



Committee for the Evaluation of Sociology and Anthropology Study Programs

Tel Aviv University

Faculty of Social Sciences

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Evaluation Report

August 2012

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Chapter 1- Background

At its meeting on July 14, 2009, the Council for Higher Education (CHE) decided to evaluate study programs in the field of Sociology and Anthropology.

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. Seymour Spilerman – Department of Sociology, Columbia University, USA, Committee Chair
- Prof. Arne Kalleberg - Department of Sociology, University of North Carolina, USA
- Prof. Herbert Lewis - Department of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin, USA
- Prof. Leslie McCall - Department of Sociology, Northwestern University, USA*
- Prof. Yitzhak Samuel - Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Haifa, Israel
- Prof. Moshe Shokeid - Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tel Aviv University, Israel
- Prof. Florencia Torche - Department of Sociology, NYU, USA†.

Ms. Yael Franks - Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

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

1. Examine the self-evaluation reports, submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in Civil Engineering, 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 2009).

* Prof. Leslie McCall did not take part in the evaluation of OUI, TAU, BIU and AUC

† Prof. Florencia Torche joined the committee at a later stage, after the first round of visits in January 2012, thus did not take part in the evaluation of BGU, HUJI, Academic College Emek Yezreel and University of Haifa

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

Chapter 2-Committee Procedures

The Committee held its first meetings on January 02, 2012 during which it discussed fundamental issues concerning higher education in Israel, the quality assessment activity, as well as Sociology and Anthropology Study programs.

In January 2012, the Committee held its first cycle of evaluation, and visited Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, University of Haifa, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and The Academic College of Emek Yezreel. In May 2012 the Committee conducted its second evaluation cycle, and visited The Open University, Tel Aviv University, Bar Ilan University and Ariel University Center of Samaria. During the visits, the Committee met with various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff, and students, and toured the visited departments.

This report deals with the **Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel Aviv University (TAU)**.

The Committee's visit to TAU took place on May 02nd, 2012[§].

The schedule of the visit is attached as **Appendix 2**.

The Committee thanks the management of TAU and the Department of Sociology and Anthropology for their self-evaluation report and for their hospitality towards the Committee during its visit at the institution.

[§] In accordance with the CHE's policy, Prof. Moshe Shokied did not participate in the evaluation of Sociology-Anthropology studies at TAU in order to prevent the appearance of a conflict of interests

Chapter 3: Evaluation of Sociology and Anthropology Studies Program at TAU

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the visit to the institution, and does not take account of any subsequent changes. The Report records the conclusions reached by the Evaluation Committee based on the documentation provided by the institution, information gained through interviews, discussion and observation as well as other information available to the Committee.

BACKGROUND, MISSION AND GOALS

Background of the institution

Tel Aviv University (TAU) is one of the premier institutions of higher learning in Israel, with a considerable international reputation. Its faculty carries out advanced state-of-the-art research and is committed to delivering quality education in a wide variety of disciplines. The university benefits from its location in cosmopolitan Tel Aviv, a city that is appealing to students and holds many attractions for the faculty as well.

The university operated with a severe budget deficit in the period 2002-2008. During that time the faculty declined in size from some 1300 FTEs to less than 1000. Student financial support and internal funds for research were similarly impacted. Only in the past 2-3 years has the university emerged from this contraction and begun to repair the damage to the institution. Plans for the current year are to add approximately 60 faculty members in addition to filling slots that become vacant as a result of retirements and other departures. Further, during the retrenchment there was a tendency to replace tenure line positions with less expensive external teachers, and the university intends to reverse this trend. Clearly, the rebuilding process will have to continue for several years to remedy the effects of the long contraction.

The Faculty of Social Sciences was established in 1964. In its present configuration the Faculty consists of three schools: The School of Social Work, The School of Economics, and The School of Psychological Sciences (which was recently transformed from a department to a school). Sociology/Anthropology, Political Science and Communications are currently departments, not schools, and offer all degrees. Two smaller departments offer only graduate degrees: Labor Studies and Public Policy. The distinction between "department" and "school" is not sharp. In general, schools appear to have somewhat greater autonomy than departments in setting the curriculum and in budgetary matters, as well having direct access to the University Rector.

Mission and goals of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology (DSA)

The DSA articulates its goals as ones of carrying out "state of the art social and cultural research in general, and of Israeli society, in particular." In its teaching mission the DSA is committed to enhancing the capability of students to define, analyze, and understand the structures and processes that shape human behavior. The methodological approaches in which students are trained span quantitative and qualitative research strategies and are intended to promote the careful examination of empirical evidence in addressing social issues.

The DSA at TAU has put together an impressive mix of researchers who use a variety of methodologies in their studies, which range over diverse substantive topics in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, and the department has received considerable international recognition for its research. Its particular claim to distinction is in the field of stratification and inequality, a substantive area in which the Tel Aviv faculty are repeatedly sought out as research collaborators by associates in Europe and the United States.

The committee notes that there is overlap in faculty and research interests between the sociologists in the department and the Department of Labor Studies, and so there might be synergy in bringing the two departments into closer organizational proximity. While we are not fully clear on the respective advantages of a school versus a department, we recommend that both departments explore the advisability of establishing a school structure, especially since strong social science departments within the Faculty of Social Sciences at TAU (economics, psychology) have taken this route.

THE STUDY PROGRAMS AND STUDENTS

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology awards the BA, MA, and PhD degrees. Since 2007 enrollment in the department has declined in all degree levels, with the most severe decline, amounting to some 14%, occurring in the undergraduate program. This trend parallels enrollment changes in sociology/anthropology in other Israeli universities and reflects the increasing competition with the colleges for students as well as a growing preference by students for majors in applied "practical" fields.

The BA study program includes a range of courses and seminars on various sociological topics, with a well-balanced assortment of central substantive fields, areas of interest in Israel society, and methodologies. Although most of the students appeared pleased with their studies and were appreciative of the opportunity to write seminar papers, some of them expressed several concerns. First, there was a feeling that too few elective courses are available, especially in anthropology. Second, there was a sense that there was too much repetition of material in the various theory courses. Third, several students deplored

the limited coverage of quantitative methods. In general, there were expressions of regret that the coursework in sociology is less demanding than in other disciplines. While the students with whom we met might not be representative of the undergraduate enrollment, it is unusual for the Committee to hear requests for more methods courses and a more challenging curriculum, and we urge the department to act on these wishes. Even in a context of declining enrollment, the DSA would do well to associate sociology and anthropology study with a rigorous study curriculum.

In the past few years the department has been active in restructuring its MA and Ph.D. programs, with the intent of both rationalizing the alternative programs and attracting more applicants. At the MA level, this has meant realigning the possible specializations. As of the next academic year, four MA programs will be offered, two of which are modifications of existing programs:

1. Organization Studies and Organizations for Social Change. This program will be expanded to include a conventional set of courses and seminars that are taught under the title of Organization Studies at other universities. In part, the motivation for this program responds to an interest by MA applicants for applied organizational studies. This specialization is expected to attract a large number of students.

2. Surveys and Public Opinion. This program is intended to appeal to students interested in professional careers involving work with public opinion polls, marketing research, political campaigns, and applied research of similar sorts. By its very nature this track is methodologically oriented, with strength in quantitative research methods, although the program design requires students to complete theoretical coursework as well.

3. Pan-disciplinary Program in Sociological Research. This specialty is intended to cover a variety of sociological areas, especially stratification, ethnicity, gender, and critical theory. In addition to theoretical coursework, students in this program will receive training in both quantitative and qualitative methods.

4. Cultural Anthropology. This program provides study in anthropological theories and methods, and reflects a commitment by the department to provide coverage of the two disciplines.

These MA programs are in the process of development and will surely be modified. The committee has a high regard for the decision making capability of the department, especially in light of its considerable success over the years in building a well regarded research and training operation. For this reason, our comments are only suggestive.

We start with the Pan-disciplinary program. First, names are important and should convey what the program is about. The current name fails this test. Second, the Tel Aviv department is distinguished in part because of its contributions to the field of stratification

and inequality. The Committee feels that this prominence should be showcased. Thus, the department might well use a program title such as "Social Structures and Processes," which both encompass multiple areas of sociological study but is suggestive of the stratification field.

A more substantive comment about this program area concerns the attempt to link stratification and inequality with critical studies. We do not understand the thinking of the department in regard to this decision; to us, it is a stretch. We suggest that the department give further thought to the rationale of this program formulation. We presume that one consideration in the decision to not field an MA specialization in stratification studies is the low prospective demand for this training. Demand is certainly a matter of consequence, and we therefore encourage the department to take steps to broaden the visibility of this program to undergraduate students in sociology, and to bring the possibility of graduate study in this specialty to the attention of students in other quantitatively oriented disciplines, especially economics and statistics. We also suggest that the department give consideration to joining in a consortium with other European universities and providing some coursework in English, as these steps might well bring students from abroad who have a high regard for the faculty in this specialty at Tel Aviv University. According to the Self Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by the Department, the University already offers MA study programs in English in a number of social science departments, we expect that such coursework would have appeal internationally for students of stratification.

We also have a concern about the Surveys and Public Opinion program. We recognize that this program might well provide training that is attractive to career oriented students, but we see the training as also useful to more academically inclined students. We suggest that a substantive concentration be required of students--especially those in the thesis track--in this methodological oriented program. Thus, students might be required to take several courses in organizational studies, stratification and inequality, or in another substantive area. We suggest that such a combination would be advantageous to students contemplating doctoral study in a quantitative field, whether in Israel or abroad.

In regard to Cultural Anthropology, the current state of the program is weak. Anthropologists in the department work closely with sociologists and there is no sense of deep disciplinary boundaries. Still, with only 4 FTEs who are formally trained in this discipline, the anthropology program is understaffed and can cover only a portion of the field. One indication of this limitation is the decision by the department to focus on Israeli society and forego recruiting researchers whose primary substantive interests are in societies outside of Israel; this, despite a proclaimed goal of the university to target globalization issues. It is the view of the Committee that the program in anthropology will suffer if the representation of the field is so limited. We recommend that the department raise its commitment to anthropology from 4 to 5 FTEs and that it consider an ethnographer who has conducted research outside of Israel as the additional hire.

The PhD program has also undergone a reassessment and adjustment. In particular, the department has decided to reduce the number of admissions to perhaps a half-dozen annually and recruit more selectively. Within the program, a formal comprehensive examination will be implemented. These changes are intended to make the program more cohesive and to give each research student greater attention and closer supervision. The Committee endorses these developments and expects that the graduates of this program will be attractive candidates for appointment at quality international universities.

The new PhD program will be divided into two stages, moving it towards the model that is common in the United States. In the first stage, the students will have to complete a set of graduate courses and pass a comprehensive exam. In the second, the students will formally select an advisor and prepare a research proposal. A doctoral workshop will be instituted, attended by various faculty, with the intention of building a collegial setting in which the doctoral students feel comfortable with giving and receiving criticism of their research and of drafts of their writings. The Committee concurs with the design and calls upon the university to provide the necessary resources for implementing this program. We advise adding a course to the program on the scientific writing of journal articles and research proposals in English, since the first experience in preparing such material in a foreign language can be daunting and intimidating.

FACULTY AND RESEARCH

The number of faculty lines in the department has declined substantially as a result of the economic crisis that began in 2002 – from about 23 FTEs in the late 1990s to 18.5 today. Recent hires are excellent scholars who are very active in the department. However, there are relevant needs in several fields, including anthropology, and political sociology (as well as stratification in the near future, as senior faculty members in this field retire).

The faculty's areas of specialization are diverse and well-balanced, including qualitative and quantitative approaches, with strength in several substantive fields, especially stratification and labor markets, organizations, ethnic relations, gender, political sociology, and sociology of education. Many faculty members focus their research on Israeli society, but several conduct international comparative studies, often in collaboration with scholars in the US and Europe; this is particularly the case in the areas of stratification, education, and labor markets.

The main challenge facing the department is the need to continue the post-crisis rebuilding and achieve cohort replacement in the face of impending retirements. Attainment of these goals will require support from the administration in making lines available to the department. The Committee is of the view that the department should protect its international reputation in the field of stratification--defined broadly to include labor

market processes, mobility in organizational settings, and education--but should also invest in developing a second area in which it believes it can attain international standing. We do not have any particular second area in mind, only stress that excellent departments with high international regard tend to be ones with strength and visibility in more than one specialty, and that Tel Aviv is capable of achieving this distinction. The Committee recognizes that a commitment to develop particular substantive areas will mean modifying its hiring strategy from recruiting the very best available candidates, irrespective of specialty, to one in which specialty is taken into account. There is certainly a need for discussion in the department about these matters and consideration should be given to preparing a development plan.

RESEARCH

The Department is intensively research oriented, with its faculty employing a balance of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative research is primarily carried out by the faculty who specialize in topics related to social stratification (such as educational and economic inequality, gender inequality, and organizational studies). Qualitative research (ethnographic, interpretative, critical approaches) is more typical of the work done by faculty in anthropology and by the sociologists studying culture and related topics. The Committee is of the view that strength in both types of methods is vital to a mainline sociology department.

The faculty publish their research in a variety of outlets: monographs, chapters in edited books, articles in refereed journals, as well as research reports and conference presentations. An impressive number of articles appear in top-tier journals, in the US and Europe. The number of articles in peer-reviewed journals published by senior faculty in the past 5 years is noteworthy--a total of 205, or an average of 9.3 articles per member. In addition, the faculty in the department extensively co-author with scholars in other academic institutions, both in Israel and in other countries.

Faculty members have been active in pursuing external research grants. During the past 5 years, at least 20 faculty members obtained grants from a variety of sources in Israel as well as abroad. A number have also obtained prestigious awards and fellowships. In total, the faculty secured close to US \$4 million in research support over the 2005-2010 period. The fact that a large proportion of the faculty--junior as well as senior members--have been successful in securing funds attests to the vibrancy of the department.

The research activities of the faculty are recognized in other ways as well. They are well represented on the editorial boards of Israeli and international journals, and prominent scholars from many countries have participated in departmental seminars and workshops. To facilitate this activity, the department runs a center, The Institute for Social Research

(which also publishes the Hebrew language journal *Israeli Sociology*), and participates in the activities of a university center, The B.I. and Lucille Cohen Institute for Public Opinion Research.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology has a strong infrastructure with which to accomplish its teaching and research missions. The layout of space is attractive, with a suitable seminar room and offices for the research centers and the journal affiliated with the department. The proximity to other social science departments within the Naftali building (notably, Labor Studies) facilitates interactions with members of these departments. The faculty offices are of adequate size. In addition to the Naftali building, the campus of Tel Aviv University offers numerous places where faculty and students can have informal conversations and socialize. Doctoral students have adequate office space with several computers, as do post-doctoral fellows. In addition, the computer lab associated with the Cohen Institute for Public Opinion Research contains a dozen computers that are available to MA and doctoral students. Two additional computer labs are available to BA students.

Tel Aviv University has a number of libraries, with one dedicated to the faculties of Management and Social Science. This facility, the Brender-Moss Library for Social Sciences and Management, is conveniently located next to the Naftali building and is a state-of-the-art facility. It contains a large number of digitized books and journals, which can be accessed at the university or at home by students and faculty. The library is well stocked with current books in sociology and anthropology and appears to be adequately funded. We found the library to be an attractive setting for students, with separate rooms for group study, quiet zones, and the like.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our summary assessment is that the DSA is a successful operation and has weathered well a difficult budgetary period in the university. The intent of our recommendations is more to ensure the continued strength of the department, in both new areas and in its established specialties, than to correct deficiencies. To that end we recommend that,

1. The department needs to rebuild its programs after a long period of contraction. Beyond the replacement of retiring faculty, there is a clear need for additional tenure line appointments in the areas of anthropology and political sociology. Also, to maintain its excellence in stratification, the department should add an additional member with this specialty.

2. The department should consider investing in a second specialty, beyond stratification, in which it believes that it can achieve international distinction, and should communicate its decision to the university in the form of a development plan.
3. The department should rethink the formulation of its MA programs, taking into account the concerns listed in this report.
4. Particular attention should be given to maintaining a robust program in social and cultural anthropology. The decision to not study cultures outside of Israel should be reconsidered, since it greatly narrows the traditional range of interest of this discipline. We especially recommend an investment in ethnographic approaches to complement the focus on "critical" studies.
5. While we are not fully clear on the respective advantages of a school versus a department, because of the overlap of faculty and research interests between the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Department of Labor Studies, consideration should be given to establishing a closer association between these two units. We recommend that both departments and the university administration explore the advantages of bringing the departments together within the framework of a school.

Signed by:



Prof. Seymour Spilerman,
Chair



Prof. Arne Kalleberg



Prof. Herbert Lewis



Prof. Florencia Torche



Prof. Yitzhak Samuel

Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment



February, 2012

שר החינוך
Minister of Education
وزير التربية والتعليم

Prof. Seymour Spilerman
Department of Sociology
Columbia University
USA

Dear Professor Spilerman,

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 Chair of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of Sociology - Anthropology Studies.

The composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Seymour Spilerman (Chair), Prof. Arne Kalleberg, Prof. Herbert Lewis, Prof. Leslie McCall, Prof. Yitzhak Samuel Prof. Moshe Shokeid and Prof. Florencia Torche.

Ms. Yael Franks will coordinate the Committee's activities.

In your capacity as 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 Chair 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. Michal Neumann, The Quality Assessment Division
Ms. Yael Franks, Committee Coordinator

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Appendix 2: Site Visit Schedule

Sociology & Anthropology - Schedule of site visit - Tel Aviv University

Wednesday, May 02, 2012

Time	Subject	Participants
08:00-08:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution and the senior staff member appointed to deal with quality assessment	Prof. Dina Prialnik , Vice Rector Prof. David Horn , Head, Academic Quality Assessment
08:30-09:15	Meeting with head of Faculty of Social Sciences	Prof. Tamar Ronen Rosenbaum , Dean
09:15-10:00	Meeting with the academic and administrative heads of the Department of Sociology & Anthropology	Dr. Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni , Head of the department
10:00-11:00	Meeting with senior academic staff and representatives of relevant committees*	Prof. Hanna Ayalon Dr. Alexandra Kalev , Member of graduate studies academic committee Dr. Adriana Kemp , Graduate Studies (MA) Advisor Dr. Nissim Mizrachi , Member of graduate studies academic committee Prof. Dan Rabinowitz , Member of graduate studies academic committee Prof. Yossi Shavit , Member of the Ph.D. committee Prof. Haim Hazan Dr. Khaled Furani Dr. Tamar Kricheli Katz Dr. Avi Gottlieb , Member of the academic committee
11:00-11:30	Meeting with Junior academic staff *	Avi Golzman Sinai Nissenboim Tamar Arieli Mor Shilon
11:30-12:00	Meeting with Adjunct academic staff *	Dr. Raquel Romberg Dr. Shlomo Fischer Dr. Erica Weiss
12:00-12:45	Lunch (in the same room)	Closed-door meeting of the committee

12:45-13:30	Tour of facilities: classrooms, library, offices	
13:30-14:15	Meeting with BA students**	Up to 8 students of all levels
14:15-15:00	Meeting with MA students**	Up to 8 students
15:00-15:45	Meeting with PhD students**	Up to 8 students
15:45-16:15	Meeting with Alumni**	Mor Shilon (M.A.) Matan Kaminr (M.A.) Dr. Amit Kaplan Dr. Anastasia Gorodzeisky Dr. Keren Fridman-Peleg Dr. Limor Gabay-Egozi
16:15-16:45	Closed-door working meeting of the committee	
16:45-17:15	Summation meeting with head of department	Dr. Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni , Head of the Department
17:15-17:45	Summation meeting with heads of institution	Prof. Dina Prialnik , Vice Rector Prof. David Horn , Head, Academic Quality Assessment

* 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.