

# **ABSTRACT**

## **Introduction**

The study of Jewish thought has great importance for thinkers in various areas: for its ability to fashion the personality of the student and to develop his worldview; for its importance in conveying skills of independent and critical thinking and tools for a faith-based manner of dealing with times of crisis; and as a means of socialization. In light of all this, one would have expected an abundance of curricular material in this area – yet this is not the case. The textbooks and articles written in the area thus far generally involve the setting down in writing of practical experience in the teaching of Jewish thought, but these bear no relation to the experience accumulated in the planning and development of curricula in Israel since the 1970's. Moreover, those studies that have been done, drawing a connection between Jewish philosophy and curriculum planning, do not include analysis of all components of the curricula, nor do they relate to curricula from before the establishment of the state or those published by the Ministry of Education. The importance of instruction in Jewish thought, on the one hand, and the poverty of academic research of curricula in this area, on the other hand, prompted the present study.

## **Purposes of the Research**

The central purpose of this study is to analyze curricula in Jewish thought, as well as to analyze those curricula in Hebrew literature which include texts from the world of Jewish thought and philosophy, written between the years 1924 and 2002 in the various educational frameworks – including curricula which existed during the period of mandatory Palestine and those written after the establishment of the State of Israel – and to examine the transformations which brought about these changes in curricula. It is anticipated that such an examination will yield an historical–theoretical structure of the development of curricula in Jewish thought. The first such curriculum was published in 1924 and the most recent one in 2002; hence, the parameters of this study are bounded by those two years. The structural approach taken in this study is that curricula written between 1924-1968 constitute the background for those composed after 1970. This approach is based upon the lack of curricular material in the area of Jewish thought prior to the 1970s. In addition, most of the curricular

material from the pre-State period of the Yishuv and from the 1950s and '60s are not specifically devoted to Jewish Thought, but to Hebrew literature. In addition to the official programs, there are also analyzed curricula composed by educators and thinkers, based on the approach that the teacher plays a central curricular role in all matters related to the development of curricula, as the writing of teachers is the result of their experience and understanding of the educational act.

An additional aim of this research is the quest for points of similarity between the methods used by authors of curricula in Jewish thought and different approaches to the organization of knowledge, based on the insight that curricula organize the largest volume of knowledge on the basis of conceptualization of ideas and contents in a given area of knowledge. In addition, the discipline of Jewish thought is analyzed with regard to the definition of the subject matter and difficulties in instruction stemming therefrom, in a manner likely to contribute to curricular knowledge among teachers and curriculum writers so as to improve the quality of instruction.

## **Research Questions**

In light of our survey of research and theoretical literature, the following research questions emerged:

1. What differences emerge from a comparison among curricula in Jewish thought in the State-Religious educational system, and what is their nature?
2. What are the points of similarity between the methods of work of the authors of curricula in Jewish thought and the various approaches to the organization of knowledge?
3. What is the ideology underlying curricula in Jewish thought in the State-Religious system?
4. What are the ideological, social, religious and educational transformations that influenced curricula in Jewish thought in the State-Religious educational system?

## **Methodology**

The research paradigm used in the present study combines two models: the naturalistic model – whose central expression is an ongoing connection with the phenomenon studied and its characteristics; and the humanistic model – which deals

with an understanding of phenomena through overall relation to multi-faceted aspects of human behavior in its environmental context, and the full range of interactions which characterize them.

The research methods used for gathering information were qualitative, and included analysis of documents and interviews. The processing of data was based upon analysis of the contents of the documents and the interviews. The guideline underlying the methods of gathering and analyzing data in the present study relied upon the exegetical paradigm, rooted, among other things, in the philosophy of hermeneutics. According to this approach, prior assumptions of the researcher allow him to judge the text and to enrich it by revealing new meanings.

The approach taken in the present study is conceptual–historical–social, serving as comparative research. The theoretical–historical approach in the study of curricula sees the concrete expression of transformations and processes that took place within educational institutions or in the educational act as implicit within the curricula themselves. In this study, two central approaches to the historical study of curricula are integrated: the first approach relates to curricula as complete entities – i.e., it examines attempts to change principles through the planning anew of curricula and the factors leading to its success or the causes of failure of such attempts. The second approach examines subjects within the discipline – i.e., internal changes that occurred within certain subject matters at a given time. In accordance with these approaches, the present study examines what underlay curricular developments in Jewish thought between 1924–2002, the transformations that occurred in the transition between the various curricula, and the changes within the discipline per se.

The research is divided into two major sections: the first section examines the official curricula in Hebrew literature – which were written by schools during the period of the Palestine mandate; and in Jewish thought – written by the Ministry of Education. The totality of these curricula is referred to in the present study as “state–official curricula,” having been written and published by official governmental bodies: the Education Department of the National Council in the Land of Israel, and the Ministry of Education of the State of Israel. In this section, the curricula are analyzed along two axes: the achronic axis – i.e., study of curriculum contents at a given point in time – each curriculum being analyzed in its own right; and the diachronic axis – examination of the changes that took place in the curricula over the course of time, beginning from the 1970’s, so as to identify the transformations that took place during

the transition among the programs. The second section examines curricula in Jewish thought written by educators and thinkers outside of official governmental frameworks.

The present study relies upon a number of models for analyzing study programs: the model of Goodlad et al (Goodlad, Klein & Tye, 1979); the model of objective curricular interpretation derived from the internal viewpoint of Silberstein and Ben-Peretz (1983); and the model of Ben-Peretz for objective curricular interpretation from an external viewpoint (Ben-Peretz, 1977), with adjustment for the needs of the study and the particular nature of the data and curricula that were assembled and examined. The ideological level, according to Goodlad, was examined by means of analysis of the rationale and goals of each of the curricula in Jewish thought, as well as through interviews with key figures in the area, and analysis of documents of the Ministry of Education. The internal structure of the curricula, including list of topics and subject headings, instructional continuity of the contents, methods of instruction, etc., were examined by means of the inner scheme proposed by Silverstein and Ben-Peretz. The traces of curricular factors in the curricula doctrines of Tyler (1949), Schwab (1960, 1962, 1964a, 1964b, 1969a, 1971, 1978), Bruner (1963, 1966, 1971) and Lamm (2002) were examined using the external scheme of Ben-Peretz.

## **Results**

The results of the research in the first section revealed that, in the curricula used by educational institutions during the period of the pre-State Jewish Yishuv in Palestine, constituting a syllabus of contents intended to be used, there appear a limited number of texts of thinkers from the Middle Ages. The study of these texts took place within the framework of the study of Hebrew literature, its purpose being to convey a national culture, not necessarily religious, or the wish to cultivate within the student a general humanistic education as part of his preparation for study in institutions of advanced education. This phenomenon – i.e., the incorporation of philosophical texts within curricula of Hebrew literature – continued into the 1950's and 1960's, and among its goals mention is made of the building of a new society in the State of Israel, alongside emphasis on preparation of the student for life in a changing world. Jewish thought as a separate discipline first appeared at the beginning of the 1970's, and

since that time has continued to take shape, as follows from analysis of curricula from 1970, 1994 and 2002.

The first research question dealt with the differences among the curricula in Jewish thought in State-Religious education. Our research revealed that two criteria influenced the differences among the various curricula, relating to two basic questions in the teaching of Jewish thought. The first criterion relates to the manner of teaching texts, and the second to the desired degree of relevance of the sources studied to the student and his ability to fully understand their language.

The second question related to the quest for points of similarity between the methods of work of authors of curricula in Jewish thought and various approaches in the organization of knowledge. The research findings revealed that, in those programs in whose development professional people and curricular advisers participated, one finds influence of the curricular theories of Tyler, Schwab, and Bruner, which guided the curriculum writers in their work. We also found that all of the curricula constituted an eclectic ideological text, edited in accordance with the four components of Lamm.

The third research question involved reconstructing the underlying ideology of curricula in Jewish thought in State-Religious education. Our study revealed that every one of the curricula in all of its parts – beginning with the rationale and ending with the means of evaluation – were in accordance with the educational ideology of the Central Supervisor for the Instruction of Jewish Thought.

The fourth research question sought the ideological, social, religious and educational changes that influenced the curricula in Jewish thought in State-Religious education. Our research revealed a number of transformations that led to change and to the writing of more updated curricula. These included political changes, such as the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, as well as socio-educational changes, such as the reform in the baccalaureate examinations and the post-modern era.

The second section of our research revealed the great impact made on the field by the book of Rabbi Saul Yisraeli, *Chapters in Jewish Thought*. Note was taken of the depth of pedagogical thinking, the compass and the systematic manner in which this book is edited, which made it a canonical text in the area of teaching Jewish thought, and which provided the first curricula in 1970 their organizational dimension. It likewise emerged that the curriculum written by Prof. Dov Rappel exerted influence on the first curriculum and conveyed upon it its philosophical dimension.

## **Contributions of the Research**

**In the theoretical realm**, this study advanced two main subjects: first, theoretical–historical construction of the development of curricula in Jewish thought in the State-Religious educational system, based upon analysis of curricula between 1924 and 2002 and the changes which occurred therein over the course of the years, with emphasis on the transformations that led to these changes. Second, it suggested a comparative model for drawing a diachronic comparison between curricula in Jewish thought developed over the course of the years in the State-Religious educational framework. It is recommended that, in a future study, use be made of these theoretical models as a basis for evaluating curricula in Jewish thought in the State educational sector and for their comparison with those in the State–Religious sector.

**In the research methodological realm**, the contribution of the present study lies in the development of a model for comparative, theoretical–historical analysis of curricula and making them available to researchers of curriculum development. This model is based upon the integration of two paradigms: the naturalistic and the humanistic, in which the approach is theoretical–historical–social, serving comparative research. This model includes elements of gathering data and their analysis using qualitative approaches, based upon an exegetical paradigm whose source lies, among other influences, in the philosophy of hermeneutics. Insofar as is known, no study of this kind has been conducted to date analyzing curricula in Jewish thought. The importance and uniqueness of the present study derives from this fact – i.e., by virtue of its pioneering nature per se. In a future study, it is recommended that this model also be applied to the study of curricula in other disciplines and to examining the lines of similarity between the methods of work of their authors and different approaches in the organization of knowledge, the ideology that influenced them, and the transformations which caused these changes among them. It is likewise recommended that curricula in Jewish thought be examined in accordance with additional levels, following the model of Goodlad, Klein and Tye (1979). Such an examination is likely to shed further light upon this discipline.

**In terms of practical application**, the present study analyzed a number of basic questions in the discipline of Jewish thought, pertaining to the definition of the area and its parameters, problems in instructional technique deriving therefrom, and the definition of goals and their implementation. By virtue of this analysis, the findings

are likely to contribute to curricular knowledge among teachers and curriculum writers, thereby improving the quality of instruction and the quality of development of new curricula in this area. In light of the findings of this study, it is recommended to curriculum policy-makers in the area of Jewish thought that any new curricula include curricular principles consistent with the curriculum in Jewish thought from the years 1994 and 2002. The model according to which the curricula in this study were analyzed can also serve as a practical framework for training teachers for intelligent use of curricula during the course of their pedagogic training, as well as in the framework of ongoing institutional training.