



The Committee for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Administration

Study Programs

The Sapir Academic College Evaluation Report

July 2011

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Chapter 1 - Background

At its meeting on October 07, 2008 the Council for Higher Education (CHE) decided to evaluate study programs in the fields of public policy and administration during the academic year 2009-2010.

Following the decision of the CHE, the Minister of Education, who serves ex officio as a Chairperson of the CHE, appointed a Committee consisting of:

- **Prof. Steve Kelman- John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, USA – Committee Chair**
- **Prof. Eugene Bardach- Richard and Rhoda Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkley, USA¹**
- **Prof. Mark Kleiman- School of Public Affairs, University of California, Los Angeles, USA**
- **Prof. David Nachmias- Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy, Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel**
- **Prof. Michael Rothschild- Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, USA**

Ms. Marissa Gross - Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the Council for Higher Education.

Within the framework of its activity, the Committee was requested to:²

1. Examine the self-evaluation reports, submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in mathematics, and to conduct on-site visits at those institutions.
2. Submit to the CHE an individual report on each of the evaluated academic units and study programs, including the Committee's findings and recommendations.
3. Submit to the CHE a general report regarding the examined field of study within the Israeli system of higher education including recommendations for standards in the evaluated field of study.

The entire process was conducted in accordance with the CHE's Guidelines for Self-Evaluation (of October 2008).

¹ Prof. Bardach did not participate in the second round of visits due to personal reasons.

² The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

Chapter 2 - Committee Procedures

The Committee members received the self-evaluation reports in October, 2010, and discussed them via email.

The Committee held its first meeting on December 14, 2010, during which it discussed fundamental issues concerning higher education in Israel, the quality assessment activity, as well as Public Policy and Administration study programs.

In December 2010, the Committee held its first cycle of evaluation, and visited the Hebrew University, Tel-Aviv University and Sapir Academic College. In March 2011 the Committee conducted its second evaluation cycle, and visited the University of Haifa and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. During the visits, the Committee met with various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff, students and alumni.

This report deals with the **Department of Public Policy and Administration, at Sapir Academic College.**

The Committee's visit at Sapir Academic College took place on December 15-16, 2010. The schedule of the visit, including the list of participants from the institution, is attached as **Appendix 2.**

Chapter 3: Evaluation of the School of Public Policy and Administration at Sapir Academic College

Introduction

The Department of Public Policy and Administration at Sapir offers a single degree – a BA in public administration and policy – and in the academic year 2008-2009, enrolled 557 students. This is not a professional program but a first degree. Naturally we use different criteria to evaluate this program. Instead of asking whether the program is an effective way of transmitting professional skills and attitudes to college graduates, we ask whether is an effective liberal arts program in public policy, which gives its graduates both a general education (intellectual and analytic skills – some variant of reading, writing, and arithmetic) at a college level, and specific education in public policy (a grasp of the most important concepts of the field that degree's title describes).

Mission

The BA program in public administration and public policy at Sapir does an excellent job of general education in difficult circumstances. Students in the program are among Israel's most disadvantaged. Many are from the periphery, and many are the first in their families to attend college. Arguing that the standard measures – grades and exam scores – are poor predictors for students from the periphery, the department has an open admissions policy. Some students therefore enter this program who are excluded from more selective departments at Sapir. Programs such as this one, which provide opportunity to the disadvantaged, make Israel a better place, and we admire them.

This program faces enormous pedagogical challenges. Teaching students with a range of ability and prior knowledge is in itself very difficult. Even though students are getting their first degree, most are older, and have families and full-time jobs. In this sense, Sapir students are similar to masters students in the other programs we examined. Sapir accommodates them in the same way that the masters programs do. They try to make it possible for students to take all of their courses in one day. The program's faculty report that these students both need and get extra attention from faculty outside of class.

The enthusiasm and commitment of the faculty impressed us. They are committed to the institution's mission and to the public-service philosophy that we expect in a department of public administration and public policy. The students with whom we spoke described the faculty as available outside class to respond quickly to emails, to receive phone calls, and in other ways to answer questions or follow up. We believe that the flexible teaching times and ability to use more than three years to complete the program that are available to students who have full-time jobs in addition to studying at Sapir make it feasible, at least for motivated students (of whom we met a number, although of course we do not delude ourselves that we were introduced to a representative sample of students), to go to class and to do class preparation outside the classroom, while still working full-time.

Study Program/Curriculum

We asked faculty what the most-important knowledge and skills they sought to teach students, and students what the most-important knowledge and skills they learned in the classroom. The answers were remarkably similar – itself *ceteris paribus* a good sign of success. Answers centered around the idea that the program’s main goal was to teach students “critical thinking” (a phrase frequently used by both faculty and students)..

“Critical thinking” as a mission at Sapir Department of Public Policy and Administration seems to involve both more and less than we think desirable in a public policy program. Critical thinking, of course, is an important part of general education. However, “critical thinking” as presented at Sapir often seemed to boil down to the view that students from the periphery and minority ethnic groups should be brought to understand that they are in an oppressed position in society, that political decisions are made against their interests, and that they should challenge these decisions. Virtually every student whom we asked what they had learned from the program repeated some version of this message.

We also asked students questions to get a feel for how much they had learned about mainstream microeconomics, quantitative reasoning, and political science, all subjects taught at least to some extent in the program’s curriculum. The response was disappointing. Hardly a single student could discuss, or even remembered having heard, extremely elementary economic concepts such as marginal cost or indifference curves. The policy papers which the committee reviewed, written as part of the final project requirement in the third year, raised interesting and locally important issues. They were qualitative, descriptive, and well-written. Their major arguments derive from or are

closely related to “critical” conceptual frameworks. However, the policy recommendations sections were not based on systematic data and did not consider political-administrative feasibility or implementation hurdles. In short, they were not contributions to public administration or policy even though they demonstrate that students have a good general education.

However, Sapir students are not taught to be critical of this perspective, and they learn relatively little about the alternative view of the field: the study of how governments can choose and implement policies that make the world a better place. We believe that some conceptual knowledge of relevant chunks of the domains of microeconomics, quantitative reasoning, politics, and organizational behavior are central parts of the ability to undertake critical thinking in the areas of public administration and public policy – to think critically and creatively about the formulation, selection, and implementation of good public policy. Thus, the program is dramatically falling short of its own stated goal of encouraging critical thinking.

We conjecture that a more analytical agenda has not been pursued as vigorously as it should have been because, to some degree, the public policy problems generally dealt with in the curriculum have been selected -- more accidentally than purposely -- so as to minimize the need, or at least the perceived need, for these analytical concepts and tools. More precisely, issues of justice, especially in the areas of inter-ethnic relations, have been placed at the center, and many imagine that sharper-edged analytical tools are not relevant to dealing with these matters. Hence these tools are given short shrift in the curriculum.

Our view, however, is that this drift has been mistaken, for three reasons. First, public policy is much broader than inter-ethnic relations or associated social policy issues such as poverty and discrimination. It includes such relatively utilitarian, but technically challenging, matters as where and how to build roads, pick up garbage, deliver elementary education, and create neighborhoods relatively safe from crime. These issues and others like them demand that the observer, and the critic of policy, apply lenses from microeconomics, quantitative analysis, organizational analysis, sociological analysis, and so on. Our impression is that policies in such areas are under-studied in the curriculum, or that, alternatively, they are studied superficially – that is, mainly through lenses that help students perceive injustice, but do not help nearly so much in evaluating efficacy and cost-effectiveness. Lacking a perceived need for more rigorous disciplinary models and techniques, the faculty tends not to teach them, and the students tend not to demand them. Thus, if the critical thought on which the department rightly prides itself were to be extended more systematically to other policy areas, we think they might see a need for deeper education in a number of tools and concepts.

Secondly, if the faculty itself has not been intellectually immersed in the conceptual world suggested by the examples above, they themselves would tend to avoid teaching about, say, transportation infrastructure or environmental regulation, areas that call for knowledge of more rigorous analytical approaches. Hence, the bias against certain policy areas and the bias against certain analytical approaches mutually reinforce one another.

Finally, we think that even when it comes to inter-ethnic and social policy issues, understanding would benefit from application of more technical tools, both

economics/quantitative reasoning and even formal moral philosophy. For example, the interests of the poor are better served if we understand, through the reading of rigorously designed and reported studies, what works and what does not among programs designed to relieve poverty, and what the relevant budgetary and social costs might be.

Now, it may be the case that in particular courses, and with regard to particular instructors, attempts are indeed made to broaden the horizons conceptually and substantively as we have been suggesting. Furthermore, we were pleased to learn that the department had just appointed an economist. The analysis above reflects the general trends and impressions we perceived during our brief visit and our perusal of such documents as have been provided, including syllabi. From what we observed, however, we feel confident that a much greater range of topics needs to be covered.

Students in a program of public policy and administration should learn more than that governments make bad policies. They should understand that some policies are better than others, that these policies can be designed and implemented just as they now do understand that the many pressures on government often affect government decisions. This is not so much a subject matter as a point of view that is appropriate to almost all topics. It will only be part of the curriculum if the faculty self-consciously designs this curriculum with this goal in view. This is another way of saying that intellectual leadership is important. While we admire the energy and dedication of the current chair, we believe that he cannot provide the leadership necessary to redirect the focus of program towards a liberal arts program in public policy.

Sapir has a masters program in public policy and administration, which is in existence but has not yet been formally approved by the Malag. This is so far the only masters program at Sapir.

Starting a masters program will divert resources from the urgent and important job of improving the BA program. We have criticized this program sharply for lacking the focus that any degree program with its name should have. We have not forgotten that this program does something important and difficult well: It provides a good general education to disadvantaged students. It will be very difficult to fix the existing BA program along the lines that we have suggested. We cannot imagine that Sapir can do this and create an effective Masters program at the same time. Both programs need the same kinds of faculty.³ These programs compete for the same scarce resources. Given Sapir's mission and resources, the BA program seems to us to have a more important claim. We recommend that the Sapir faculty decide to use the jargon of management studies, providing quality undergraduate education to a group of often disadvantaged students should be the core competency of this program. The institution should resist as much as possible the temptation to dissipate its time and energy on non-core activities.

³ It is arguable that the mere existence of a masters program will make it easier to recruit for the BA program. A bit of thought convinces us that this argument is not plausible. Masters programs carry more prestige than BA programs. If given a choice almost all Israeli academics will prefer to be associated with the graduate program. Faculty who have commitments to both programs will have to decide to which program they will devote their energies. We believe they will find it more interesting and rewarding to think about the MA program than the BA program. The two programs are in economists jargon substitutes rather than complements.

Teaching

Sapir students learn how to write. This is difficult and cannot be an accident. The curriculum and many individual courses must make this a priority. We applaud this. Similar care has not gone into the equally difficult task of teaching students quantitative reasoning. That task too must be done. Like teaching writing, teaching quantitative thinking is hard, but the methods that work are not a secret: assign enough exercises that instructors can monitor student progress. Make sure that courses build on one another in a logical way. Teach a few concepts deeply. Use examples in lectures and exercises that show how these tools can be used to analyze public policy. We note that all this is much easier to do when the people who teach these courses are part of the senior staff rather than adjuncts.

We believe promotion criteria should be more-closely tied to teaching ability (see below).

Faculty, Research, and Promotion Criteria

There are four ranks of senior faculty: Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor and Professor. Promotion to Associate Professor or Full Professor requires the approval of national committees appointed by the Malag. These committees apply essentially the same standards to college faculty as to faculty in universities. Publication of scholarly books or articles is necessary for promotion. Promotion to Senior Lecturer – although largely a college matter -- seems to have the same research requirement. Although there may be a way of being promoted from senior lecturer to some kind of senior teacher, this has not been used. Thus it is not now possible to be advanced beyond

the most junior rank of senior faculty without research publications.

The core mission of Sapir College is teaching; research is not mentioned in the department's mission statement. If faculty must publish to be promoted, they will try. Research burns time and energy – a scarce resource for those who teach 12 hours to students who need more faculty attention than most. To remain a good teacher requires an active engagement with what you teach. Research is one way to do this but it is not the only way, nor is it necessarily a good way for teachers of general courses. Research is focused and narrowing; teaching at the college level is integrative and general. Teaching public policy well adds yet more demands.

While it is extremely difficult to find time for research and financial support for research is negligible (\$33,500 in 2007-08), the Self-Evaluation notes that most of the faculty is involved in some degree of research activity, and are recognized for their contributions by the academic community. We admire those faculty who maintain a research program and publish scholarly work. But we do not think that scholarly publications should be required for promotion.

The evaluation of teaching ability should be based on systematic evidence that goes beyond student evaluations. These could include examination of teaching portfolios including but not limited to syllabi, visiting classes, and videotaping classes. Judging the quality of teaching is difficult. But without good methods it is difficult to reward good teaching. It is important to Sapir College's mission that it and the CHE find or create better ways to evaluate teaching.

Recommendations

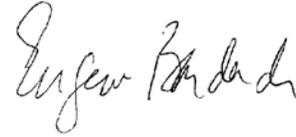
Sapir College is complex and faces many constraints.. With this caveat, we make the following recommendations:

1. If the Department of Public Policy and Administration is to retain its present name, it should revise its curriculum, focus, and mission to teach central tenets of public administration and policy. A plan to do so be completed in the next 18 months and then be implemented over a 3-4 year period.
2. The teaching of quantitative reasoning and methods needs to be improved, centering on presenting a very small set of essential concepts at much greater depth, centering on thinking/conceptual rather than deep mathematical skills. The redesign of the quantitative methods curriculum should be completed within two years.
3. The senior staff should be enlarged, from resources redirected away from the master's program (see below). New hiring should focus on recruiting people who specialize in the technical or analytic areas of public policy -- quantitative methods and statistics, policy analysis, policy evaluation, and economics.
4. Within two years, Sapir should develop a clear path of promotion beyond lecturer for excellent teachers.
5. We were not asked to evaluate the masters program. Nonetheless, we believe that the proposed masters program should not be approved unless and until our recommendations for improving the BA program have been implemented.

Signed By:



Prof. Steve Kelman, Chair



Prof. Eugene Bardach



Prof. Mark Kleiman



Prof. David Nachmias



Prof. Michael Rothschild

Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment



שר החינוך
Minister of Education
وزير التربية والتعليم

October 12, 2010

Prof. Steve Kelman
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
USA

Dear Professor Kelman,

The State of Israel undertook an ambitious project when the Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE) established a quality assessment and assurance system for Israeli higher education. Its stated goals are: to enhance and ensure the quality of academic studies; to provide the public with information regarding the quality of study programs in institutions of higher education throughout Israel; and to ensure the continued integration of the Israeli system of higher education in the international academic arena. Involvement of world-renowned academicians in this process is essential.

This most important initiative reaches out to scientists in the international arena in a national effort to meet the critical challenges that confront the Israeli higher educational system today. The formulation of international evaluation committees represents an opportunity to express our common sense of concern and to assess the current and future status of education in the 21st century and beyond. It also establishes a structure for an ongoing consultative process among scientists around the globe on common academic dilemmas and prospects.

I therefore deeply appreciate your willingness to join us in this crucial endeavor.

It is with great pleasure that I hereby appoint you to serve as the chair of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Administration.

The composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Steve Kelman (Chair), Prof. Eugene Bardach, Prof. Mark Kleiman, Prof. David Nachmias, Prof. Michael Rothschild.

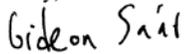
Ms. Marissa Gross will coordinate the Committee's activities.

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כתובת אתר המשרד: <http://www.education.gov.il>

In your capacity as the chair of the Evaluation Committee, you will be requested to function in accordance with the enclosed appendix.

I wish you much success in your role as a member of this most important committee.

Sincerely,



Gideon Sa'ar
Minister of Education,
Chairperson, The Council for Higher Education

Enclosures: Appendix to the Appointment Letter of Evaluation Committees

cc: Ms. Riki Mendelzvaig, Secretary of the Council for Higher Education
Ms. Michal Neumann, Head of the Quality Assessment Division
Ms. Marissa Gross, Committee Coordinator



Schedule of site visit

Department of Public Administration and Policy, Sapir College

Wednesday December 15, 2010

Time	Subject	Participants
09:30-10:15	Opening session with the heads of the institution and the senior staff member appointed to deal with quality assessment	Prof. Uri Regev-acting president Dr. Nachmi Paz-general manager Prof. Ariel Feldshtein- academic director Dr. Daniel De-Mal`ach- head of department Ms. Cindy Flash-department coordinator Ms. Anat Wolff-academic secretary
10:15-11:00	Meeting with the academic head of the department of Public Policy	Dr. Daniel De-Malach- head of department Ms. Cindy Flash-department coordinator
11:00-12:00	Meeting with faculty and representatives of relevant committees (teaching/curriculum committee, admissions committee, appointment committee)*	Admissions –Dr. Merav Moshev Pedagogic – Dr. Chana Katzv Appointments –Dr. Zvi Schuldinerv Dr Lihi Lahat, Dr. Erez Tzfadiav, Dr. Iddo Nevo, Ms. Yehudit Morag, Ms. Ronit Miller, Dr. Mike Dahanv, Dr. Neta Hadar
12:00-12:45	Lunch with students	
13:00-14:30	Observation-Lecture 1:00 p.m. -Introduction to Microeconomics – room 4304. 1:15 p.m. Administrative Law-room 12104 1:30 p.m. Issues in Peace Building-	

	room 7005	
14:30-15:00	Closed-door working meeting of the committee	



Schedule of site visit

Department of Public Administration and Policy, Sapir College

Thursday December 16, 2010

Time	Subject	Participants
09:30-10:15	Meeting with Bachelors students***	
10:15-11:00	Meeting with adjunct lecturers*	<p>Dr. Ariela Bairey Ben-Ishay, Leadership for Change; From Confrontation to Partnership Building, Diversity and Difference in Society and the Workplace</p> <p>Dr. Ye'ela Ra'anani - research methods, final project; Oppression as Policy; Racism, Community and the State; Why Do They Insist on Being Poor?</p> <p>, Dr. Sigal Ron, - Social Psychology , Introduction to Behavioral Sciences</p> <p>Dr. Ofer Casif, - Ethnicity, Nationalism and Zionism, Religion State and Politics; Between the Military, Society and Politics; Conceptions of Social Justice</p> <p>Atty. Ofer Shenar, Workshop in the Field of Social Rights A & B</p> <p>Ms. Tami Zanberg, - Social Psychology, Introduction to Behavioral Sciences</p> <p>Ms, Michal Zylber, - Statistics</p> <p>Mr. Moti Gigi, - Academic writing, Leadership for Change, Diversity and Differences in Society and the Workplace</p>

11:00-11:45	Meeting with Alumni***	
12:00-12:30	Campus tour (classes, library, offices of faculty members, computer labs etc.)	
12:30-13:15	Meeting with Head of Master's Program	Prof. David Dery
13:15-14:00	Lunch and Closed-door working meeting of the committee	
14:00-14:45	Summation meeting with heads of the institution and of the department	Prof. Uri Regev-acting president Dr. Nachmi Paz-general manager Prof. Ariel Feldshtein- academic director Dr. Daniel De-Mal'ach- head of department

* The heads of the institution and academic unit or their representatives will not attend these meetings.

*** The visit will be conducted in English with the exception of students who may speak in Hebrew and anyone else who feels unable to converse in English.