

Kislev 29, 5775
December 21, 2014

To:
Ms. Maria Levinson-Or
Coordinator for QA
Quality Assessment Division (QAD)
Council for Higher Education
Jerusalem

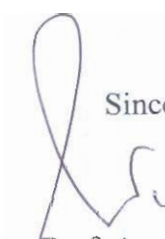
**Response to the CHE Evaluation Committee's Report and Recommendations and
Action Plan for the School of Education (SOE) at Bar-Ilan University**

Dear Ms. Maria Levinson-Or,

Enclosed please find the Response to the CHE Evaluation Committee's Report and Recommendations and the Action Plan for the School of Education (SOE) at Bar-Ilan University. The response and action plan were written by Head of the School of Education, Prof. Nirit Bauminger-Zviely, and approved by the Dean of the Faculty of Social Studies and me.

We thank the CHE Committee for the helpful recommendations and hope to continue to improve the quality of the School of Education.

Sincerely,


Prof. Amnon Albeck
Vice Rector
In charge of Quality Evaluation

Cc:
Prof. Miriam Faust, Rector
Prof. Joseph Deutsch, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences
Prof. Prof. Nirit Bauminger-Zviely, Head, School of Education

Replies to the CHE Evaluation Committee's Report and Recommendations and Action Plan for the School of Education (SOE) at Bar-Ilan University

Prof. Nirit Bauminger-Zviely, Head of the SOE
December 2014

We would like to begin by thanking the Council for Higher Education (CHE) Evaluation Committee for the Education and Science Education Study Programs for impelling us to reconsider our priorities, identify key areas of growth, reexamine our SOE's connections with the field of education in Israel and worldwide, and most importantly, rethink our role as a SOE within a research university. We are pleased to be deeply engaged in this forward thinking process of continuous exploration and growth in light of external input and feedback, with the aim of improving our SOE's relevance and effectiveness. Next, I will address the Committee's nine topics of evaluation in sequence.

A. MISSIONS AND GOALS

Major Clarification: We Do See the "Big Picture"

Differently from the impression gained by the CHE Committee, we do hold a *clear conceptualization* about the unique role and responsibilities of the SOE at our research university. Unfortunately, we did not succeed in adequately conveying our existing conceptualization to the Committee. In our recent SOE management meetings, we discussed this "big picture" and easily reached consensus on this conceptualization. Let me convey it here: We not only uphold a strong belief in the interplay between **research**, the **community "audience"/educational field**, and **pedagogy** (see Figure 1) but also make every effort to promote such links in every facet of our work. To do so, we consistently emphasizing the importance of narrowing gaps between theory and practice and of enacting dialogue with the educational field (as will be detailed below). In our SOE, we have researchers who systematically investigate and teach pedagogical issues such as learning, instruction, and curriculum. In each and every program and subprogram, our SOE maintains diverse, multiple, close connections with the community at large and with the Israeli educational field. To participate in national priority setting and policy making and thus bring our expertise to important decision-making processes, our faculty members serve on various committees in the Ministry of Education (and other ministries) spanning issues such as curriculum, evidence-based pedagogy, teacher training, educational reform, and more (detailed list of such collaborations available upon request¹). Moreover, our faculty and students implement numerous research studies and intervention projects focusing on the needs of a broad range of community stakeholders, and our faculty members serve as experts to support formal and informal educational endeavors. To name only a few of many examples would be the SOE's Laboratory Support Center faculty providing pedagogical and technical support to high-school biology laboratories and the SOE's Da-Gan (דגן) Center faculty promoting educational leadership in preschool sciences, mathematics, and technology (both under our science education program); national professional diploma program and counseling in early childhood education in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy (under our child development program); pedagogical practicum providing

¹ We would like to note that SOE is a large organization (the size of a faculty). Due to space limitation in the first report and in this one, we were unable to describe in detail many of the national and international educational initiations taking place in the SOE. Further details are readily available upon request.

guidance and supervision for teachers who work with children with autism spectrum disorder mainstreamed in regular education executing social, academic, cognitive, and other interventions (under our special education program, specialization in ASD); active academic studies in our SOE for individuals with intellectual disabilities (the Empowerment Project, under our special education program, intellectual disabilities specialization); and Nachshonim in cooperation with the Bar-Ilan BA and MA programs for Management and Administration.

Another aspect of our SOE's *big picture* that we would like to clarify is that we do hold a *clear conceptualization* of the organizational structure for our various programs/subprograms at the BA and MA levels – as centered around three main domains: human development, ecological education, and pedagogical education. (1) **Human development** focuses on the individual typical and atypical child or student, including the following programs: Child Development, Educational Counseling, Special Education. (2) **Ecological education** focuses on understanding educational organizations and management, including Leadership and Educational Administration, Non-Formal Education. (3) **Pedagogical education** focuses on deepening knowledge about learning and instruction, including Curriculum and Instruction, Science Teaching, Teacher Education. In our SOE, we believe that all three of these main domains are important and have national value and implications.

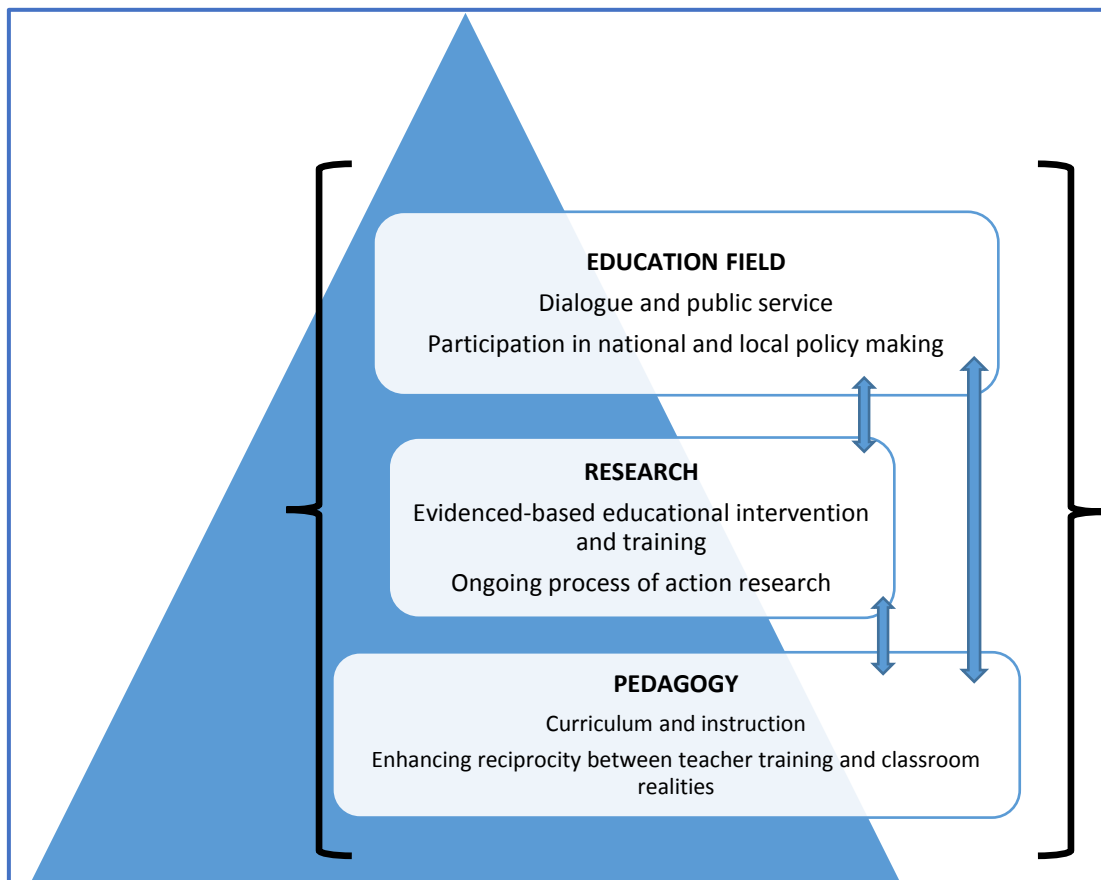


Figure 1. The "big picture" as conceptualized at the Bar-Ilan SOE.

Let me note that the issue of the role of the SOE in the specific context of a research university is a worldwide dilemma with more than one good answer, and we will continue to strategically contemplate our current conceptualizations in the coming months and years (see reply to recommendations below). Only recently, I was privileged to hear two of the leading educational researchers in the world addressing this challenging issue at the Mandel Institute for Leadership in

Education, Jerusalem (November, 2014). Both Prof. Lee Shulman – Professor Emeritus from Stanford Graduate School of Education, President Emeritus of the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching, and a past president of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) – as well as Prof. Michael J. Feuer – Dean of the Graduate School of Education & Human Development at George Washington University, who was recently nominated by President Obama (October 2014) to serve on the U.S. National Academy Board of Education Science – were in agreement that the unequivocal, complicated issue of the SOE's particular role in a research university context requires ongoing thinking and conceptualization.

Reply to Recommendations

The Bar-Ilan SOE has a new management team that started its term in October 2014. In line with the CHE Evaluation Committee's recommendations, one of my first declared targets as new Head of the SOE was to establish a strategic faculty committee that will focus on the development of a strategic plan for the SOE for the next five years. Discussions about the committee have begun in our management meetings. We intend to nominate a strategic committee that will represent all school leadership levels (e.g., senior and junior and emeritus professors, teachers) and all of our various programs. I will head the committee. It will communicate with all heads of specific SOE programs and with policy makers in the Israeli educational systems, will identify international targets and aims in education research, and will maintain an ongoing process of evaluation of its missions and goals. The committee will be nominated within 6 months and will deliver its recommendations and benchmarks within a year. Committee work will be transparent to tenure-line faculty members, who will review its activities in an ongoing manner.

B. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Reply to Recommendations

As seen in our reply above regarding our mission and goals, we are aware that we did not adequately convey our SOE's existing organizational structure in our former report. We also recognize that we may want to change our structure to in various ways once we begin our intense meetings of the new strategic planning committee under new management. We thank the committee members for asking us to develop a strategic plan that will clarify priorities and identify key areas of growth.

C. STUDY PROGRAMS

Reply to Recommendations

The Evaluation Committee observed in general that (a) the current range of programs is driven more by the ability to attract students than by pressing educational needs of society at large and (b) the school has many separate study programs with few interconnections. Our response is four-pronged:

- Attracting student is indeed important to SOE, but we would like to suggest a different view to the notion of "student attraction." We believe that students will be attracted by state-of-the-art programs where evidence-based knowledge is delivered by researchers who are leaders in their field. We feel that we offer such programs in our SOE. As a matter of fact, we are almost the only department in the Faculty of Social Sciences that succeeds in maintaining consistent rates of student enrollment and even increasing enrollment in some programs (e.g., teacher education). We are proud of this impressive achievement in light of the tough competition between university SOEs in Israel and the proliferation of colleges. We will expand on this issue below, in relation to each program type (BA, MA, Teacher Education, and PhD).

- When taking into consideration the big picture of the suggested three-part SOE organizational structure described above along the three main domains (human development, ecological education, and pedagogical education), we do not think that all of our various programs should be interconnected. Yet, we do agree that better interconnections might be established among programs within each

domain through the work of the strategic committee. We would like to note that, currently, we already do have some important interconnections between programs and subprograms (e.g., special education and its subprograms), and fruitful cooperation between researchers from different programs (e.g., child development and special education).

- We also would like to draw attention to the fact that our SOE developed a number of new programs and subprograms over the last five years, based on emerging educational, policy, and communication needs. For example: (1) We developed the special education program and its subprograms in autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disabilities, to address these growing populations' needs (1 in 100 children in the education system have ASD, and 13,000 children have ID). (2) We redesigned our structure to differentiate between special education and learning disabilities, in line with Ministry of Education policy. (3) We developed a cognitive-behavioral therapy specialization in Educational Counseling as a part of the advanced professional development for educational counselors. (4) We developed two main specializations for the practicum in child development to deepen professionalism in these evidence-based domains pinpointed for their growing importance for understanding child development: early childhood educational intervention and an innovative theoretical and practical specialization in sensory integration. (5) We developed a subprogram in informal education in the MA program for management (the only one in Israel) that empower professionals who work in non-formal organizations such as community centers and with at-risk populations.

- We do agree that we should invest more efforts in developing the *pedagogical education* domain, including learning (especially but not only science and mathematics), instruction, and curriculum in line with the development of other programs (which we emphasize are not less important in terms of national needs).

- The Evaluation Committee members reported that the curriculum program is on frozen status, but that is not correct. The program is active but has major difficulties to recruit students every year. We accept the Committee's recommendation to recheck our programs in this domain and to suggest ways of development.

BA Programs: The Evaluation Committee recommended curtailing BA programs that do not lead directly to a professional certificate (except for special education). Some of the BA programs in our SOE establish the foundation for the MA program in the same field (e.g., educational counseling and management); therefore, we do not think that a BA program at a research university should necessarily lead to educational practice or provide a professional certificate. The BA programs in the SOE are organized under the umbrella of two main domains: the individual child (special education and educational counseling) and the educational system (educational management). Having said that, the strategic committee will reevaluate its BA programs in terms of research considerations and national needs.

MA Programs:

- The Evaluation Committee observed in general a lack of emphasis on the area of pedagogical education (instruction, learning and curriculum, teacher quality and educational assessment). We accept the Committee's recommendation and will place greater emphasis on development of this domain as well as on the MA programs' links with the teacher education program (see below). We intend to ask for a new faculty position in this area for next year.

- The Evaluation Committee commented that some programs are variations of one another (special education and its sub-specializations). We are proud of our major program in special education, which provides students from all the sub-specializations with a common cutting-edge theoretical foundation for understanding diverse disabilities (courses on brain and language, neuropsychology, social-emotional development, sensory integration, etc.). The sub-specialization tracks provide students with deeper theoretical specification and practical courses that develop

professionalism and expertise in a specific disability (ASD, ID, LD). Feedback over the years from students and from stakeholders in the education system is very positive. The combination of theory and practice including general and specific courses seems to be very sound and to prepare students to play a significant role in meeting the needs of these individuals with disability and their families and communities.

- The Evaluation Committee recommended that Science, Halacha and Education must either be placed in another unit of the university or should be aligned with best practices in science education and the learning of science. We are aware that this program is not well connected with the various other educational programs at SOE. We started a discussion with the program leaders to either implement changes in the program for a better match to the SOE, or to rethink its placement. However, it is important to note that this program is not related to science education. The focus of the program is applying the scientific method and educational methods to Halachic issues. Thus, even if the program remains in the SOE, it will still be differentiated from the science education program. We thank the Committee for bringing this specific course to our attention and agree that we should invest thinking about the education part of the program. We agree that as-is, the link is too weak.

PhD Program: We thank the Committee members and accept their comments with regard to the PhD program at SOE. We already started implementing several steps in light of your recommendations, as described below. However, it should be noted that due to budgetary limitations our capability to support these students' participation in international conferences is very limited.

The first important step that already took place was that we established a PhD committee, headed by Prof. Adina Shamir, with two additional faculty members. One is an expert in qualitative methodology, Prof. Deborah Court, and the other one is an expert in quantitative methodology, Dr. Joseph Klein. This PhD committee, together with me, the Head of SOE, has begun to examine several areas needing change in line with the Evaluation Committee's recommendations:

(1) The three stages of the PhD. seminar program (before approval of the proposal; after approval; and after data analyses, in the writing stage) was examined by the PhD. Committee, and students' feedback was also collected. It seems that the first-stage seminar (before approval of the proposal) is less necessary, due to the fact that students at this stage keep in close contact with their doctoral supervisor. Instead, the committee is considering offering two advanced courses, one in quantitative and another in qualitative methods, in line with the recommendation by the CHE Committee.

(2) The content of the two other PhD. seminars will be reexamined in terms of the Evaluation Committee's recommendations, with an emphasis on providing students the opportunity to present their work and helping them become active researchers. Issues to be examined include: requiring/encouraging participation in at least one national conference, provision of assistance in preparing a presentation for a conference, furnishing help to write grants and papers, helping doctoral candidates write a review on papers in their area, etc. In addition, students in the PhD program will be required to participate in department colloquia, as part of being active researchers in SOE.

- The suggested changes will be discussed by the PhD committee and the required changes will be implemented from the beginning of the next academic year.

Teacher Education Program:

- As for today teacher education is organized as separate unit in SOE. As described in our reply to the Organizational Structure topic above, we aim to develop better connections between the Teacher Education program and some other SOE programs under the *pedagogical education* domain. This new suggested organization will enable better links between the teacher education program and the programs of science teaching, instruction, learning, and curriculum. The strategic committee will examine this suggested structure for the SOE and will consider the possibility of including courses given by senior faculty members in the teacher education program and to the content of the courses, in

line with national and international goals.

- It should be noted that as part of the changes in the new management team of the SOE, the Teacher Education program has a new Head, Prof. Yaacov Yablon, who has also already initiated a separate steering committee specifically for developing a new strategic plan for the teacher education program. This steering committee has already started to map short- and long-term needs and to reexamine the curriculum in each of the 16 various tracks. The steering committee consists of all track directors and closely collaborates with faculty members, field work coordinators, students, and the administrative staff. Some important steps were already initiated by this steering committee, including the ones described next.

- A new committee was established – a curriculum committee – to examine the development of new integrative programs (BA, MA, and teacher certification) in the spirit of *Nachshonim*. In addition, the heads of the 16 tracks were asked to define the unique role of their program within the research university context. However, it is important to note here that the best practitioners are not always the best researchers; therefore, better integration with SOE faculty members in the pedagogical education domain may lead to more and improved research projects. We will observe how researchers in the pedagogical domain tend to collaborate with practitioners from the teacher education's various tracks and consider how best to support and enhance those collaborations. Also, this curriculum committee will reexamine the curricula for the general and specific teacher education courses.

- A new position was created as Head of fieldwork and microteaching, and one of the program's leading faculty members was appointed to the position. All aspects of fieldwork will be reexamined, better coordination between the different tracks will be suggested, and new models for student training will be examined.

- Discussion has begun with leaders in the Ministry of Education for each of the 16 tracks, to identify national needs for each of the tracks.

- Administrative issues are being examined, and a new process of student recruitment is being developed to simplify the process of enrollment to the program.

D. HUMAN RESOURCES/FACULTY

We were pleased to learn that the Committee members were impressed by the qualifications of the faculty members at SOE as well as by faculty members' dedication to their students. The Committee also found SOE faculty members to be productive in terms of standard academic metrics of research, publishing, and generating external funding. The strong dedication of SOE faculty members was emphasized especially in light of the very high student-to-staff ratio. The Evaluation Committee recommended recruiting new faculty members to SOE based on sober assessment of the most crucial educational areas to pursue at the national level.

Reply to Recommendations

We are aware of the fact that we operate at a remarkably high ratio of students to staff, most critically between graduate students and mentors. As the Committee noted, this is the result of the retirement of senior faculty members and the recruitment of young faculty members to replace them who cannot yet provide the kind of mentoring needed by graduate students. This ratio is already affecting our ability to mentor MA and PhD students and unfortunately is leading to a downward trend that is dangerous for a SOE in a research university – toward enrolling more MA students to the non-research track than to the research track and also toward reducing the numbers of doctoral students. We definitely would like to recruit new senior faculty members, and we already started a process of meetings with the Dean of the Faculty for Social Sciences to present the troubling information about the gap between the faculty members that we lost and the ones we received to the SOE. In our discussions, we presented the fact that we need two faculty members for next year's program, one in the area recommended by the Committee (instruction, learning and curriculum) and another in the area

of human development where we lost many senior faculty members. Indeed, the strategic planning committee may set other priorities for faculty recruitment for the years to follow. Upon the recommendations that will be made by our strategic committee, we will continue planning our next faculty recruitment areas with the belief that all three domains are equally important. Currently, we are only setting in motion the plan for the immediate needs of next year. We already started a process of searching for new faculty members.

E. STUDENTS

Reply to Recommendations

We accept the CHE Evaluation Committee's recommendation to bring the student-faculty ratio into compliance with the university average. This issue should be supported by the university authorities, by either reducing the student number in our various programs and/or support recruitment of new faculty members as noted before.

F. TEACHING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Reply to Recommendations

Based on the recommendation of the CHE Committee members, we decided to establish a Learning and Instruction Committee that will be headed by Dr. Eli Schechter. Its mandate will be to develop various methods for improving learning outcomes as well as to examine the development of learning centers at SOE that will be available for students in the different programs, but most frequently for students in the *pedagogical education* domain (e.g., teacher education program). This committee will aim to integrate between the various educational resources that exist in the SOE (e.g., pedagogical center, library, LEV simulation center).

G. RESEARCH

Reply to Recommendations

The ranking system of SOE was based on the criteria of the Faculty of Social Sciences. This has now changed with the new Dean and Rector, and more objective criteria are requested based on ISI and/or SJR.

H. INFRASTRUCTURE

Reply to Recommendations

We are in agreement with the Evaluation Committee's recommendation that each faculty member should be provided with computers and software packages that are necessary to carry out their academic duties. Unfortunately, the SOE does not have the resources to provide this to each of our faculty members. We will be very thankful if the university adopts this recommendation and provides us with the necessary resources.

I. SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS

Reply to Recommendations

See Mission and Goals section above.

Summary of Essential* Recommendations and Replies	
Evaluation Committee recommendation	Steps toward implementation
1-2: SOE will establish a strategic faculty committee for	We already started the process of thinking about SOE strategic planning within the new SOE management team, which will establish a faculty

the purpose of strategic planning within six months.	committee within 6 months that will submit its recommendations within a year.
3. SOE will reconsider its BA and MA programs and provide strategic vision that will connect the various programs offered with the essential needs facing Israeli society.	We provided the "big picture" conceptualization of the various BA and MA programs within SOE under three main, equally important domains: pedagogical education, human development, and ecological education. However, we will operate to create better links between the various programs in each domain for our MA programs as we will examine the necessity of our BA various programs. The strategic planning committee will also examine the necessity and possibility of de-freezing the early education program at the BA level and the information and communication technology in education at the MA level.
4. <i>Science, Halacha and Education</i> must be either placed in another university unit or to be better connected with SOE content and aims.	The SOE management team already started negotiations with the program leaders, and we are examining each of the options. The aim is to reach a decision in the near future. We also need the university's support to replace the SOE unit for this program if such a decision will be taken.
5. The role of a teacher education program at a research university should be reexamined and its relation with the other SOE programs should be considered in the spirit of <i>Nachshonim</i> (e.g., programs that integrate BA, MA and teacher certification).	As described above, the new head of Teacher Education already started a process of examining the recommendations made by the committee, and he established several sub-committees within teacher education. In addition, we believe that the suggested structure of including teacher education within the pedagogical education domain will better connect this program to SOE senior academic staff and to research. This issue should be examined by the strategic planning committee.
6. Faculty search must be based on sober assessment of the most crucial educational needs on the national level, such as mathematics and science education, early childhood education, educational access, educational assessment, and teacher education.	We agree that educational needs are an important source for faculty search; however, we do not necessarily accept the defined nation's needs as stated by the members of the Committee. We think that all three domains of human development, ecological education, and pedagogical education are equally important. We think the faculty search should be based on the areas where we lost senior faculty members. We started a process within the university to obtain approval for two new faculty members for next year (in human development and pedagogical education), and we plan to ask for another faculty member in pedagogical education and qualitative methodologies for the year to follow and in the ecological education field. This will depend on decisions taken by the strategic committee at the end of its work, after a year, and on university policy.
7. The university must bring student-faculty ratio into compliance with the university average, and as recommended by the CHE.	We completely agree with this recommendation and will be pleased to reduce student numbers. If this is not possible, due to university budget limitations, we will appreciate the university's approval of recruitment of new faculty members.
8. SOE should use consistent means to rank international journals.	SOE will develop a consistent means of ranking in collaboration with the new Dean and Rector.
9. Faculty members must be provided with computers and software packages necessary to carry out the academic duties.	We agree and look for university support in this matter.

*Replies for the advisable changes are described above in the full text, within the related areas.