

**Report to the CHE on the Implementation of Recommendations by the  
Committee for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Administration  
Study Programs**

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The Committee for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Administration Study Programs (hereafter, “the Evaluation Committee”) made its report to the Israel Council for Higher Education (CHE) in July 2011, just over two years ago. This followed institutional self-evaluations, site visits in Dec. 2010 and March 2011, responses to the CHE by the institutions, and finally self-reports from the five evaluated institutions concerning actions to implement the Evaluation Committee’s recommendations and in some cases, because of disagreements with the Evaluation Committee, to confirm non-implementation.

I have been asked by the CHE to assess the extent of implementation, relying primarily on the institutions’ self-reports. I have not visited the institutions nor in any other way received information from the institutions. I was a member of the Evaluation Committee and participated in all their work through February 2011, including site visits to three institutions (Sapir Academic College, the Hebrew University, and Tel Aviv University). Due to health problems I did not participate in site visits to the other two institutions (Ben-Gurion University and Haifa University) in March 2011.

I have interpreted the request to assess the “extent” of implementation to incorporate “quality” as well. The quality dimension is especially salient when the relevant implementation actions are long-term, subtle, or intangible. For instance, if the recommendation is to shift from teaching microeconomics that is heavily theory-based – similar to the training of PhD students in economics – to more practice-oriented teaching, this project clearly would involve asking faculty to do reflection plus experimentation over a period of months and probably years, perhaps with student feedback and perhaps in conjunction with peers and/or others who teach in the program. These “qualitative” aspects of implementation are different from the more tangible aspects, like introducing a new course title into the required curriculum or abolishing the requirement for a

research thesis at the Master's level. Such qualitative changes are very important but obviously extremely hard to assess. Nevertheless, they deserve attention.

I wish, therefore, to acknowledge that the limitations of the data, so to speak, and my need to rely on impressions make any implementation assessment uncertain. An uncertain assessment, however, is better than no assessment at all.

The report has three main sections. The first proceeds institution by institution, treating each of the five one at a time, and notes both the probably successes and the remaining challenges. The second adopts a sectoral focus; it stresses areas where implementation processes might be undertaken collectively, throughout the sector as a whole, rather than by institutions individually. Finally, in the third section, I summarize implementation tasks that appear still to remain and note whether they should be addressed institutionally or, perhaps in combination with these, by the sector as a whole.

This mode of organization means that sometimes a discussion of certain topics relevant to each individual institution is deferred to the section that deals with the sector as a whole, and also that occasionally the sectoral discussion alludes to topics discussed previously in the context of some particular institution(s).

## **I. Individual Institutions**

In general, the five institutions that the Committee evaluated have taken the Committee's findings to heart. The extent and character of implementation is commendable. Specifically, they appear to have responded positively to recommendations that:

- More attention be paid to microeconomic reasoning and to certain quantitative skills.
- Professional education in various policy- and management-related skills become the main programmatic objective. The Committee recommended that this be given higher priority than the teaching of descriptive, explanatory, and historical materials. In the Committee's language, the idea was to favor the prescriptive over the merely descriptive, or "policy analysis" over "policy studies."
- Faculty be encouraged and supported to do more publishable and high-quality research. The institutions were already pressing hard in this direction, to be sure, against difficult constraints.
- More of an effort be made to encourage and reward excellence in teaching.
- The institutions keep trying to find ways to motivate and facilitate student effort. This is especially important given that student time and energy are critical inputs into effective learning.

## Sapir

The Evaluation Committee made five explicit recommendations, and Sapir's self-report on implementation addresses these. The key recommendation called for a broad reconsideration of the mission of the Department of Public Policy and Administration. The Committee recognized that the main mission was to offer a liberal arts concentration to undergraduates, not to add to the population of trained policy professionals. In this, Sapir differed from the other four institutions the Committee evaluated. The Committee noted that the strategy underlying the Sapir mission was to help the students to learn "critical thinking." The Committee thought that both the mission and the strategy were appropriate. The Sapir self-report on implementation describes (pp. 8-23) a very impressive amount of activity stimulated by this recommendation. Committees were convened, personnel were added and withdrawn, syllabi were reviewed and revised, courses were invented, coordination mechanisms were designed. This highly engaged and active approach is consistent with the faculty enthusiasm and commitment that the Evaluation Committee observed during its site visit. The results, on paper, look very persuasive.

All this activity, and the extensive documentation of its occurrence, might, of course, amount merely to a lot of hand-waving to convince outside observers – and the Sapir faculty themselves – that they were making sincere and heroic efforts. But I do not think so. To be sure, the proof of this pudding would be in what students actually learn as they pass through this revised program, with "learn" construed very broadly as "how they have improved their understanding of the world," or at least the complex political and policy part of the world. We do not have information on these points. Probably, it is a bit too soon to tell. But I think the most significant indicator of the energy and authenticity of the Department's efforts is to be found on p. 16 of the implementation self-report, which details a number of the courses and topics that were dropped from the curriculum.

In the main the dropped topics had to do with the Department's overarching strategy in delivering its mission, that of teaching "critical thinking." The Evaluation Committee thought this strategy potentially very effective and meaningful, but it took exception to the way it was actually carried out. The Committee's concern was that the idea of "critical thinking" had been cast rather narrowly, to wit, "criticizing" the government and Israeli society for many apparently unjust policies and practices, particularly those directed towards ethnic minorities. The Committee report urged that students learn to turn their critical thinking skills on the ideas and topics that they were being taught as well.

To this end the report urged that students be taught more microeconomic, quantitative, and managerial/administrative skills and that they learn to take a broader perspective on the various constraints on policy and, indeed, to think more deeply about what counts for "just" and "unjust" policies. The Evaluation Report also urged that students be exposed to a broader array of policy problems than those that fit comfortably within the experience and expertise of the

current faculty members. It instanced environmental and transportation policy as examples for expanding the scope of teaching materials.

It appears that, on all these fronts, adequate progress is being made.

I should add that it is also possible – though I think not likely – that Sapir has gone too far in this direction. What looks to one observer (i.e., the Evaluation Committee) like ideology and interpretive bias can look to another like truth and realism. The Evaluation Committee was sensitive to the possibility of trying to impose its own ideologies and biases and thereby to be manhandling academic freedom. It tried hard not to do so.

However, debates over public policy wisdom and justice cannot, and should not, avoid these dangers. They would do so at the price of stripping the subject matter of its essence. One calls this a retreat into “scientism,” and one must be watchful of the signs. “Reasoned” and “evidence-based” could be substituted for “scientific” with no loss of meaning and with some small gain in appropriate modesty. For a further discussion of related issues, please see the discussion below (section II) about the role of normative analysis in PhD and other policy research.

Another major recommendation of the Evaluation Committee concerns increasing support for excellent teaching. It is not too broad a generalization to say that most academic careers in Israel, the U.S., and Europe are geared more towards excellence in research than in teaching. Because Sapir’s mission has to do more with teaching than with research, though, it is unusually burdened by this dilemma. On pp. 28-33 of the implementation self-report we see a very thoughtful discussion of possible means to push this very large rock up a very steep hill. The Sapir efforts to improve teaching and learning, and to support teaching excellence, are certainly no worse than those ordinarily seen in higher education circles. Indeed, they are much better. But that does not mean they are ideal or the best that could be imagined.

Finally, the Sapir implementation report takes up the issue of the Master’s Program, which was just getting going when the Evaluation Committee did its work. The Committee was skeptical about this program and recommended against approving it until the undergraduate program was improved. Sapir objected to this recommendation and has not implemented it. I think their reluctance is reasonable. The Evaluation Committee acknowledged its lack of real conviction in making this recommendation, and expressed it mainly to provoke discussion and debate.

### Hebrew University

When the Evaluation Committee looked at the Federmann School, it was still in the throes of growth and change. A number of the recommendations about structure, procedure, leadership, and governance amounted mostly to encouragement for what the University and the School were already trying to do. The Federmann School implementation self-report affirms that

they have made much progress in these directions. The self-report goes into the relevant details, and these do not bear repeating here. They are to be congratulated.

A point of conflict between the School and the Committee, at the time the evaluation was done, concerns the relative centrality to the Master's requirement of the research thesis. The Committee was antagonistic to a research thesis requirement. Having been a Committee member, I was also sympathetic to this point of view. However, I hasten to acknowledge that an opposite point of view is legitimate. This issue is further discussed below, in section II.

The Federmann School self-report appears to be addressing an issue that was of great concern to the Evaluation Committee. This is what was taken to be an excessive orientation towards "policy studies," that is, a descriptive-analytical-historical account of how phenomena got to be the way they are, to the apparent detriment of "policy analysis," which would involve normative analysis of presumably beneficial changes. (The Evaluation Committee often uses "prescriptive" rather than "normative," but the underlying idea is the same.)

The Federmann School implementation self-report does say that the core MPP program provides "extensive prescriptive training," that is, policy-analytic training, and that students must write a policy paper "with bold emphasis on the implementation of their recommendations" and that this paper is "presented to a 'real' client." This certainly is responsive to the general concern of the Evaluation Committee. But the latter's more targeted concern was with the theses conceived as part of the PhD program, and it is not clear what is being done on that front.

A more extended discussion of the relationship of "policy studies" to "policy analysis" research is reserved for Section III.

### Tel Aviv University

The implementation self-report submitted by Tel Aviv University (TAU) on July 8, 2013, is very sketchy. However, the department submitted an extensive and very useful response to the Evaluation Committee's report on September 15, 2011, which also serves as a basis for my remarks, and a further report on October 3, 2013, in Hebrew. I asked that a portion of the latter report be translated into English; that was received on November 12.

The department's 2011 response indicates substantial agreement with the Committee's recommendation to orient its curriculum more towards professional education, while still maintaining some strength in more liberal-arts oriented policy studies. It also endorses in principle the recommendations to "teach fewer concepts more intensively," to introduce group (and perhaps field-oriented) capstone projects, and to offer a course on negotiations.

The implementation of the first of these recommendations is slated for this semester, according to the July 8, 2013 memo, while the last two would begin in 2014/5. There is no

explicit explanation for this delay, though one could imagine various practical problems. The CHE should follow up on this in early 2014.

The department's self-described "gradual implementation" of the recommendation to "teach fewer concepts more intensively" also warrants follow-up. It is actually very difficult to implement such an idea, given faculty members' (usual) inclinations to "cover the material" and hence their reluctance to discard certain traditionally "covered" topics. Very likely, it is especially difficult if the faculty orientation is as much towards fostering student research as that of the Tel Aviv faculty appears to be.

The Evaluation Committee recommended adding strength in management/organizational behavior or politics, and the department has hired Prof. Itai Sened, whose appointment is effective as of October 1, 2013. Prof. Sened has a very distinguished reputation in the field of institutional politics, but as a social scientist and not as a professor of management or professional practice. One hopes that Prof. Sened will have the support of his departmental colleagues in trying to orient his course towards professional practice. On the overall importance of a collective faculty effort to set priorities, shape the curriculum, and influence classroom pedagogy, see Section II below.

### Ben-Gurion University

In response to the Evaluation Committee's report, the Ben-Gurion University (BGU) Department of Public Policy and Administration has evidently spent a lot of time reflecting on its mission and curriculum. They have taken what looks like the substantial step of dropping one of the three tracks offered in the curriculum (the Local Government track) and have better focused the two that are retained, now called Public Management and Economy, Business, and Society. This re-focusing accords well with the Evaluation Committee's recommendation that the department try harder to take advantage of their location within a business school.

Their implementation self-report (undated but presumably from mid-2013) provides quite a lot of detail about the names of the required courses that constitute each track as well as the elective courses; it also contains syllabi for a number of the courses. The narratives explaining the rationale for the courses in each track are not extensive but they are nevertheless sufficiently informative, as well as persuasive.

The BGU implementation self-report also addresses a concern of the Evaluation Committee expressed in its General Report but not explicitly reprised in the report on BGU specifically. The General Report recommends a much greater emphasis on education for professional practice as opposed simply to academic insight and understanding. The attempt to implement this recommendation appears especially evident in the write-ups of their courses by Profs. Mizrahi and Ben-Porat. However, the write-ups of the other courses to be found in the appendix do not convey this spirit. They seem to be much more oriented towards the more academic and theoretical – what the Evaluation Committee calls "policy studies" – rather than

the practical and “policy-analytic.” A university curriculum, even in a professional school, should of course make room for such an orientation. It is a matter of balance, however. One gets the impression that the balance at BGU has been and remains too much in favor of the academic and theoretical.

One other matter bears mention. This is the Evaluation Committee’s view that the department’s inclination was to present Israel public policy making in “unattractive” ways. The BGU response to this, in its 9/11/2011 memo to the CHE, was to say that this was an “achievement rather than a weakness.” Perhaps so. After all, the conventional wisdom is that “Laws, like sausages, cease to inspire respect in proportion as we know how they are made.” But the issue deserves more scrutiny. The Committee’s concern was that the truth – supposing it is a truth – can be presented so as to inspire either cynicism or commitment. The Evaluation Committee hoped for the latter but feared the former.

BGU also commented about the utility of requiring a research-oriented thesis as training for eventual professional use of evidence-based work in policy-making and management. They did not, however, make a real case for it. See below for a fuller discussion, in the section on Sectoral Focus.

### Haifa University

Like the self-report on implementation from Tel Aviv University, Haifa’s is sketchy. I have therefore relied not only on this but also on the November 2012 response by Prof. Eran Vigoda-Gadot to the CHE concerning the Evaluation Committee’s report.

The Evaluation Committee thought very highly of the Haifa program overall and its approach to management and organizational practice in particular. It recommended a reconfiguration of the course on microeconomics into a course on “microeconomic reasoning for public policy.” This has been done. A new recruit, Dr. Nissim Cohen, is now teaching this. The 2012 memo by Prof. Vigoda-Gadot describes him as having “expertise in Economic thinking and conduct of inquiry.” All this sounds very promising.

The Committee also recommended that, in a “fairly non-technical” way, students should be exposed to “some of the quantitative techniques of policy analysis: the calculation of benefits and costs, cost-effectiveness analysis, statistical decision analysis, and probabilistic reasoning (as distinct from statistical methods)...” The June 2013 implementation self-report indicates that the program had already begun in 2010 to move in this direction and that new faculty members (including Dr. Cohen) have been recruited to support this thrust.

## **II. Sectoral Focus**

The report of the Evaluation Committee included, in addition to sections on each of the five individual institutions, a 23-page (excluding appendices) General Report dealing with

several issues that were applicable to all the institutions and to the policy studies/policy analysis field more generally. Extensive commentary on the field was thought to be necessary because of the unusual nature of the field: it is a hybrid of professional training, theoretical research, applied research, and problem-oriented policy analysis. Academic and professional opinions as to what counts for quality in the field vary widely; and most such opinions have some legitimacy. It was impossible for the Evaluation Committee to do its work without some reference to the heterogeneity of background opinions and its own location within that background.

Such an overview document is not necessarily a part of an evaluation report done for the CHE, but there were good reasons for its inclusion in the Committee's report. One such was to draw attention to issues that are generic to public policy professional education in Israel – and also in the field more universally, including the U.S. and Europe. Evaluation reports on specific institutions would be meaningless without such a prior understanding. These problems are often subtle and require deep and extensive exploration. These include issues surrounding the strategic choice of just what kind of public policy education to provide, the special pedagogical problems of professional education in public policy, and the role of traditional academic research-related requirements in a professional education program. Sectoral treatment of these and related issues also minimized the redundancy that would have been entailed by institution-by-institution treatment. The same logic applies here. Just as a large part of the Evaluation Committee's recommendations and reasoning was presented in an overview General Report, this section correspondingly takes a sector-wide focus on implementation.

There is an important further reason as well. This has to do with the question of how to implement solutions to the problems raised by the Evaluation Committee. Some implementation actions are pretty clearly in the domain of the institutions themselves; others are clearly best done some sector-wide entity (perhaps one that has yet to be invented); and others could be done by one or the other or perhaps some combination. As an example of a sectoral strategy, consider the challenge of improvements in PhD training. The Evaluation Committee's final report recommended that the CHE make use of its leverage over funding to encourage these. But use of funding leverage may not be the only, nor the best, way for the CHE to promote sector-wide improvement. It might also act as a convener of one or more task-forces staffed primarily by individuals from the institutions, or perhaps as the organizer of a network of professionals that would hold an ongoing series of workshops about one or another problem. The CHE need not necessarily play a facilitative role at all, of course; professionals from the institutions could organize themselves on their own initiative. In the U.S. there is a professional association of policy school faculty (APPAM) that historically – particularly in the 1980s -- has hosted workshops about pedagogy as well as research conferences. An Israeli version of such an association might also be useful for this purpose.

In dealing with these sector-wide issues, I am reluctant, with some exceptions, to recommend one implementation strategy over another. Considerations of cost, convenience, capacity, and institutional legitimacy all come into play. Even when I turn to the CHE, I often

envision the CHE role more as that of a convener and facilitator than a regulator. Just how it, or another body, should play such a role is not clear. Trial-and-error is obviously necessary.

## **Overview**

On the whole, the institutions' implementation self-reports give less attention to the issues discussed in the Committee's General Report than they do to issues raised in the Committee's reviews of their particular, individual, programs. Although this is understandable, the present report, on the implementation process, aims to underline the importance of these general issues. On the whole, they are harder to deal with than are the issues that can be managed by individual institutions, and succeeding with these would have a higher payoff as well.

Following the lead of the Evaluation Committee's General Report, the issues discussed in this section include:

- Evaluating and crediting faculty research directed to specific policy issues in Israel and often undertaken at the behest of a specific Israeli governmental unit or Israel-based NGO. The Committee calls these "policy reports."
- Systematic efforts to improve teaching and learning.
  - Strengthen the orientation towards "professional education"
  - Alternatives and supplements to "frontal lectures."
  - "Cross-fertilization" between executive training (largely mid-career and non-degree) programs and "regular" (pre-career and degree) programs.
  - Facilitating and motivating more and better student inputs of time and energy.
- The role of a Master's Thesis in a public policy training curriculum.
- The role of a PhD track in public policy programs.

## **Faculty research**

The Evaluation Committee judged the research productivity of faculty in four of the five programs it reviewed to be adequate or better. The Committee did not attempt a judgment of the fifth, Sapir. Clearly it was lower than the others but it could reasonably have been judged adequate for an institution that stressed teaching more than research.

The major sector-wide issue involving faculty research quality and quantity is how to evaluate, and then weight, what can be called "policy reports," that is, analyses that deal with particular policy problems in Israel that are intended for use by governmental (and sometimes NGO) decision-makers at some particular point in time, e.g., whether to expand budgetary support for a home-visit public health nursing program in the Be'er Sheva region. Such reports can vary in scope and quality. At the high end, they can represent extraordinary commitments of labor and embody extremely high quality insight and logic.

Even the best, however, rarely count for much when it comes to promotions and salary increases. They are typically not published in academic journals, are in Hebrew, and reach only a limited audience. It is generally agreed that high-quality policy reports should count towards academic advancement. Yet, the absence of a consensually validated method for evaluating quality stands as a fundamental barrier to doing so.

Unfortunately, even if there were consensually validated quality measures, the consensus would reach only so far. As the Tel Aviv implementation report puts it, the production of high-quality policy reports at the expense of more traditional academic research published in more traditional academic outlets would be “tantamount to academic suicide.” (And this from a department that basically agrees with the Evaluation Committee about the social value of such policy reports.) U.S. public policy faculty operate under similar pressures, and they do sometimes manage to overcome them. Hence, the Tel Aviv judgment might be more pessimistic than is warranted. Nevertheless, it points to a serious problem.

The Evaluation Committee made mention in several places of the challenge of giving credit for the production of high-quality policy reports. It did not suggest specifics about how to overcome it, however. Implicitly, it left this task to the several individual institutions that it reviewed. None of these has addressed this issue constructively in its report on implementation actions – and this is not surprising. The task is extremely difficult and requires a fair amount of creativity. Within limits, it benefits from many heads rather than just a few, and a diversity of viewpoints. Depending on what the mitigating measures might be, any consensus reached by such a collective effort might benefit from cross-institutional endorsement and support. Thus, it is probably better explored by a joint effort of several institutions – a task force, one might say -- than by any single institution alone.

In addition, it is possible that the evaluation process eventually adopted by such a task force would include a panel of experts, both academic and governmental, whose members would be asked from time to time to serve as evaluators for policy reports done by faculty from different institutions. If this or other such cross-institutional structures were contemplated, it would make sense to have preparatory discussions occur in a cross-institutional forum.

## **Teaching and Learning**

Pedagogy. Pedagogical approaches would also benefit from cross-institutional discussion, albeit not from a “task force” but from a workshop of academic professionals who wished, over a long period, to explore issues of teaching and learning among policy students. In the field of higher education in public policy and administration, when it comes to teaching and learning, we unfortunately know more about what does not work than about what does. The sort of learning, for instance, that promotes good performance on multiple-choice exams is without much value. That said, I would make three points based on my own teaching experience plus extensive, if unscientific, discussions with many academic public policy colleagues over a 40-

year period. One point is obvious but widely overlooked: you cannot improve teaching unless you start with a reasonable and coherent idea of what you would like to students to learn. It does no good to worry about syllabi and curriculum and even classroom method and style unless you have in mind reasonable learning objectives. “Critical thinking,” properly understood, is one such. “More sophisticated understanding of how good and bad policy is made, and of the differences between them” would be another. How to do regressions might not be, although when a situation looks like it could be illuminated by data collection and regression analysis, it well might be. Having students find well-defined solutions to well-defined problems is probably on the path to achieving learning objectives, but no one can claim to be sure; and it might even act as a subtle impediment.

A second point, already noted above, is made by the Evaluation Committee’s report: less is more. “Coverage of the material” is the enemy of good teaching and learning. Perhaps this applies also to a syllabus conceived as a succession of “topics.” Deep understanding of fewer but more powerful key ideas and conceptual lenses is generally preferable.

A third point is that it is very hard to measure student learning when it is conceived in this more complex way. It is no wonder that we fall back on lots of dubious proxies, and fix instead on the various inputs of the teaching process such as textbooks used and topics “coverage.”

Orientation towards professional education. The Committee recommended that the entire sector should primarily be oriented towards “giv[ing] students skills to do a better job in various roles associated with improving the performance of the public sector.” The most important word in this sentence is “skills.” The Committee did not say that a descriptive-explanatory-historical understanding of policy origins and policy processes (the “policy studies” orientation) is unimportant, but it did say that the balance between this and professional problem-solving, and policy-implementing, skills should move towards the latter.

The Committee held that the Haifa program was doing well in this regard, especially singling out the education in organizational behavior and public management. Haifa therefore had no reason to dwell on this recommendation. The Federmann School allowed that it was already taking the mission of education for professional practice quite seriously, but that it was adding a faculty member (Prof. Berrebi) who could advance this goal still further. Tel Aviv also pointed to some new faculty who could do the same, although, as I have noted above, there is a difference between “could” and “probably would.” Tel Aviv, which discussed this issue more than most, also noted that the faculty had had extensive discussions about the issue and that they had also attempted to implement the Committee’s pedagogical dictum for professional education, “fewer concepts, more intensively [taught].” Ben Gurion University indicates that they have “added content with a professional orientation in the sense that students not only learn the explanation of existing problems and situations, but also what can be done to solve them.”

Such affirmations of commitment to professional education are no doubt sincere. However, good will and sincerity are not enough. Faculty who have been trained in the social sciences – and who assuredly have also excelled in their training – have a very hard time making the transition to the role of effectively educating policy professionals. It is a matter of mental set and, one might say, ideology (or “philosophy” if one wants to put a more polite spin on it). The orientation to the future which policy requires is at odds with the orientation of the social sciences to the past and the present. The future addressed by policy by definition provides no “evidence,” and is home to inescapable contingencies and uncertainties, whereas social science seeks incontrovertible evidence and rejects propositions that do not meet a certain minimal standard of reliability. Social science does what it can to screen out value judgments whereas policy finds in value judgments a mainstay and lodestar. Social science seeks the general and regards as an embarrassment the “merely” local, whereas policy sees the general as constituted by an aggregation of “locals,” each of which must, at some point, have its particularity respected. Finally, most, though not all, social science is oriented towards a single discipline whereas good policy thinking is almost always multi-disciplinary.

To be sure, conceptual and practical bridges can be built between the world of social science and that of policy and an excellent academic program tries to do so. My sole point, though, is that it takes much, and constant, effort to do so. It cannot be assumed that because a person is an excellent social scientist he or she can simply be sent off to teach students to think intelligently and constructively about policy.

The Evaluation Committee’s report did not go very deeply into how to prepare faculty to do this task. It did stress that fewer concepts should be taught more intensively, however, and Tel Aviv has noted that it is trying to do this. Neither Tel Aviv nor any other institution (besides Sapir) commented on which concepts or topics they were cutting back, or even considering cutting back. This is not surprising, since this is philosophically and educationally a very difficult task. Even more importantly, it is a task that, unless managed well, threatens to provoke professional and personal disturbance and possible conflict. Public policy programs outside of Israel have not been particularly successful at it either. An outside body like the CHE might have a useful facilitative role to play here. Or it might not. But perhaps the possibility is worth considering.

In any case, at the institutional level, the faculty should collectively take more responsibility for what goes into the curriculum, and what goes on in the classroom. I quote the Evaluation Committee at length on this important point:

While we all value the autonomy of the instructor in the classroom, the demands of instruction in public policy mean that simply allowing each instructor to teach whatever seems best under a given course title may be an inadequate managerial approach. Instructors need to be aware of the instructional needs of the program – what it is that the faculty collectively has decided that the students should learn...

Finally, a word needs to be said about the concern lest the normative slant of the problem-solving, or policy-analytic, approach undermine academic norms of objectivity and respect for scientific method. This concern is understandable. But in general it contributes to an unnecessary, and undesirable, tilt towards policy studies and away from policy analysis. One element of this concern is the belief that the policy studies approach can be “value-free” and “scientific.” But this is mistaken. Consider, for example, worker safety regulation. The policy studies approach might describe the current policies and explain how these got implemented rather than some other policies. But this framing inescapably introduces a normative element. The “other policies” chosen for comparison are likely to be either more protective of worker safety or more sensitive towards employer (and society-wide) costs. Or some of each type are chosen. In any case, the reader is assumed to be a person with normatively-based preferences. Not only is this legitimate but it is desirable: otherwise, the reader’s probable curiosity about the overall social outcome of the policy would not be satisfied. This argument can be extended to cover policy analysis as well: the researcher can explore what changes might be made and assess their relative merits as seen by a variety of stakeholders and through a variety of normative lenses, such as benefit-cost and cost-effectiveness analysis. The personal policy preferences of the researcher need not enter into the discussion at all if the researcher does not choose to introduce them.

Motivating student effort. Of special concern, from a pedagogical point of view, is the motivation of student effort and the efficient use of student time. As an input into the learning process, student time and effort could well be more important than curriculum design and faculty approach. In any case, because students often work part- or full-time and have family responsibilities, these inputs cannot be taken for granted. Nor can their quality. The Committee found that in some cases students were assigned so much reading that they did not take the assignment seriously. They either did not do it at all or else divided the labor of doing the reading within teams constituted for the purpose of coaching one another.

Looking at the various course syllabi that accompanied the institutions’ various self-evaluations and self-reports, I have been struck by the occasional syllabus that provides only a list of readings but no allocation of sub-groups of readings to assignments for specific dates. This seems like a sure way to discourage students from reading at all or, at best, to encourage end-of-term cramming.

Field (group) projects, decision-forcing cases, and negotiations course. As the Evaluation Committee pointed out, frontal lectures are often not the best way to stimulate real learning of skills and subject matters of concern to policy programs. Experiential learning through field projects (usually done by groups) is one possible approach to such learning, and some of the institutions noted in their implementation reports that they were undertaking these. However, it is also important just how these projects are coached or overseen – a matter on which the implementation self-reports are silent.

In its General Report the Evaluation Committee also recommended, in connection with pedagogical improvement, that the several institutions consider the use of group field projects, decision-forcing teaching cases, and courses on negotiations. I find in the several implementation self-reports affirmation of this first suggestion, no mention of the second, and only passing acknowledgement of the third.

I should point out, by the way, that these pedagogical issues are not better explored in other countries, such as the U.S., than they are in Israel. They are intrinsically difficult, and the career incentives for faculty to deal with them are not usually very powerful.

“Cross-fertilization.” Excepting Sapir, all the institutions reviewed mount executive training programs as well as Master’s degree programs. The Evaluation Committee recommended that there be more “cross-fertilization” between the two sorts of programs, intending mainly that the Master’s training programs benefit from more contact with the mid-career participants. While the implementation reports generally acknowledged that this would be desirable in principle, they remarked that it was difficult to do in practice. Logistical barriers often intervened. Again, this is the sort of problem for which a sector-wide effort might find some traction.

### **Efficient resource allocation**

A sectoral issue best addressed by the CHE, rather than by a task force or workshop or other sector-wide group, concerns the expenditure of resources on activities that impose high opportunity costs, especially if there are not commensurate returns in delivering educational value.

The Evaluation Committee noted, for instance, in its General Report, that outsourcing certain courses to other departments might free up resources for other uses. Of course, there might be good reasons not to do so if the courses (e.g., microeconomics) were not as generic as they might seem to an outsider but required a customized design such as only a policy program was likely to provide. Nevertheless, I did not see in the implementation self-reports any mention of the out-sourcing idea, nor its companion, the use of on-line courses or lectures or other forms of distance learning.

Master’s thesis. The Committee took a strong position opposing the writing of Master’s theses as undermining the goal of “professional” rather than “academic” training and as being a poor use of scarce resources. It called such requirements at the Master’s level “the bane of policy education in Israel.” In their responses to the Committee’s report, the institutions disagreed, sometimes vehemently, partly on the grounds that the “research” goal of thesis writing supported the training of professionals who should be able, in their work, to make use of research products. Another reason for disagreement was more practical: abolishing the opportunity – though not the requirement – to do a thesis would send a signal to prospective students that the program was of lower academic quality than those of competitor institutions.

This latter point, the anxiety over the prospective loss of competitive stature, requires a coordinated, sectoral, solution, and the CHE is probably best positioned either to provide it directly or to set in motion a process for indirectly providing it.

Although I basically agree with the Committee that the Master's thesis is an inefficient use of student and faculty resources in the context of professional education, I also recognize that the Committee might not have fully appreciated either the educational payoff to thesis research or the importance of research-related skills and sensibilities to professional working in the Israeli policy environment.

One of the counter-arguments from the institutions is that students heading for a career as policy professionals should learn to appreciate the value of high-quality policy research as a source of potential evidence as a basis for decisions and actions. The importance of research-based evidence is not at all in question; nor is the importance of sensitizing future practitioners to its value. However, trying to accomplish this by means of having students write a research-based thesis is arguably a very inefficient use of student time and effort, and of questionable efficacy besides. One might instead, for instance, pose a novel and unfamiliar problem and have students spend up to, say, six hours on the internet and in the library looking for evidence that bears on the value of alternative policy approaches to the problem. Two or three exercises of that kind would probably be a far more efficient and effective way of conveying the importance of evidence-based reasoning.

At some point the CHE and one or more institutions might go head-to-head over the continuation of thesis requirements and/or opportunities. Such a confrontation would be unfortunate, since an appropriate solution would probably involve institutions being more selective – probably much more selective – about permitting and/or encouraging the writing of theses. Haifa may be taken as exemplary here.

PhD programs. Like the Master's thesis requirement, the PhD option is a point of controversy between the Evaluation Committee and at least some of the institutions. The Evaluation Committee suggested that four PhD programs in Public Policy in Israel were more than enough to meet expected academic demand for future faculty in this field, that other and more cost-effective means to meet academic market demand and to do high-quality policy research were available, and that the PhD training in Public Policy was generally mediocre in any case. (The Committee's skepticism excluded Haifa, however, whose program the Committee endorsed.)

The Committee recommended the institutions evaluate their PhD programs with respect to time towards completion and the publication of dissertation results, and that programs "not reasonably successful by these criteria" be terminated. None of the institutions comments in their implementation self-reports on this recommendation.

Nor did any of the institutions propose to abolish their own PhD program. This is not surprising, given the probable concern over losing competitive status which we have already seen evidenced regarding the Master's thesis. If the CHE wants to trim resources for the PhD, it has to find a way to coordinate such a policy across institutions.

Probably more to the point is for the CHE to take steps to improve the quality of PhD training. The Evaluation Committee disapprovingly noted the absence of qualifying exams or required courses for PhD students. Exactly how the CHE might remedy this is beyond the scope of this report. But the drain on resources implied by what the Committee has taken to be largely ineffective PhD training is ample warrant for the CHE to become involved.

Finally, I would emphasize a point, alluded to above, about the prescriptive, or normative, nature of PhD theses as well as research in the policy field more generally. Academics are often discouraged from normative analysis on the grounds that it introduces subjective and individualistic elements into what should properly be a neutral, or "inter-subjective" consensual framework. (Sometimes the ideal is held to be "objectivity." But this term is somewhat misleading, and the idea of inter-subjectivity is usually more helpful.) Yet, as the Evaluation Committee report stresses, policy professionals in practice surely must blend both normative and positive analysis, and any program intending to train them must necessarily take this into account. One normative dimension of nearly universal interest that has certain nearly consensual inter-subjective acceptance is "efficiency" conceptualized as economists would do. Generally, it is reasonably measurable too. Other dimensions would be less consensual, and in those cases careful and explicit acknowledgement of what these are is the proper remedy for analyst and observer bias and the fear of bias.

### **III. Remaining Implementation Challenges**

In this concluding section, I summarize all the recommendations in the report up to this point and posit where the locus should plausibly be for initiating action. In doing so, I want to reiterate that these conclusions can and should be modified by those more familiar with important features of the local institutional context than I am.

#### **Actions for the institutions themselves acting independently**

All institutions (generally, except Sapir):

- Explicitly drop courses and requirements that do not realistically contribute to the capacity of Masters graduates to perform as effective policy professionals. Continue efforts to reduce "coverage" of topics and teach carefully selected skills more deeply.
- Give further consideration to dropping required Masters-level research thesis and/or to making it voluntary and/or highly selective.

- Continue shift in Masters education from “policy studies” to “policy analysis” orientation.
- Further develop departmental collective responsibility for core courses as opposed to sole individual responsibility of the instructor.
- Continue – or begin – efforts to incorporate into pedagogy: field projects (generally by groups), training in negotiations, and use of decision-forcing cases.
- Continue – or begin – efforts to cross-fertilize executive training and “regular” educational programs.
- Pay more attention to the possibilities for efficient use of resources through out-sourcing, distance learning, and other such unconventional approaches.

### Individual institutions

Sapir: none

Hebrew University:

- Review how to incorporate normative framing into “policy studies” doctoral dissertations (see Section III below for further remarks).

Tel Aviv University:

- Fulfill the stated commitment to introduce group (and perhaps field-oriented) capstone projects and to offer course on negotiations.
- Fulfill the stated commitment to teach fewer concepts more intensively.
- Continue the effort to add professionally focused management pedagogy to the curriculum.

Ben-Gurion University:

- Continue to re-focus the curriculum on education for professional practice rather than “policy studies.”
- Rethink the desirability of requiring a research-oriented master’s thesis.

Haifa University:

- Continue to work on integrating quantitative methods into the policy analysis curriculum.

### **Actions for the institutions acting collectively**

- Develop means for evaluating and crediting high-quality “policy reports” with an eye to incorporating these into faculty personnel evaluations.
- Consider the consolidation of PhD programs in fewer institutions than presently offer them.

### **Actions for faculty across institutions acting collectively**

- Develop, disseminate, and train teaching approaches that do not rely on frontal lectures.
- Find ways to incorporate normative considerations into academic and scientific policy-analytic studies without inappropriately introducing researcher bias and subjectivity.
- Find ways to prioritize the essentials of what should be taught in policy analysis programs, and to make those priorities salient at the institutional and programmatic level.

### **Actions for the CHE to consider**

Facilitate, as appropriate and necessary, actions listed above that are to be undertaken collectively by individual institutions and by faculty teaching at these institutions (e.g., by means of initiating workshops, task forces, technical assistance efforts, etc.).