



THE CONSORTIUM FOR APPLIED STUDIES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Assessing Outcomes in Israel Education

Author: Dr. Ezra Kopelowitz¹, *Research Success Technologies and the Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education*

How should we determine success in Israel education? This paper tackles the question from the perspective of research conducted for program evaluation or strategic planning. What are the appropriate measures or metrics? How do we go about formulating and implementing those measures? And, how do we enable multiple publics of educators, academics, funders, policy makers and lay leaders to benefit from the research?

Three Ways to Conceptualize “Success”

As sociologists we conduct applied research in order to provide useful data to organizations for the purpose of program evaluation and strategic planning. For applied research to be useful, in the sense that it contributes to the implementation of excellent Israel education, there is a need for accompanying conceptual or intellectual work to enable us to better understand what “success” means. It’s not just about the data; it’s also about the ideas.

Good applied research is not simply about good counting and good measures; it’s also about rich and illuminating concepts, good ideas. The great sociologists did not (only) count well; they thought well. The challenge is to make good thinking useful and accessible for practitioners and those who support them. Excellent evaluation research necessarily serves both applied and intellectual interests. However, the reality is that that much research or writing on Jewish education in general, and Israel education in particular, tends to work in either applied or intellectual modes.

We begin by examining three scenarios for research on Israel education. In the first, only the applied interest is served. In the second, an intellectual agenda is advanced. The third approach combines the two.

An exclusive focus on the applied

We begin with a description of research that focuses narrowly upon measuring program impact with relatively little attention to conceptual development.

Evaluation research which focuses narrowly on the applied dimension tends to rest on a “consensus definition” of successful education, one that depends on consent from the stakeholders involved with the particular project. The funders, educators and lay leaders involved with the program will read the list of factors that the researchers use as their definition of success and say, “Yes, based on our experience that list is correct.” The researcher might need to interview the stakeholders and draw out a definition for success, which the stakeholders themselves have not formulated; but, the researcher does not bring an alternative intellectual framework, which would go beyond or fundamentally challenge the definition of success used by those who are immediately involved in the educational project. In many cases, researchers will stay narrowly focused on applied questions and not introduce a conceptual dimension, as either the client is not interested or the financial framework does not allow for the extra time required to introduce a higher level discussion of the nature of the program’s success.

Applied statements of success can either focus on individual and/or institutional outcomes.

¹ Steven M. Cohen, Ted Sasson and Alex Pomson provided feedback on the initial drafts of this paper.

Individual outcomes

When the focus is the impact of Israel education on individuals the researcher often begins with the following questions:

1. Has the educational program recruited qualified or appropriate individuals to participate in the program?
2. Do participants participate and do they express satisfaction with the educational experience?

At a more advanced level the researcher shows that positive cognitive, emotional and behavioral changes occur as expected by the definition of success, which might include participants reporting:

1. Greater emotional attachment to Israel or the ability to balance critical with supportive emotions regarding Israel
2. Greater interest in Israel matters, such as news from Israel or events concerning Israel in the United States or in his or her local community.
3. Increased Israel involvement, such as a decision to continue learning more about Israel, to engage in Israel advocacy, to increase one's donations to Israel causes, to return to Israel on a visit or make aliyah, or bring matters involving Israel into one's professional work or social and community networks.
4. Enhanced Israel-oriented social networks; that is, more and better relationships with people who are somehow connected to Israel engagement.
5. The contribution of participation in Israel education to increased participation in Jewish communal life as a lay leader or Jewish professional.

The following is an example of conclusions from an applied evaluation research report. The excerpt focuses on individual outcomes from participation in an Israel educational travel program, and is one of several findings listed in the conclusion, all of which read in a similar way.

“REALITY [name of program] greatly strengthens respondents’ connection with Israel. This is true for respondents who had been to Israel prior to REALITY and for those who had not. As shown in the survey results, 36 (97.3%) of the 2009 respondents said they agree or strongly agree that they feel a greater connection with Israel because of the REALITY trip, and 39 (95.1%) of 2010 respondents agree or strongly agree that they feel more connected with Israel now. Beyond the numbers, respondents from both years said they experienced vast changes in their feelings toward Israel while on the REALITY trip. Many respondents expressed a desire to return to Israel, either for pleasure or for another service opportunity.”²

Note that the conceptual framework offered in the above example keeps our focus “close to the ground.” The concept of a “connection to Israel” is taken at face value and not expanded upon in a manner that will push the reader to a deeper understanding of how the educators involved built their conception of a connection to Israel. Where does their chosen strategy fall within the broader field? What is the significance of the strategy, its achievements and its shortcomings for others who want to develop the connection of individuals to Israel?

Institutional outcomes

In a second variant of evaluation research with an applied focus, the researcher asks questions touching on institutional capacity, including:

1. Are the educators who are implementing the program, qualified? What types of training do they have for Israel education? What types of skills and knowledge do they need?

² The REALITY Israel Experience: An Impact Study. SuccessLinks, LLC, November 2010. p. 75
<http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=8808>

2. Does the institution offer the necessary support and professional development? Is there a curriculum and pedagogic strategy in place? Are there financial incentives for engaging in Israel education? Are there senior faculty or outside resources who provide mentoring and guidance? Is there policy and resources in place for on-going professional development?
3. How is Israel education integrated into an educators work? Are their dedicated Israel educators and/or is Israel education integrated into the educators' larger job description? What types of Israel education are promoted and in which areas of the institution's work?

The following is an excerpt from an applied research report that evaluated a school change initiative.

“Schools identified a variety of positive early outcomes and BASIS project [name of project] accomplishments at the student, teacher and community levels that were possible only because of the project management and supports provided. Surveys of teachers revealed increases in educators’ knowledge about, connection to, and engagement with Israel and increases in the capacity of teachers to design, plan, and teach Israel education. These increases mainly occurred, however, for the 44% of teachers who reported being involved in the BASIS project. In addition, school assessments of learning objectives and pre-/post-surveys of students suggest increases in student knowledge about Israel and their connection to and engagement with Israeli people and the role Israel plays in the Jewish community worldwide. Finally, schools reported that Israel and Israel education are now more established components of their school cultures, and this can be evidenced in their revised mission statements, the visual presence of Israel in their schools, increased parent support for Israel education, and the schools’ commitment to work on sustaining their Israel education work and new Israel education strategies.”

Again, the conceptual framework utilized to illustrate the importance of the findings does not go beyond the face value of the findings themselves. So for example, we learn that educators’ knowledge increases, but we have no idea of the underlying factors involved in expanding an educator’s knowledge for Israel education, including the nature of that knowledge and the institutional contexts which facilitate or inhibit the process.

An exclusive focus on the intellectual

At the other end of the research spectrum is intellectual and/or academic research that at its best focuses on the big issues of Jewish existence and the place of Israel education. Researchers grapple with the big issues of Jewish life over time and in contemporary society. For example, we can find theological, historical and sociological work on the nature of contemporary Zionism or the connection of the American Jewish community to Israel. Some of the work is focused on discipline-based academic research; in other cases, the work is politically oriented, seeking to diagnose the problems of our times and make a case for a particular course of action.

Quality intellectual or academic work is very valuable and can and should stand by itself. However, if our purpose is to create intellectual frameworks for organizing applied research, most academic and intellectual writing is not useful. To become applicable for applied research, authors need to write for the purpose of translating their higher level ideas into a format that applied researchers can easily extract measures for evaluating educational programs.

The following is an example from two philosophers, who are writing for Jewish educators.

The major issue facing the Jewish educator who wishes to deal with Israel in Jewish education shapes up as the following... Are we to manufacture and package counterfeit myths that hold reality at a distance or invite learners to

³ Golan, Shari, Marjorie Weschler, Tracy Huang, Nicole Fabrikant, and Lynn Newman. Early Outcome Evaluation of Bay Area Schools Israel Synergy (BASIS): The Israel Education Project in the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Day Schools. Jim Joseph Foundation, 2011. p. 56. http://jimjosephfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/BASIS_Summ_Report_FINAL_04-28-11.pdf

address a larger-than-everyday-life reality? Actually, there may be no choice. Myths are important, in education and life as a whole, when they help us see general and larger-than-life truths. But when myths are a tapestry of scenes from unreal worlds, they become an escape from reality. when people confront a reality that was "sold" to them as mythical, such as the actual life of Israel, they often ask: Why does reality intrude, to ruin the myth? Then they become angry, disillusioned, turned off, and they keep away.⁴

The authors offer a clear intellectual standard for conceptualizing success, but do not take the step of translating their concept of excellent Israel education down to a level where we can understand what their claim looks like in the body of an educational program and as a standard for applied research.

Integrating the applied and the intellectual

At its best, research that integrates applied and intellectual dimensions has three qualities:

1. Intellectually informed outcome statements
The researcher draws on academic or intellectual frameworks or from lessons generated by applied research conducted in other contexts; in order to, develop an interpretive framework for organizing and making sense of the data that goes beyond the definition of success used by the stake-holders involved in a particular program.
2. An explanation of the characteristics of successful Israel education
The researcher makes an effort to delineate key environmental variables, educational strategies and content for Israel education that others who are not directly associated with the particular program will find meaningful for their work.
3. Multiple publics can read and benefit
If the above two items are in place, then researchers will be able place their work at the boundary of the intellectual and the applied in the sense that academics, educators, funders and lay audiences can read, understand and see the relevance of the research for their concerns. For that purpose, the researcher pays attention to the crafting of a narrative that highlights that importance of the findings, that is free of jargon that one reading public will understand, but another will not. In short, the research is intellectually deep and at the same time readable and accessible to multiple publics.

Researchers can integrate the applied with the intellectual at either a middle range or high level of abstraction.

Middle range interpretative frameworks

A “middle range” interpretative framework enables an understanding of educational success that remains relatively close to the particular case under investigation. Questions might include: Who is the ideal graduate? What does excellent education look like in terms of required human, curricula, pedagogic, physical and financial resources and the resulting educational environment? Within these broader questions touching on excellent education, the author will delineate the issues, which are particular to determining success in Jewish and Israel education.

⁴ Arnold Eisen and Michael Rosenak. 1997. “Teaching Israel: Basic Issues and Philosophical Guidelines,” Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), The Charles R. Bronfman Centre for the Israel Experience: Mifgashim.,The CRB Foundation. P. 35. <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=6090>

For example, Saxe, Chertok and Sasson⁵ set out to evaluate the question, “does participation in Birthright Israel lead to increased involvement of alumni in Jewish communal life.” For that purpose they suggest a conceptual framework that distinguishes between “tourists, travelers and citizens.” The latter category is the ideal. Success is ultimately reached by moving the previously uninvolved Jew into a position of “citizenship” – that is on-going involvement with Jewish communal life. However, before we can reach that stage, the successful educational program will also induce participants to move from being “tourists” to “travelers”. Each category connects the reader to a different level and quality of interaction between Birthright alumni and the organized Jewish community. The conceptual framework is researcher-generated, not one used by Birthright professionals or supporters. The framework is used both to organize the presentation of the data and for the purpose of drawing policy oriented recommendations, which are accessible to multiple publics who are interested in the broader question of the interaction of educational programs, young adults and the organized Jewish community.

Our findings suggest that years later most alumni continue to view Taglit as a watershed experience. It catalyzed their personal connection to the Jewish people, Israel, and their own Jewish identity. However, as postcollege-age young adults, they remain “tourists” in the Jewish communal world, sightseeing at a few programs but, overall, struggling to find ways to connect. Moreover, given their developmental stage of life, modest Jewish experiential background, and limited knowledge, most alumni are not yet ready to become full-fledged “citizens” of their Jewish communities. Accordingly, we propose an alternative model to tourism and citizenship for engaging Taglit alumni and their peers. Jewish communal strategy should encourage young adults to become “travelers” who take an active role exploring what it means for them to be Jewish in a self directed process of discovery. P 2.

In analysis of interviews conducted with students at modern Orthodox and community days schools, Pomson suggests the “b word, bias”⁶ as a conceptual framework through which to make sense of the approach of community day school students to the Israel education they are receiving. Pomson enables the reader to understand both the significance of the progress being made by non-Orthodox day schools in Israel education and at the same time presents a core issue that stands in the way of success – namely the student’s perception that their school has an ideological agenda with which they are uncomfortable. The analysis is pertinent to any liberal Jewish educational institution.

It is no wonder that student skepticism in community day schools about what they perceive as their schools' agenda to promote or defend Israel contrasts so sharply with how interviewees from Orthodox schools talk. Skepticism is fueled by a disconnect between school culture and the values that derive from significant institutions outside school, by what is perceived as a lack of robustness in how schools handle Israel, and by an unfamiliarity with some of the basic reasons why adults in their schools regard Israel as so important for Jews living in America. ... Evidently, even as schools have become ever more creative in their delivery of Israel education, and while some have been ready to recognize and embrace what makes a relationship with Israel complex, they may have still taken too much for granted about their students and the starting points from which they enter a relationship with Israel. Pp. 102-3.

Other examples, include Sinclair’s⁷ “heuristic device” for assessing the quality of Israel engagement in Jewish camps; Grant’s⁸ unpacking of the the characteristics of a “virtual mifgash” to guide her evaluation of a

⁵ Leonard Saxe, Fern Chertok, Theodore Sasson. 2009. “Tourists, Travelers, and Citizens: Jewish Engagement of Young Adults in Four Centers of North American Jewish Life,” Maurice & Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS). <http://bir.brandeis.edu/bitstream/handle/10192/23170/comstudy032309.com.pdf?sequence=1>

⁶ Alex Pomson. 2012. “Beyond the b-word. Listening to high school students talk about Israel,” in Lisa Grant and Ezra Kopelowitz, *Israel Education Matters: A Paradigm for 21st Century Jewish Education*, The Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education.

⁷ Alex Sinclair. 2009. “A New Heuristic Device for the Analysis of Israel Education: Observations from a Jewish Summer Camp.” *Journal of Jewish Education*, 75:1, pp. 79-106.

⁸ Lisa Grant. 2006. “Yachdav/School-to-School Israel-Diaspora Virtual Mifgash Preliminary Program Evaluation”. Lokey International Academy of Jewish Studies at the Leo Baeck Education Center, Haifa, Israel. <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=4817>

Boston-Haifa school to school twinning program; and, Kopelowitz's⁹ use of the concepts of "social and symbolic engagement" to analyze survey data on the manner in which Israel education is conducted at community day schools.

High level interpretative frameworks

High level interpretative frameworks draw on data collected from applied research to provide a contemporary or historical perspective on why Israel education is important? How does Jewish education, and within that Israel education, contribute to the mission of strengthening the connection of Jews to the Jewish people in our time? Higher level intellectual frameworks offer a narrative that enables a broad understanding of the conditions that enable and constitute success in Israel education.

One variant cuts across the many contexts in which Israel education occurs, including the achievements of educators and the challenges they face. For example, Kopelowitz and Grant,¹⁰ draw on the research projects they have conducted on Israel education to develop a historical and conceptual narrative explaining the significance of an Israel education which seeks to "integrate" Israel into Jewish institutions, "complicate" the relationship of the learner with Israel and "connect" Diaspora Jews to their Israeli counterparts at a person to person level. The authors, suggest that the "integrate, complicate, connect" framework should serve as a standard for evaluating the success of Israel educational initiatives. Another example is the work Sinclair¹¹ does to unpack the concept of "Liberal Zionist Education" from a philosophical perspective. He then explores the implications of his philosophical understanding of liberal Zionism for the different contexts in which Israel engagement occurs within the field of Jewish education.

Another variant of a high level interpretative framework focuses on a particular educational context, but draws on broader theoretical frameworks and research from other fields to understand the broader significance of the particular case study. For example, Kelner¹² seeks to understand the factors that contribute the success of Birthright Israel, by exploring the broader educational issues which arise from using "mass tourism" to nurture a connection between "homeland" and "diaspora."

What enables mass tourism to serve as a medium for constructing diasporic identities, and what contradictions in the medium undermine or limit attempts to put it to use? How do social practices mediate the relationship between collective identities and the personal identities of those who travel? What is the nature of the knowledge that emerges? How does this shape peoples' understandings of themselves in relation to their ethnic and civic communities and the places they imagine as homelands? P. 4.

In each chapter of their book on Birthright Israel, Saxe and Chazan¹³ introduce a set of theoretical concepts for understanding Birthright Israel success. For example, in one chapter the authors explore the role of an educational program in generating collective identity through "bonding and bridging capital." Another chapter focuses on "organizational culture" and its role in educational programming; and, in another they introduce a theory of experiential Jewish education to explain the pedagogical aspects of Birthright Israel. The overall effect is to gain an understanding and appreciation of the complexity of utilizing Israel travel for the purpose of education.

⁹ Ezra Kopelowitz. 2005. "Towards What Ideal Do We Strive? A Portrait of Social and Symbolic Engagement with Israel in Jewish Community Day Schools. Ravsak, 2005.

¹⁰ Lisa Grant and Ezra Kopelowitz. 2012. *Israel Education Matters: A Paradigm for 21st Century Jewish Education*, The Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education.

¹¹ Alex Sinclair. Forthcoming. *Educating for Liberal Zionism: A New Israel Engagement Agenda*. Ben Yehuda Press.

¹² Shaul Kelner. 2010. *Tours That Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism*, New York University Press.

¹³ Leonard Saxe and Barry Chazan. 2008. *Ten Days of Birthright Israel: A Journey in Young Adult Identity*, Brandeis University Press.

The Israel Education Applied Research Toolkit

There are two primary challenges.

Lack of interest in broad intellectual frameworks

The first challenge is that few of the organizations or funders who sponsor applied Israel education research have the interest, funds or time needed to pay attention to issues of interest that extend beyond their immediate program. Many educators and funders consider larger interpretative frameworks the domain of academia, or beyond their immediate concern. The result is that most applied research offers little contribution to the intellectual capital needed to develop the field of Israel education. The lack of interpretative frameworks also reduces the ability of the research to help funders and educators to conceptualize what is possible to achieve and hence to maximize the educational contribution of their programs.

Lack of researcher sensitivity to the communicative needs of the field

The second challenge is the lack of sufficient exposure and sensitivity of many researchers to the demands and realities of working as an educator in the field. While systematic and rigorous research is always required, applied research at its finest is a user friendly product that is free of discipline specific jargon and the often patronizing approach of the Ivory tower to the field. Educators and funders need to easily convert the outputs of the research process (the report, meetings and presentations) into assets for their work on behalf of the Jewish people. The role of applied research is to provide language and data that enable effective communication for the purpose of improving educational work or for communicating to others its importance. For that to happen, researchers need to work closely with their clients to construct an intellectual framework that is at once powerful and yet clear, appealing and useful; which is normally, not what they would produce for specifically academic or intellectual purposes.

In order to change this state of affairs, the advantages of intellectually informed applied research need to be better understood by funders and educators. Likewise, applied researchers need the ability to easily access intellectual frameworks and corresponding measures for success that are appropriate, useful and appealing to educators working in the field.

One possible approach is the development of a toolkit for intellectually-informed applied research on Israel education, which rests on two steps:

Step one: Delineating the big issues

The researchers who develop the toolkit will delineate and index the big issues and corresponding questions driving funders and Jewish educators who work in the field of Israel education. The issues will be vast and varied. For example: What is the rationale for Israel education? Why are organizations investing in the field and what is their ultimate goal? Are we seeking to fight assimilation, promote a new form of Zionism or develop a new generation of Jewish leaders? Do younger generations of Jews have a different and/or weaker connection to Israel and what is the role of education in transmitting values from generation to generation? Is it correct, that educational approaches that emphasize “the real Israel” are the best way to connect to the younger generations? How do changing relations between Israeli and Diaspora Jews impact the work of Jewish educators?

These types of issues and questions are what drive Israel education – they are the field’s reasons for being and influence the focus and substance of the research. Thus, when we seek to evaluate a particular program or conduct a strategic planning study, the reasons why we are involved in this particular type of Israel education

need to be front and center in order to enable us to move to step two. The tool kit will provide starting issues that researchers can draw on and further refine in conversation with their clients.

Step two: Applied research questions and measures for evaluating outcomes

Once a researcher, funder and/or educator locates their big issues and questions in the index compiled in step one, they then need to translate them into applied research questions and measures. Step two of the toolkit will delineate and index interpretative frameworks and measures currently used by researchers on Israel education. The authors will also suggest which interpretative frameworks and measures are most appropriate for tackling the big issues selected in step one. The toolkit should also point to areas of Israel education that are insufficiently addressed by existing interpretative frameworks and for which a new or improved conceptualization of educational success is needed. In the ideal, the index is dynamic, with researchers drawing from and contributing to the toolkit with each of their applied research projects.

In summary, the two steps in the toolkit compose a guide and conversation starter for how applied research can address the big questions of Israel education in a manner that enables productive thinking and the collection of useful data. The guide will help applied researchers, funders and educators to speak to one another, with the goal of figuring out the issues on which they wish to focus and the most appropriate intellectual frameworks, applied research questions and measures of success that are useful for the practitioner; but, at the same time do not sacrifice the big picture and need to address issues which are of general interest.

Developing the Tool Kit: A Sample Case Study

The following case study is an initial and limited attempt to illustrate the components of a tool kit for applied research on Israel education. The case study is drawn from an evaluation of Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future, Counterpoint Israel program.¹⁴ The following are examples of steps that this researcher would take, in order to prepare the research project for dissemination as part of the *Israel Education Applied Research Tool Kit*.

Note that in what follows, the emphasis is on "form," rather than "substance," we want to know what the researcher did, rather than learn about substance of the findings. Anyone interested in the findings can read the evaluation report.

Background on program

- **Program Name:** Counterpoint Israel
- **Program website:** <http://www.myisraelsummer.com/category/yeshiva-university-counterpoint>
- **Institutional Affiliation:** Center for the Jewish Future at Yeshiva University
- **Institutional Mission:** To advance the field of experiential Jewish education and Jewish service learning in order to contribute to strengthening the relationship between Jews in Israel and the Diaspora.
- **Program Details:** In the summer of 2012, the Counterpoint Israel program operated in Dimona (fifth year) and Arad (second year) and expanded to three new locations: Beersheva, Kiryat Gat and Kiryat Malachi. In total 300 Israeli teens and 58 American college students participated.
- **Program Mission**
 - To train and empower American college students to run intensive English language summer camps for Israeli teens in development towns in Israel.

¹⁴ Ezra Kopelowitz. December 2012. "Sustainable Education through Partnership: Counterpoint Israel - Evaluation Summer 2012. *Research Success Technologies*.

- The English language summer camps are a means to strengthen the relationship between Jews in Israel and the United States by developing partnerships with the local municipality and other Israeli stakeholders. If successful the partnering relationship will:
 - Produce benefits for the American and Israeli participants and all of the organizers of the program.
 - Garner financial, human and physical resources from the partners over and beyond the start-up investment made by Yeshiva University in the camps, in order to sustain the operation of the camps into the future.

Select Background on the evaluation

- **Public report** – Link to report will appear here when report is published
- **Framing the importance of the study [the big issues]**
 - Historical trends
 - Increasing investment by Jewish funders and organizations in
 - Jewish service learning
 - Israel educational travel
 - Experiential Jewish education
 - Increasing emphasis by Diaspora and Israeli educators on "partnership"
 - Increasing numbers of individuals and organizations are seeking to create direct relationships rather than working through central philanthropic or communal organizations.
 - Increasing numbers of Diaspora supporters of Israel are seeking to move from "gift giving" in which the Israel side receives the gift and delivers the service, to "partnership" in which each side brings assets to the relationship in order to promote greater benefits for all.
 - Counterpoint brings these historical trends together
 - Jewish service learning on Counterpoint is focused on American college students learning how to work with methods of Jewish experiential education.
 - The meeting of the American college students with the campers is conceptualized and designed as a *mifgash*, an educational encounter between Israeli and Diaspora Jews, in which each side enriches the other. The *mifgash* serves the Jewish service learning goals of the program.
 - The larger program results from collaboration between Israeli and Diaspora educators and other stakeholders, which if successful will develop into a full scaled partnership for sustaining the camps into the future.
- Evaluation methodology
 - Surveys
 - Israeli teen campers filled out a start and end of program surveys at camp.
 - American college aged camp counselors were sent an Internet survey at the end of the program.
 - Interviews and focus groups
 - Three focus groups with campers
 - Twenty-five telephone interviews with randomly selected campers
 - Ten telephone interviews with parents of randomly selected campers
 - Three in-person Interviews with campers
 - Nineteen Interviews by phone or in-person with [municipal and regional contacts] as well as [parents] and [program alumni].

A selective look¹⁵ at the manner in which the big issues are operationalized as applied and survey questions and analytical frames for analysis

1. Focus on Jewish service learning

Does work at the English language summer camp in Israel contribute to broadening the American college students' Jewish horizons, in which they come to view their service work as camp counselors through a Jewish lens?

2. Focus on mifgash

- What are the elements critical to a successful mifgash, in the context the English speaking summer camps?
- Does the mifgash contribute to the Jewish service learning experience of the counselors?
- Does the mifgash contribute to the American college students' connection to Israel?

3. Focus on the relationship of the educational program to the development of an Israel-Diaspora partnership

- Does the quality of the educational experience provided by the camps, contribute to Yeshiva University's desire to develop partnerships with the local Israel stake-holders?
- Is Counterpoint's senior staff successfully collaborating with Israel stakeholders for the purpose of running the camps?
- If so, does that collaboration constitute an Israel-Diaspora partnership at the level required for reducing Yeshiva University's initial role and sustaining the camps into the future?

Corresponding analytical frame for writing survey questions and analyzing data collected from the survey of the American college students

1. Viewing service learning through a Jewish lens (dependent variable - that which we want to explain)
 - a. Do the American counselors report improving their ability to work as educators?
 - b. Do they express greater interest in future work in Jewish experiential education?
 - c. Do participants attribute specifically Jewish impact on them personally, from the service learning work?
 - d. Do participants exhibit an understanding of the service learning work in Jewish terms?
2. Explanatory (independent) variables having to do directly with Israel education, which might influence the dependent variable.
 - a. Does the nature of the personal ties formed during the mifgash impact participants' Jewish understanding of the service learning?
 - b. Does extent of prior Israel travel influence the service learning experience in Israel and the impact of that experience?
 - c. Does the extent and nature of prior contact with Israelis influence the service learning experience and the impact of that experience?

Corresponding survey questions for the American college students

The following are categories of questions asked in the Counselors end of program survey. The corresponding questions appear in the appendix to this article.

1. Establishing extent and type of prior Israel travel
2. Establishing extent of participation in educational programs involving mifgashim or direct interactions between Israeli and Diaspora Jews
3. Establishing an understanding of the motivation to participate in service learning in comparison actual experience, including interpretation of that experience and the role of the Israel and Jewish dimensions.

¹⁵ This is a selective presentation of the evaluation for the purpose of this case study. The actual evaluation was broader in scope.

4. Impact of service work in Israel in Jewish professional plans

Developing the Toolkit

A research program for developing a toolkit for applied research on Israel education might include the following five stages.

- 1. Review of intellectual and applied research literature**

A research team will delineate and index the big questions and issues that drive Israel education. The team will also work to delineate and index existing interpretative frameworks and measures and then develop a method for suggesting matches between the big questions and appropriate interpretative frameworks and measures.

- 2. Incorporating material from adjacent fields**

The research team will interview people with expertise from complementary fields in Jewish education and researchers with expertise on education for other ethno-religious groups. The goal of those interviews is to expand horizons, enabling us put our finger on big questions and issues and corresponding interpretative frameworks and measures that are not currently in use in the field of Israel education. The researchers need not produce an exhaustive index of the alternatives, but rather highlight possible directions for productive thinking, which other researchers, funders and practitioners might wish to consider.

- 3. Preparing a prototype**

An Internet ready prototype of the toolkit will be developed, which will include materials gathered for steps one and two, packaged in a manner that is accessible and easy to use. For that purpose the research team should work closely with a consultant with expertise in communications and the appropriate technologies required for packaging and delivering complex information.

- 4. Reactions and suggestions for revision and improvement**

The toolkit prototype will be given over to a panel of funders, educational practitioners and researchers for review. The resulting suggestions for improvement will then be incorporated and the toolkit finalized.

- 5. Publication of the toolkit with incentives and tools for continued updating by researchers working in the field**

The toolkit should include the ability of researchers to help others track their work in applied Israel education. The researcher will log their work, including big questions addressed, intellectual frameworks and measures for success that are used. As such, the tool-kit will expand in a dynamic and ongoing manner. For that purpose, funders of Israel education initiatives should include in their funding for applied research a request that researchers use the tool-kit to inform their conceptualization for the research project and then to log work done.

In conclusion, this paper has laid out an argument that research and discourse about Israel education currently tends to operate in either applied or intellectual modes. The result is that applied research on Israel education often does not contribute to broader knowledge and thinking about what constitutes excellent Israel education. A third way is suggested, one which brings the intellectual dimension to inform applied research. The creation of a toolkit for applied Israel education research is suggested as a strategy for moving the field towards the integrated mode of applied research on Israel education.

Appendix – Survey Questions

I. Establishing extent and type of prior Israel travel

Altogether, how many times have you been to Israel prior to this summer?

- Never
- Once
- Two or three times
- Four times or more

[If answered visited Israel once or more, ask]

Prior to this Summer, have you ever been to Israel on ...? (Check all that apply.)

	Yes	No
A family trip		
A school, camp, community center or synagogue/Church trip for peers my age		
An organized mission, e.g. AIPAC, David Project, Federation Birthright		
A program lasting four months or more		
By myself or with friends		
I live or have lived in Israel for an extended period of time		
An academic program in which you study at a school (a university, yeshiva, or high school) in Israel for a semester or more		
I am currently on an educational program in Israel		
Another organized educational program, not covered in the above list		

II. Establishing extent of participation in educational programs involving mifgashim or direct interactions between Israeli and Diaspora Jews

How much familiarity did you have with Israelis prior to this Summer on Counterpoint?

	Yes	No
Prior to this summer had you ever interacted on a personal basis with an Israeli, who lives in Israel?		
Prior to this summer had you ever participated in an organized program where you knew or met Jewish people your age who live in Israel (For example, an organized encounter with your school or conversations on the Internet)?		
In the past year, have you been in touch with friends or relatives who live in Israel?		
Prior to this summer, had you ever spoken in Hebrew with a native Israeli		

III. Establishing an understanding of the motivation to participate in service learning in comparison actual experience, including interpretation of that experience and the role of the Israel and Jewish dimensions.

The following question asks about the reasons for your involvement with Counterpoint this summer. How important was each area for your decision to participate in the program? In reality, to what extent did you experience each area during the summer?

	How important was the area for your decision to participate in Counterpoint	To what extent did you experience this area this Summer?
	Very important Important A little important Not important at all	To a great extent To an extent To a small extent Not at all
An exciting experience		
A personally meaningful experience		
A fun way to spend the summer		
A positive religious experience		
Develop my sense of responsibility		
Contribute to Israel		
Volunteer in a development town		
Learn more about Israel		
Learn more about poverty		
Learn more about Jewish values		
Strengthen the connection of Israelis to religious Judaism		
Strengthen the connection of Israelis to Jewish values		
Strengthen the connection between Israeli and American Jews		
Develop a personal relationship with Israelis		
Serve as a role model		
Improve my knowledge and skills in the area of education		
Explore working as an educator		
Explore working as a <u>Jewish</u> educator		
Improve my resume		

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?

Agree to a large extent To an extent To a small extent I don't agree at all

[focus on impact of work on campers]

The campers have a stronger connection to American Jews as a result of my work

The campers have a stronger connection to Judaism as a result of my work

[focus on mifgash]

I established a warm personal relationship with campers

I expect to maintain contact with some of the campers this year by Facebook or other means

I hope to visit some of the Israelis whom I met this summer in the future

I had sufficient opportunity to interact with the campers and/or their families outside of the formal camp hours

[focus on relationship to Israel]

I intensified my personal relationship with Israel

The program exposed me to aspects of Israeli society of which I was unaware

I significantly increased my knowledge about Israel

I had sufficient opportunity to interact with Israelis (other than the campers and their families) outside of camp

The Counterpoint program provided enough opportunity to explore and learn about Israeli society

The experience this summer has influenced the way I think about political issues having to do with Israel

[focus on Jewish experience]

I feel that I broadened my Jewish horizons this summer

The Jewish learning during camp for the counselors was enriching

The Jewish learning during camp for the counselors was of a high quality

I improved my Hebrew

The learning program gave me a framework for understanding the importance of the work in Jewish terms

IV. Impact of service work in Israel in Jewish professional plans

The following regards your future professional plans. In the future do you have any interest in any of the following areas? If so, to what extent did your experience this summer affect these plans?

	In the future do you have an interest in ...	To what extent did your experience this summer affect your answer?
Working as a counselor on another Israel program	Yes No I'm thinking about it, but not sure	To a great extent To an extent To a small extent Not at all
Working in education in general		
Working in Jewish education at a school		
Working in Jewish education at a camp, JCC, Hillel, Youth Movement or the like		
Working for another type of Jewish organization involved in educational or community work		
The clergy (rabbi or cantor)		

