely the knowledge *about* the subject matter. In the “methods knowledge” view, the question is answered by providing the teacher with different *teaching* methods which are embedded in the subject matter. In both cases, there is a real concern about what will lead to better *teaching*, and about the requisite knowledge that can be acquired through text study. But, it should be noted that in both cases, the question of “what will make for future good teaching” is answered in the form of *theoretical* knowledge: knowledge about the subject matter (the substantive and syntactic knowledge view) or the knowledge of skills appropriate to the subject matter (the methods knowledge view).

However, at the core of the rationale of both approaches we do not see attention to ways that teachers are *learning* that might enhance their capacity to become better teachers. This question of the pedagogy of teachers’ learning seems, even in the best case scenario, to be secondary.

### MODEL 3: JEWISH TEXTS FOR META-EDUCATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

In the first model, “Jewish texts for *Torah Lishma* study,” the study of Jewish texts is not specifically designed to impact the teachers’ teaching. In the three variants of the second model there is a clear attempt to use text study to influence the teaching of the teachers, by giving them an opportunity to learn more subject matter. The texts that are part of this study were directly connected and defined by the discipline that the teachers were expected to teach. Thus, in the case of Bible teachers:

- In the *content knowledge* view (model 2a), the teachers study more Bible.
- In the *substantive and syntactic knowledge* view (model 2b), the

teachers study various paradigmatic approaches to the study of Bible.

- In the *methods knowledge* view (model 2c), teachers study teaching methods appropriate to the specific Bible content.

The third model, about to be described, will find also attempt to have the study of Jewish content influence the teaching practice of the teachers. But, unlike the second model this is not specific subject matter related knowledge but what I am calling “meta-educational knowledge.” In this model, we can find two distinctive types of Jewish content that function as meta-educational knowledge:

1. Ethical norms and ideas to permeate the practice of teaching and learning in Jewish education.
2. All encompassing philosophical educational goals guide and permeate the way teachers teach as well as the ultimate educational goals they are aiming for.

### ***Jewish Texts as the Source of Ethical Norms of Teaching***

Here teachers study texts that describe the behavioral norms of an educational context. An example would be Maimonides’ Laws of the Study of Torah, Chapters 4–5, which deal with the ethical standards for the teacher-student relationship, e.g. when and how one should ask questions in class (Laws of the Study of Torah, chapter 4:4–6).

The rationale and purpose behind the study of these texts would vary in different ideological contexts. We can imagine a range of approaches: more Orthodox-oriented teachers may read these Laws with a pretty close normative approach, implementing the ideas expressed in this text in the classroom because “this is what our sources tell us to do.” Less Orthodox-oriented teachers may adopt a more deliberative approach, an approach in which the Laws are open to a wide variety of interpretations and would be considered as an important and worthwhile “source of wisdom” in the Jewish tradition that deals with educational issues. But the ideas and the norms expressed in these texts would require deliberation and a conceptual translation. This is because teachers might not entirely identify with these norms and values or because they come out of such a different historical and cultural context. However, the engagement in the study of these sources as well some of the insights they offer are considered to be a rich and inspirational source for the teachers’ own development as teachers in Jewish education.

In this view, the Jewish content consists of different *genres* of texts that express norms that are expected to prevail and to be nurtured in the educational context. Besides Maimonides' Laws of the Study of Torah that I have already mentioned, we could find, for example texts about the importance of total dedication to the study of Torah (*Avot* from Rabbi Nathan, version A, chapter 6) or humility and audacity to ask questions, as conditions of learning (*Pirke Avot*, chapter 5:6).

As for the pedagogy of teacher education, both in the more normative and the more deliberative approach, we do not necessarily find a concern for how teachers learn these texts. Often it is assumed that just by studying and cognitively knowing these norms, teachers will translate them into practice.

### ***Jewish Texts as Sources of Educational Philosophy***

There are different schools of thought that define the meaning of philosophy of education. Thus, for example, we find analytical philosophy of education that aims to clarify key educational concepts or philosophy of education that aims to define the ultimate goals of education and provide reasonable justifications for them (Wingo 1974).

We will focus on this latter form of educational philosophy in relationship to Jewish text study. We are referring to texts that express educational ideas and ideals relating to the ultimate goals of Jewish education. In this category, the predominant *genre* is the writings of Jewish thinkers, from which, a profile of the ideal educated Jew can be extrapolated and translated in terms of what he should know, be able to do, value and aim for. These texts also include rationales for the ideals that ought to be cultivated. These rationales stem from the thinkers' assumptions about reality, humankind, wisdom, Judaism, etc.

The rationale and purpose of having teachers learn these texts is to encourage teachers to think about the goals of Jewish education and/or religious education. These goals are to influence their entire educational enterprise, the ways teachers will teach and the ways they will think about education (Rosenak 1978); (Fox 1973); (S. Fox 1977); (M. Fox, 1977); (Aron, 1986).

Thus, one would study what seem to be some of the characteristics of the educated Jew according to diverse thinkers such as Maimonides, Martin Buber, or Mordechai Kaplan. Teachers would learn selections from these thinkers in order to gradually design the profile of the characteristics of the educated Jew according to each of them. These characteristics would be formulated as Jewish educa-

tional goals that would guide and inform the different elements of the educational enterprise like the curriculum, the pedagogies, etc.

In this view, the literature of Jewish philosophy has a privileged status since a significant part of its agenda is about the goals and aims of Jewish life and Judaism.<sup>8</sup> An example of this approach is the work of Michael Rosenak in his *Roads to the Palace* (Rosenak 1995).

Those who have been developing this approach have usually stressed the importance of:

- The need to deliberate among competing views of Jewish thinkers about what it means to be an “educated Jew.”
- The need for a systematic model that will enable a conceptual translation from these philosophical ideas into the practice of education.<sup>9</sup>

One purpose of this type of translation is to narrow the cultural and historical gap that separates us from these sources. Another even more important purpose is to translate these general ideas into concrete examples of implementation in education contexts as curriculum and the practice of teaching. Although some conceptual models of translation have been developed (Fox 1969); (Frankena 1970)<sup>10</sup>, finding ways to apply these models to teacher education is a step that has not yet been developed. This approach seems to underestimate the difficulty of transfer of knowledge by teachers. The translation of philosophical ideals to *theoretical* examples of educational practice may be of an intellectual interest for teachers but does not provide the necessary learning experiences to help teachers improve their practice. In other words, the learning of teachers is not addressed in this approach and until such work is done it is unrealistic to expect teachers to approach their work as practitioners of applied philosophy.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup>On the links between Jewish philosophy and education see Rosenak (1978); Fox (1973); Fox S. (1977); Schweid (1987).

<sup>9</sup>See forthcoming publication: Visions of learning: Theory and Practice in Jewish education. Eds. Seymour Fox, Israel Scheffler, and Daniel Marom.

<sup>10</sup>For an attempt of a first systematic application in Jewish education see Aron (1986).

<sup>11</sup>An interesting and new variant of this view seems to emerge in a recent article published by J. Cohen. The author explores different thinkers’ hermeneutic approaches to the meaning of religious texts. These approaches have clear roots in philosophical ideas about religion, history, etc. and at the same that touch directly on the practice of teaching. For example, by what they consider to be the questions one should be asking about what presents itself as a religious text. See Cohen (1999–2000).

**Summary Analysis of the Three Models**

At this point, the different conceptualizations of the study of Jewish texts in professional development can be summarized in the following chart:

We have pointed to three different ways of conceptualizing the role played by the study of Jewish texts in the context of Jewish educational professional development. Clearly, these different models are indispensable for the professional development of teachers. The second and the third models both seem to address a very important aspect of what will ultimately lead to better teaching, namely, the

	<b>1. Rationale and purpose</b>	<b>2. The Jewish content and its texts</b>	<b>3. The pedagogy of teacher education</b>
<b>Model 1: Jewish texts for Torah Lishma study</b>	Study of <i>Torah</i> for its own sake	Not specified	Not addressed
<b>Model 2: Jewish texts for subject matter knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To acquire content knowledge</li> <li>b) To acquire knowledge of substantive and syntactic forms</li> <li>c) To acquire knowledge of methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Texts of disciplinary knowledge</li> <li>b) texts reflecting different approaches to the discipline</li> <li>c) Texts of disciplinary knowledge</li> </ul>	Not embedded in the model
<b>Model 3: Jewish texts for meta-educational knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To learn Jewish ethical norms about teaching</li> <li>b) To learn Jewish educational philosophy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Variety of text <i>genres</i>, reflecting ethical norms that should prevail in the practice of education</li> <li>b) Texts from Jewish philosophers</li> </ul>	Not embedded in the model

**FIGURE 2.** The study of Jewish texts in professional development for teachers

different types of teachers' knowledge that are important for better teaching.

However, as we can see, the question of the pedagogy of teacher education is not addressed, or at least, is not central in these different models. These approaches do not ask questions like:

- a) What is the relationship between the ways teachers are learning these various Jewish texts and how teachers are learning to teach?
- b) What are modes of thinking, investigating, and talking about teaching that we believe are needed for teachers to learn and develop their practice?

These questions are rarely asked. Indeed, they may sound secondary to proponents of these three more conventional approaches to the use of Jewish texts in teacher education. After all, one might think that what is important is the Jewish content that teachers need to learn. As for the ways they will learn, these are distinct from, or one may say not necessarily related to the ability of teachers to assimilate these types of knowledge into their teaching practice.

But teaching is a practice and studying in order to know the content of *what* one is to teach or in order to know *how* to teach does not mean that one is actually learning how to apply this knowledge to one's practice. It is important to emphasize that we believe the pedagogy of teachers' learning to teach is not to be dealt with *instead* of teachers learning content and methods but, as it were, "behind and beyond" their learning of subject matter knowledge, methods and meta educational knowledge. A thorough examination will show that what is called the "pedagogy of teachers' learning to teach" is much more than a practical secondary question. It entails both the cognitive processes and the learning opportunities in which teachers need to be engaged (Feiman-Nemser and Remillard 1996). It has the potential to transform the ways teachers think, talk and practice teaching in its various aspects relating to the students, the subject matter, and the teacher himself.

This is not only a theoretical assumption but resonates with typical comments from teachers in the field as well. Many teachers believe that what they have learned in pre-service education (and sometimes in in-service education) is irrelevant to the "real" world of teaching in the classroom (Lortie 1975); (Smylie 1989). They claim that the knowledge of different theories (psychological, pedagogical,

sociological, philosophical, etc.) assumed to relate to their practice, are not relevant and helpful for the practice of teaching.<sup>12</sup> The link between what and how teachers learn on the one hand and their practice of teaching on the other hand remains a major challenge for teacher educators and needs therefore to be carefully examined.

At this point in our discussion, one strategy could be to go back to each of the models I have described and to explore what pedagogies could possibly be useful in each of these models in order to create bridges between what teachers learn and their practice. However, in this article I will develop a fourth model for the role of the study of Jewish texts in professional development. Drawing on some of the features of what is sometimes called the new paradigm of professional development this model strives to integrate a pedagogy of teacher education with the study of a specific *genre* of Jewish texts so that some of the features of the study will be integrated with a larger rationale of teacher education.

Cases of this approach were developed and used in the context of the Teacher Educators Institute (T.E.I.), a program for the professional development of teacher educators who work in Jewish education (Holtz et al. 1997). In the context of this article I will essentially offer a theoretical presentation followed by a short example only. I will first briefly introduce the theoretical approach to professional development upon which it draws, highlighting the elements that are relevant to our discussion. Then I will articulate the rationale and the purpose of the study of Jewish texts in this fourth model. As I will show, it is interesting to note that both the content and the pedagogy of teacher education are embedded in this model's rationale.

#### **MODEL 4: STUDY OF JEWISH TEXTS FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

##### ***The Investigative Approach to Teaching and Teacher Education***

The new paradigm of professional development considers the practice of teaching as requiring knowledge to be used in particular situa-

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<sup>12</sup>About the lack of investment in the thinking about this issue see Barone, Berliner, Blanchard, Casanova, Mc Gowan (1996). As to the fragmentation of the knowledge in both coursework and field experiences see Ben-Peretz (1995).



tions and in complex interactions with students, the subject matter and the environment. Teaching is, in Lampert's terms, "a thinking practice" which integrates reasoning and knowing with action (Lampert 1998). Teaching is an intellectual activity that depends on what Zumwalt (1982) has called the "deliberative" ability to reflect on and to make intelligent decisions about practice. As we said earlier, the theoretical knowledge that one might have about the subject matter and teaching does not translate directly to the practice of teaching. On the contrary, the teacher is expected to monitor the different kinds of theoretical knowledge that he has (about the subject matter, about learning, about the students) while being engaged in the interpretation of the particular, complex and unpredictable situation in which he finds himself.

This need for ongoing interpretation is one reason that using these various kinds of knowledge is so complicated in the practice of teaching. There is no one fixed reality in which the teacher finds himself. Rather, the teacher's perception of the situation, together with different types of theoretical knowledge he has, will guide the actions he will take (McDonald 1992); (Schon 1983). Therefore, the ability to be engaged in the interpretation of what is taking place is an important element of good teaching. It requires a certain openness on the part of the teacher and, even more so, an investigative orientation, an attempt to try to interpret the teaching situation in which he finds himself. As Ball and Lampert put it:

What one should do next always *depends* on where one is in the content, on who is engaged, on what they are engaged in, on how tired or interested the class is, on whether students are 'getting it', and so on.<sup>13</sup>

What are the consequences of this conception of teaching for the education of teachers? Conventional professional development for teachers builds on experts who teach new methods of teaching or diverse forms of content knowledge. Teachers are offered few opportunities for meaningful interactions and for using this knowledge as a part of a fruitful learning process. It is therefore unlikely that their learning will affect their teaching practices (Feiman-Nemser 2000). In response to this state of affairs, a new paradigm of professional

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<sup>13</sup>Lampert and Ball (1998) 29.

development has emerged. Conceptually, it takes as its starting point teachers' practical knowledge. It is assumed that one of the conditions that makes for teachers' learning is the opportunity to examine and reflect on the knowledge that is implied in the good practice of teaching. Conceptually, this premise draws on a long tradition starting with John Dewey (1929), who already thought that the practical inquiry of teachers should be the substance of educational research. It was further developed by people like Donald Schon (1983,1987); (Zeichner and Liston 1996).

In more recent examples, we find teacher educators who explicitly state their way of thinking about the teachers' learning. Thus, Ball and Lampert underline what seems to be an important strategic change in the way of thinking about teachers learning to teach:

Instead of taking a position in the argument about *what* prospective teachers need to know, we would like to enter the fray at another point, asking instead *how* they should know those things.<sup>14</sup>

In other words: besides the usual content of the teachers' curriculum, the question to be raised concerns the *pedagogy* of learning to teach. This is not to mean in any way that this question overshadows what teachers should know but that it is a significant and different entry point in conceptualizing teacher education.

A crucial question for teacher education therefore becomes: What are the pedagogies that we, teacher educators, should use in order to help people learn to teach?<sup>15</sup> In this conception of teaching it is assumed that the use of knowledge in practice depends on:

learning to see, hear, interpret and design, ( . . . ) actions in context. This kind of learning occurs in a complex interaction between doing, on the one hand, and talking about the doing on the other.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Lampert and Ball (1998) 36.

<sup>15</sup>Already Dewey criticized the tendency in teacher education of his time, to emphasize the immediate proficiency of the teacher on the account of preparing teachers who have the capacity and the disposition to keep on growing: "Practical work should be pursued primarily with the references to its reaction upon the professional pupil in making him a thoughtful and alert student of education, rather than to him get immediate proficiency ( . . . ) Unless a teacher is ( . . . ) a student [of education] he may continue to improve in the mechanics of school management, but he cannot grow as a teacher, an inspirer and director of soul life," Dewey (1965) 151.

<sup>16</sup>Lampert and Ball (1998) 40.

Teacher education will therefore have to foster, develop, and build on these abilities.<sup>17</sup> This approach advocates for teacher's learning these abilities by the *investigation* of teaching and learning in given contexts, starting from practice and considering what is embedded in the practice of teaching to be the "subject matter" to be investigated, analyzed, and reflected upon.

The analytical and reflective work on the practice of teaching is to contribute to the teachers' ability to monitor the various types of knowledge in the concrete context of teaching. Or, in other words, using Donald Schon's language: the assumption is that an after the fact, systematic reflection about what may have taken place during a lesson ("reflection on action") should make a difference in the teacher's ability to be a reflective practitioner in the course of his teaching ("reflection in action") (Schon 1987).

In order for reflection on action to be possible educators need records of practice upon which to reflect. These records of practice (Lampert and Ball 1998) are documents, texts, and images collected in the course of real life in classrooms. Studying records of practice such as these can help teachers become more aware of the characteristics of teaching, promote analytical and reflective thinking about the complexities of teaching and learning content, and ultimately improve practice.

In recent years, teacher educators have been developing different records of practice in order to engage teachers in this kind of work. The case study approach is an example of a record that is meant to have teachers learn *from* practice and *in* practice by engaging them in the investigation of teaching and learning in the context of concrete cases. More recently, Lampert and Ball developed a range of materials like videotapes of real classroom teaching, the analysis of students and teachers' materials, curriculum materials, etc. (Lampert and Ball 1998).

But, central to this type of learning are the ways the teachers will be engaged in the work of learning to teach. In a way, the practice of

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<sup>17</sup>As Lampert and Ball mentioned, this is in line with the recommendations of the National Commission on Teaching and America's future: "Successful teacher preparation programs aim to develop a foundation for continual learning about teaching - the capacity to analyze learning and examine the effects of contexts and teaching strategies on students' motivation, interest and achievement - rather than only to transmit techniques for managing daily classroom activities," Teaching Multimedia and Mathematics (1998) 37.

teaching now becomes the “subject matter” of teacher education. Thus, the subject matter of teacher education consists of the elements involved in teaching and learning: the teacher, the students, the disciplinary subject matter and the dynamic relationships among them. This subject matter calls for an analytical and investigative approach. The stance to be adopted towards this subject matter of teacher education will therefore include the abilities needed for the study and the analysis of teaching and learning. It should be stressed that these are the same abilities that are believed to be at the core of good teaching practice. In other words, the abilities that make for good teaching will be practiced in the investigation of teaching by teachers, which is also one way to help teachers learn to teach.

For the purpose of our discussion about Jewish texts, let us note three of these abilities, which are mentioned by Ball and Cohen (Ball and Cohen 1999) as those which teacher educators should try to help teachers develop:

- Methods of interpretation, analysis and weighing competing views.
- A disposition of inquiry.
- New norms of interaction with other teachers, such as arguing and exchanging ideas etc.<sup>18</sup>

The application of such an approach to teacher education in Jewish education would take the form of, for example, an investigation of a videotape of a Bible class. Teachers would investigate what the teacher is doing, what and when students are asking questions as well as what possible ideas could be taught using the given Biblical text. In the investigation one would “flesh out” what might be included in each of these categories and would then make new connections between theoretical knowledge and this real and specific instance of teaching. The conversation would focus on issues of teaching and learning, it would stimulate investigations and reflections on the dilemmas of teaching and develop a culture of inquiry and conversation among teachers. However, at the same time, these activities would also aim to develop the *habits* of an investigative stance toward the elements of teaching and learning, since these are believed to be essential for good teaching. It is in this approach to teacher education that I now suggest conceptualizing the study of Jewish texts.

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<sup>18</sup>Ball and Cohen (1999) 27.

### ***The Study of Jewish Texts as a “Site” to Develop the Investigation of Practice***

In the context of an approach to teacher education as described, what could be the role of the study of Jewish texts? I want to argue that as the investigation of records of practice can be a vehicle for teacher education, so too can the study of certain Jewish texts. In other words: there would be a way by which we could look at Jewish texts as one particular form of record of practice and therefore approach it as such. For this to be possible one would adopt a similar investigative stance in the study and the exploration of these texts. The investigation of the texts would emphasize in particular the three abilities mentioned above as crucial to the investigation of teaching and learning: methods of interpretation, disposition of inquiry, and new norms of interaction. As in the case of the investigation of videotapes, some of the skills and dispositions of investigation that we would nurture around the study of the texts, would be the same which are believed to central to good teaching.

Moreover, teachers studying Jewish texts using this approach would also take advantage of their own learning experiences at the professional development program in order to reflect and learn about teaching and learning. Thus, we can think of the study of texts in teacher education as having two distinctive and complementary parts: the study of Jewish texts and the teachers' reflections on the teaching and learning that they themselves have experienced during that same study. By doing this, one can hope for more integration of the study of Jewish texts and the overall rationale and pedagogy of teacher education, which is to investigate teaching and learning.

### ***Characteristics of the Study of Texts as Investigation of Practice***

What are the Jewish texts that would best lend themselves to the investigation of the practice of teaching and learning? In this model, the teacher educator planning the study program would need to ask: what elements could make the study of Jewish texts an opportunity for the investigation of the practice of teaching and learning? I identify the following three possibilities:

- The *content* of the text needs to refer to an aspect of teaching and

learning. This would enable us to approach it as a version of a record of practice.

- The *pedagogy* utilized by the teacher educator to guide the learning of the teachers should encourage by the teachers the adoption of an investigative stance. This investigative stance is characterized by: an openness to diverse interpretation; exploring what learners bring to the interpretation as readers of the situation and of the text; being analytical; unpacking and questioning the motivations, intentions and thoughts behind what one “sees”; learning by contrasting one’s approach to others.
- Teachers would engage in *analytical reflection* about their own experience having just learned these texts. Thus, in addition to reflecting upon the teaching and learning situations expressed in the texts, teachers would examine their *own* learning of these texts, by analyzing an additional instance of teaching and learning.

I will now exemplify this approach to the study of Jewish texts with a brief case. It has been developed and used in the context of the Teacher Educators Institute (T.E.I.), a program for the professional development of teacher educators who work in Jewish education (Holtz et al. 1997). However, given the limited scope of this article I will limit myself to a brief summary of the learning tasks that embodied the ideas I have developed above.

The text appears in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Sanhedrin*, 99b. For the clarity of our analysis let us represent the passage in the form of a chart.

“He who teaches Torah to his neighbor’s son is regarded by Scripture

<i>Author</i>	Resh Lakish said	Rabbi Eleazar said:	Rava said:
<i>Statement</i>	As though he had fashioned him	As though he himself had created the words of the Torah	As though he had made himself
<i>Prooftext</i>	As it is written: “and the souls which they had made in Haran” (Genesis 12,5)	As it is written: “keep therefore the words of this covenant and make them” (Deuteronomy, 29,8)	For it is written “and make them” (Dvarim). Render not <i>them</i> but <i>yourselves</i>

**FIGURE 3.** The text from Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Sanhedrin* 99b

## *The Tasks of the Text Study*

### **1. First reading and representation of content**

First basic biographical data about the three characters that appear in the passage was provided. Participants then read the passage for a first time and were asked to prepare, in groups, a graphic representation of what they understood to be the content and the structure of the passage. Each group then had to present and explain the representation they chose.

In this task, the weighing of competing views and the interaction among the educators were especially effective. This happened in each of the small groups and also in the plenary session when each group presented its representation. Each group had to articulate what they saw in both the content and the structure of the text that led them to their representation. The comparison of these representations led to some reflections about interesting differences and similarities among the participants' understandings of the text. For example: one group of participants drew the teacher in the center of the picture and wondered about what would be elements of his teaching that would make the learning transformative for the student, the teacher himself, and the way the teacher relates to the subject matter. This exercise also set the stage for some of the key content questions that can be raised in the reading of this text.

### **2. Second reading and exploring questions to be asked**

The second reading of the Talmudic passage was conducted in *Hevruta* (study in pairs). At this stage the learners were asked to list questions and/or to comment on the internal and the overall meaning of the text.

The learners were also encouraged to ask themselves: "what does it say?" "what would be different ways to say what it's about?" "how would we know?" "what do I think about it?" These questions were meant to help develop a disposition of inquiry among the learners.

At this stage of the study, the overall obvious question is what do these talmudic statements actually mean? Too often, teachers do not move past a superficial understanding of the text. The question is how could one be engaged more thoroughly with the ideas expressed in these texts?

In order to enable the learners to interact with the texts' ideas in a

more fruitful and meaningful way we created an opportunity for learners to consider their roles as both teachers and students. We hoped that later, when they would reflect on these experiences they might understand the ideas expressed in the *Sanhedrin* text in a more meaningful way.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Learn in order to teach

Half of the participants studied a short story that appears in the Talmud, in a form of a guided *Hevruta* study. The other participants studied another text in the same fashion. Both texts deal with an issue related to the study of Torah. The guidelines for the study provided basic facts about the text in question. The suggested steps for the *Hevruta* study were to encourage each individual learner as well as the interaction between the two.

### 4. Teach in order to learn about teaching and learning

Each participant was then asked to plan how he or she would teach what she had learned to someone who had not studied the same text. By pairing up people who had studied different texts, each participant found himself once in a position of a teacher and once in a position of a student. In each case, the student had not previously studied the text that was taught.

### 5. Reflections in journal writing

Participants were then asked to write reflections, on the different roles they took in the study: (*Hevruta*, teacher and student) in the form of a journal entry.

### 6. Fusing the horizons of the text and the readers

Participants were expected to go back to the original *Sanhedrin* text in order to explore its possible meanings again. Behind this task was a clear hermeneutic assumption that has been articulated by H.G. Gadamer. The reader of a text is not as much a receiver of informa-

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<sup>19</sup>The hermeneutic assumptions behind this approach are briefly discussed below.



tion as a catalyst of content. Gadamer calls “fusion of horizons” the integration of one’s understanding of a text with its relevance to one’s own circumstances in a way that an “original” meaning of the text cannot be differentiated from the meaning that the text has for one-self. What is taking place in the process of interpretation is a fusion between the horizon of the text with that of the reader (Gadamer 1996). Only when we, the readers, are able to relate what the text says to our own situation, can we say that we understand the text. For Gadamer, this is not to say that we are free, arbitrarily, to project our own presuppositions on the text. When a fusion of horizons does occur, our own presuppositions are put “at risk” by the horizon offered by the text. Therefore, our own presuppositions are often not confirmed but challenged and transformed. Without expanding more on this theory of interpretation, let me only stress that meaning is created in the study of texts when readers bring “themselves” to the text but at the same are open to “meet” with something said by the text.

In our case, the text itself talks about things that take place in the moment of teaching and learning. Hoping to increase the effect of the fusion of horizons, we therefore provided the participants with a recent experience of being in the roles of teacher and of student, assuming that this will nurture their own “horizon” with a recent and concrete experience to relate with which they can relate. This would then enable a richer and more meaningful encounter with the “horizon” provided by the text.

Participants first reread and shared their journal writing with each other. This was done in order to focus them back to their own experience of teaching and learning. Then, they were asked to reinvestigate the original *Sanhedrin* text again.

In order to orient the participants and raise the awareness of what it takes to have a fruitful encounter between reader and text, the learners were first given a few minutes to discuss a quotation by H.G. Gadamer about the relationship between the text and the reader:

One intends to understand the text itself. But this means that the interpreter’s own thoughts too have gone into re-awakening the text’s meaning. In this the interpreter’s own horizon is decisive, yet not as a personal standpoint that he maintains or enforces, but more as an opinion and a possibility that *one brings into play and puts at risk*, and that helps one truly to make one’s own what the text says.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Gadamer (1996) 295.

The new reading of the *Sanhedrin* text was now to become for the learners an experience in which they were called to put themselves “at risk,” bringing together the insights of their own experiences with the opinions that the text might be expressing.

In this stage of the study special attention was given to alternating working individually and sharing with a colleague. These are two important elements in encouraging teachers to develop a discourse on and about their profession, while relating to their own experiences.

### **Questions about Learning this Practice in Order to Improve It**

In this type of text study for teachers, to what extent do the learners need to be aware of the purposes and the rationale that are behind the study? Would different degrees of awareness help to achieve some of the goals of this type of learning?

- Would there be empirical ways to study the impact of this type of learning on the actual teaching of teachers?
- What do we know about transfer in teacher education that might be of help to improve the links between this sort of study and the practice of teaching?

The study of texts is in and by itself a sophisticated and rich practice. It may be the case that further research of this practice may help us to improve the quality of teacher education.

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