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Title of the Paper¹ For-profit Mid-career Programs as a Second Chance for Disadvantaged Social Groups

Abstract:

Israeli universities have recently established non-profit mid-career programs, aimed at holders of junior managerial positions, who wish to acquire a Master's degree and improve their status and salary. These programs charge particularly high tuition fees and are highly criticized on institutional and social grounds.

We analyze the programs as a second-chance system, which provides working people with the opportunity to win a Master's degree from a prestigious university. This population was deprived of this opportunity prior to the establishment of the programs due to social and educational disadvantages.

The sample includes 580 students of for-profit and regular programs in the social science faculty, Tel Aviv University, Israel. A questionnaire was administered to all students who took these programs in 2006, 2007, and 2008. The data is analyzed using logistic regression. The main findings are as follows: Students in the for-profit programs are older than regular students and have lower achievements in their undergraduate studies. The for-profit programs serve as a second chance to the lower stratum of the dominant ethnic group and to the higher stratum of the disadvantaged ethnic group. Students need at least one asset, a bachelor's degree in a prestigious field or graduation from a prestigious higher education institution in order to enroll in these programs. The paper discusses theoretical and practical implications of the findings.

Key words: Approximately 20 Words

Higher education; Israel; for-profit programs; mid-career; Master's degree; second chance in education; ethnic inequality; socioeconomic inequality; field of study; elite universities; non-elite universities; second-tier institutions; logistic regression; main and interaction effects; policy implications.

Authors and/or co-authors short biographical statement: 150-200 words

Professor Hanna Ayalon is Professor at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tel Aviv University. Her research focuses on educational inequality, particularly the curriculum as a source of inequality, and inequality in higher education. She published in *Sociology of Education*, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *Comparative Education Review*, *European Journal of Sociology*, *The British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *Teachers college Record*, *Sex Roles*, *Higher Education*, and *Higher Education Policy*. Recent

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publications: Audrey Addi-Racah, Hanna Ayalon. From High School to Higher Education: Curricular Policy and Post-Secondary Enrollment in Israel. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 30, 31–50, 2008; Hanna Ayalon, Eric Grodsky, Adam Gamoran, Abraham Yogeve, Diversification and Inequality in Higher Education: A Comparison between Israel and the United States. *Sociology of Education* 81, 211-241, 2008. Currently she is studying the effects of the mobility channels of fathers on the enrollment of their children in higher education.

Dr. Gila Menahem is the chair of the Department of Public Policy and Senior Lecturer at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tel–Aviv University. Her research interests focus on the study of processes of policy formulation and policy paradigms. She has published in the *Journal of Public Policy*, *Journal of social Policy*, *Work and Occupations* and *Urban studies*. Her recent study on the transformation of higher education in Israel was published in *Governance: an International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions* in 2008. She has co-edited a book titled *Public Policy in Israel* and is the co-editor of three volumes of *Social Processes and Public Policy in Tel-Aviv-Yafo*.

Paper

For-profit Mid-career Programs as a Second Chance for Disadvantaged Social Groups

Higher education systems have undergone notable changes in recent decades. The first and most obvious is their remarkable expansion (Meyer et al. 2007), accompanied by significant diversification. Higher education is no longer dominated by research universities, aimed at the accumulation and distribution of knowledge, and many higher education systems offer now professional programs, which are labor market-oriented (Breneman, Pusser and Turner 2006; Teichler 1996).

One of the reasons for this change is the increasing proportion of older students, who are career- and not education-oriented (Breneman et al. 2006). This is particularly true for students who have already joined the labor market and wish to upgrade their position by acquiring education. Higher education systems respond to the demands of this population by offering practical rather than intellectually centered programs. One of the consequences of this process is a change in the meaning of the Master's degree. Some Master's programs are no

longer a step towards doctorate studies, but the path to an independent professional degree (Yogev forthcoming).

One of the changes in higher education is the establishment of for-profit (FP) degree-granting programs in special institutions or within traditional universities. Unlike the traditional higher education programs, these focus on training for employment and treat the students as clients.

FP programs have been subjected to severe criticism, on institutional and social grounds. On the institutional ground the criticism focuses on their economic orientation. The operation of the new programs is based on economic considerations, and a clear academic logic is missing (Yogev, Livneh and Mcdossi 2008; Barnett 2003). Another line of criticism attacks these program's academic standards. Their concentration on economic success stops these programs matching the selectivity of non-profit programs, thereby lowering their standards (Yogev et al. 2008). Critics also argue that they downgrade the academic profession (Breneman 2006). From the social aspect the criticism is leveled at the high tuition fees demanded by the FP programs. These widen social gaps as only wealthy students can afford them (Breneman 2006).

Supporters of FP programs take a different view of their social aspects. They claim that these programs open the doors of higher education to populations whose interest in post-secondary education is instrumental rather than intellectual (Yogev et al. 2008).

The lower selectivity of the FP [programs, which is criticized from the institutional aspect, can be differently viewed from the social aspect. Since lower class students have higher odds of failing to meet the high standards of the selective higher education programs, lowering the standards can reduce social inequality in enrollment. This argument may seem unrealistic in view of the high tuition charged by FP programs: how can we regard institutions meant for wealthy populations as moderating social inequality? We argue that this claim is

indeed unrealistic for conventional students, but it makes sense for older students who have already joined the labor market. In the analysis of traditional students' enrollment in higher education their social position is measured according to their parents' socioeconomic achievements (e.g. Shavit, Arum and Gamoran 2007). It is different for students who have already joined the labor market, and wish to upgrade their professional status by acquiring education. These students may have originated in lower socioeconomic strata, but after joining the labor market their social position is no longer defined by their parents' achievements. Members of the workforce who have attained some degree of professional and economic success, and can afford the fees charged by the FP institutions, may try to convert their own economic progress into educational credentials. For this population, the FP programs have the potential of serving as a compensation for initial disadvantages.

We follow this logic here, and analyze FP mid-career academic programs in Israel as a second chance for students who suffered initial disadvantages. We ask whether ethnically, socioeconomically and educationally disadvantaged populations are more heavily represented in FP than in regular programs in similar areas of study.

Higher education and FP mid-career programs in Israel

The Israeli higher education system is stratified according to several dimensions. There is an inner stratification among the universities, which Yogev (2000) divides into elite and non-elite ("target") institutions. The elite universities concentrate on graduate studies and absorb better students, whereas the non-elite concentrate on undergraduate studies. There is also an inner stratification among the colleges, which are quite diversified (Ayalon and Yogev 2006). The two types of inner stratification are secondary, however, to the stratification between the colleges, which are considered the second tier of higher education, and the universities, which constitute the first tier (Ayalon and Yogev 2006).

Another source of stratification in Israeli higher education is field of study. Israeli undergraduate students enroll in a specific field right from the start. The prestige of fields of study mainly depends on their selectivity. Usually, fields that lead to economically rewarding professions (i.e. business, economics, law, engineering, computer sciences, and medicine) are highly valued. The social sciences take an intermediate position. The humanities and education are usually non-selective and are considered the least prestigious (Ayalon and Yogevev 2005).

The idea of expanding the system by establishing FP programs in the non-profit publicly-supported universities is mainly the result of a severe financial crisis, beginning in the late 1990s. Because of this, as well as the increasing competition with the colleges for students, the universities initiated FP programs for the Master's degree (Yogevev et al. 2008). The programs are mainly intended holders of senior positions in the labor market.

The FP programs, which naturally are not publicly supported, operate within the public non-profit Israeli universities, and as such constitute a unique entity. To sidestep the long approval procedure demanded by the Council for Higher Education (CHE) for new programs, most FP programs parallel older regular programs. Still, there are significant differences between the two types. The FP programs are shorter than the usual Master's programs. They last three semesters, including summer, which sum to one year. The regular programs are at least two years. Classes in the FP programs are concentrated in two days a week, and all students study together. The students pay at least twice as much as students in the regular programs. Yogevev (forthcoming), who studied FP programs at Tel Aviv University, reports that unlike the regular programs, they do not include elective courses, and all students follow the same curriculum. He also reports that in all fields of study the FP programs are less selective than the regular ones.

Second chance in education and the for-profit mid-career degree programs

Second-chance systems are nonselective channels which provide an additional opportunity mainly to dropouts from the mainstream of education. Being mostly aimed at students from underprivileged strata, they are viewed as a potential mechanism for moderating educational inequalities in society (Brint and Karabel 1989; Shavit, Ayalon, and Kurlaender 2002).

Previous research shows that second-chance structures often miss their target population. Instead of improving the opportunities of underprivileged students they serve middle class students who failed in mainstream education and whose family resources enable them to take advantage of these additional opportunities (Lee and Frank 1990; Ayalon 1990). This pattern is reflected by Raffe (1979) who, in analyzing second-chance (the 'alternative route') in Britain, distinguished "alternative in the social sense" from "alternative in the educational sense". The first refers to an alternative for students with social disadvantages, the second to an alternative for students with educational disadvantages.

We analyze the FP programs as a second chance for a prestigious Master's degree for possessors of a Bachelor's degree who, we assume, could not attain it via the regular programs due to earlier social and/or educational disadvantages. "Social disadvantage" refers to disadvantages of socioeconomic or ethnic origin; "educational disadvantage" refers to educational deficiencies: graduating in a non-prestigious field, graduating from a second-tier institution, and low achievements in undergraduate studies.

In Israel, as in many other countries, remarkable social and ethnic inequality exists in higher education. Lower socioeconomic strata and members of underprivileged ethnic groups are underrepresented in higher education (Addi-Racah and Ayalon 2008). The disadvantaged ethnic groups are Jews of Middle Eastern and North African origin (usually called in Israel Mizrachim, easterners) and Arabs. The odds of members of these two groups obtaining the matriculation diploma, a prerequisite for higher education, are relatively low (ibid.).

Consequently, they have low enrollment rates in higher education. The disadvantage continues on the path from undergraduate to graduate studies (i.e. CBS 2007).

Our major purpose is to study whether the FP programs serve as a second chance in the social sense for disadvantaged groups and / or as a second chance in the educational sense, for members of privileged groups.

Data and Method

The data are based on a survey conducted by the authors in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Tel Aviv University. As noted, Tel Aviv is classified, according to Yogev's typology, as an elite university. It is the university with the largest number of FP programs—over 20, whereas other universities have less than 10 programs each (Yogev et al. 2008). The Social Sciences faculty conducts four programs. We analyze two of them, public policy and labor studies, which parallel similar regular programs. The regular programs are prestigious and in great demand. The prestige of Tel Aviv University and the prestige of the regular programs contribute to the status of the FP programs, which are highly valued and demanded.

Obviously, we cannot claim that our sample represents the entire population of FP programs in Israel, but we believe that the processes occurring in it represents those of parallel FP and regular programs elsewhere. We conducted three waves of surveys: in 2006, 2007 and 2008. The questionnaires were administered to the whole cohort of the FT and the parallel regular program of those years. Students in the FP and regular programs answered a questionnaire composed mainly of closed items. They were asked about their socio-demographic characteristics, educational background, and labor market position. The final sample consists of 580 students: 326 in regular programs and 254 in FP programs.

Variables

Socio-demographic characteristics

Gender

Age

Ethnic origin includes three dummy variables: Mizrachim, coded 1 for students who they or their fathers were born in the Middle East or North Africa, 0 otherwise. Non-Mizrachi Jews, coded 1 for students of European or American origin and for second-generation Israeli Jews, 0 otherwise; Arab, coded 1 for Arabs, 0 for Jews.

Parental education – Years of schooling of the parent with the higher educational achievement.

Father's occupational prestige, according to the scale of Semyonov, Lewin-Epstein and Mandel (2000).

Educational history

Major in undergraduate studies:

Humanities (humanities and education – 1, other majors – 0)

Social sciences (social sciences – 1, other majors – 0).

Other – includes social work, nursing, exact sciences, life sciences. Due to their small numbers, these majors were included in the same category, although they differ in prestige and selectivity.

Institution of undergraduate studies

Elite university (elite university – 1, otherwise – 0)

Non-elite university (non-elite university – 1, otherwise – 0)

College (college – 1, otherwise – 0)

Graduation score, final grade in the undergraduate studies.

Labor market characteristics:

Current income

Method

We use logistic regression to compare students of the FP programs with those of the regular programs. We perform three models. The first model includes the sociodemographic characteristics except age, which is more relevant to the current labor market position of the respondent. The second adds the educational variables to the model. The third model adds variables related to current labor market position: income and age. The models include three interactions: ethnic origin with father's occupational status, undergraduate major with institution, and parental education with income. To achieve a better interpretation of the interactions we centered parental education and father's occupational prestige around their means. Due to the small number of Arab students in the sample (23) we were unable to include them in the multivariate analysis. Most variables include small numbers of missing values. We introduced dummy variables, coded 1 for missing values, 0 otherwise.

Results

Descriptive results

The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. The differences between students in the FP and regular programs are seen to be in the expected direction. The proportion of the disadvantaged ethnic groups in the FP programs is higher than it is in the regular programs.

Students of Mizrachi origin constitute 32% of the students in the FP programs, whereas their proportion in the regular programs is only 24%. Arabs constitute about 6% in the FP programs and only half of it in the regular ones. Students in the FP programs are also characterized by lower parental education (13 versus 14 years of schooling), and fathers' lower occupational prestige (46 versus 50). The regular programs of both public policy and labor studies particularly cater to women, who constitute 75% of the students in these programs. The FP programs are more attractive to male students: women constitute only 53% of the students in these programs.

Differences in the educational variables also place the students of the FP programs in a relatively disadvantaged position. Twenty-eight percent of the students in the FP programs majored in the non-prestigious humanities and education in their undergraduate studies, as against 15% of the students in the regular programs. Continuity of field of study is more frequent among students in the regular programs: 67% of the regular students studied social sciences as undergraduates, compared with 50% of the students in the FP programs (see also Yogev et al. 2008). Students in the FP programs are more often graduates of non-elite universities than students in the regular programs, 28 versus 42% respectively. Students in the FP programs graduated with lower grades than the regular students, 83 versus 87. As expected, students in the FP programs are older than students in the regular programs (40 versus 31 years), and they have higher income. All differences, except studying at a college, are statistically significant.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Multivariate analysis

Ethnic origin is the most significant sociodemographic characteristic regarding enrolling in the FP versus the regular programs. It retains its main effect and its interaction with father's

occupational prestige in all three models. Model 3 shows that for students with average father's occupational status, the odds of Mizrachi students studying in a FP versus a regular program are about 2 times ($e^{0.719}=2.052$) as large as those of non-Mizrachi students. The negative sign of the coefficient of father's occupational status, which reaches the threshold of statistical significance, implies that for non-Mizrachi students better social background decreases the odds of studying in the FP programs. The interaction between ethnic origin and father's occupational prestige shows that social background operates differently for the disadvantaged ethnic group. For this group, higher social background increases the odds of enrolling in the FP versus the regular programs. In other words, the FP programs serve as compensation for initial socioeconomic disadvantages mainly for members of the dominant ethnic group.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Parental education does not have a significant main effect in any of the three models. Gender has a negative significant effect in the first two, indicating that the FP programs cater more than the regular ones to male students. The coefficient of female became smaller and lost its statistical significance in the third model. An additional analysis (not reported) showed that the coefficient lost its statistical significance after the inclusion of current income in the model. It appears that women, whose lower income in the Israeli labor market is well documented (e.g. Haberfeld and Cohen 2007), find it hard to pay the high tuition charged by the FP programs. After controlling for income, gender difference in program type disappears, suggesting that gender differences in enrollment are more a matter of economic resources than of different tastes.

The educational disadvantage of the students in the FP programs is obvious in the 2nd and 3rd models. Increase in the graduation score decreases the odds of enrolling in the FP versus the regular program. Score does not interact with any variable, implying that the FP

programs serve as a second chance for lower achievers, regardless of social origin or educational history.

The main effects of humanities in Model 3 shows, *ceteris paribus*, that graduates who majored in the humanities and education at elite universities have odds about 5.5 times ($e^{1.719}=5.749$) higher than those of their fellow graduates who majored in the social sciences of enrolling in the FP versus the regular programs. The interaction between college and humanities reveals that this pattern does not hold for college graduates. For this group, students who majored in the humanities and education are as likely as students who majored in the social sciences to enroll in the FP versus the regular programs ($e^{1.701-1.742}=0.960$). The coefficient of the interaction between college and humanities does not reach statistical significance, but we cannot ignore its size and implications. The interaction between non-elite university and humanities is small and statistically insignificant, implying that the enrollment patterns of graduates of non-elite universities who majored in the humanities are similar to those of graduates of elite universities. The FP programs serve as a means for upgrading field of study mainly for graduates of the first but not the second tier of higher education.

The picture is even sharper for students who majored in other fields in their undergraduate studies. The main effect of other is positive. Although it does not reach statistical significance it hints at a certain tendency of graduates of elite universities who majored in these fields to enroll in the FP programs. The interaction effects show that for college graduates, and to some degree graduates of non-elite universities, the picture is reversed: social sciences majors tend more than majors in other fields to enroll in the FP programs. The main effects of institution further clarify the picture. Among social sciences majors, graduates of colleges are about 9 times ($e^{2.209}=9.107$) more likely than graduates of elite universities to enroll in the FP programs. The comparison between non-elite and elite

universities yields a similar pattern, although the difference is much more moderate ($e^{0.789}=2.201$).

The main effects of major and institution, and their interaction, reveal that the FP programs serve graduates of elite universities who majored in fields other than the social sciences to get a prestigious Master's degree in this field. College graduates, and to some extent graduates of non-elite universities, use the FP programs to get a prestigious Master's degree in their original field of study. These students use the FP programs to upgrade their higher education institution rather than their field of study.

The effects of age and income follow our expectations. Older age increases the odds of enrollment in the FP versus the regular programs. Higher income operates in the same direction. This is expected, as most students in the regular programs are employed in temporary work, whereas most students in the FP programs have already started their careers. More noteworthy is the interaction between income and parental education. The effect is positive, implying that increase in parental years of schooling increases the effect of income on the odds of enrolling in the FP versus the regular programs. In other words, children of better educated parents are more inclined to use the FP programs to convert their economic achievements into educational credentials.

Comparison of the Pseudo R^2 of the three models indicates the relative importance of the three variable sets. The model that includes only sociodemographic characteristics improves the model fit by about 6%. The inclusion of the educational variables improves the fit by about 17%. Age and income, which are related to current labor market position, improve the fit by an additional 25%. Clearly, the educational and the labor market variables are more significant than the socio-demographic variables in shaping enrollment in the FP versus the regular programs.

Conclusions

The paper examined whether for-profit (FP) programs provide a second opportunity to students of disadvantaged social origins ("second chance in the social sense"), thus moderating educational inequalities, or to low achievers of privileged groups ("second chance in the educational sense"), thus maintaining or even enhancing educational inequalities.

This examination is timely in view of several developments on the educational scene in recent years: diversification of higher education, emerging policies of its marketization, and rising trends of lifelong learning. The confluence of these three trends creates both supply of a variety of FP programs in higher education institutions and demand for higher education by populations at advanced stages of their occupational careers.

Analysis of students in parallel FP and regular programs at an elite university in Israel showed that the FP channel provides a second chance to students whose social and educational disadvantages limited their educational opportunities at earlier stages of their life. The programs serve as a second chance in the educational sense for all their students. The graduation scores of students in the FP programs are lower than those of students in the regular programs, regardless of their social origin. The FP programs also help students to upgrade their undergraduate experience. Graduates of elite universities upgrade their area of study, whereas college graduates, many of them with Bachelor's degrees in more prestigious areas of study, upgrade their higher education institution. This pattern reveals an exchange between field and institution. Students who join the FP programs possess at least one asset, namely a prestigious field from an elite institution.

The findings show that students of disadvantaged ethnic origin are represented in the FP more than in the regular programs. Social background operates differently among the two Jewish ethnic groups. Among the ethnically disadvantaged groups, socioeconomic advantaged

increases the relative odds of enrolling in the FP programs. The opposite is true for the dominant ethnic groups: here lower socioeconomic characteristics increase the odds of enrolling in the FP programs.

What are the social implications of the FP programs? Our findings allow a tentative generalization that FP programs provide a second opportunity for the lower stratum of the dominant ethnic group, and for the higher stratum of the disadvantaged ethnic group. The programs moderate, thus, ethnic and social inequality in education, but only to a limited degree. They moderate ethnic inequality by opening the way to prestigious Master's degrees at elite universities before the disadvantage ethnic group; they do likewise regarding socioeconomic inequality by opening new opportunities to the lower stratum of the dominant ethnic group. They seem less relevant for the double disadvantaged – those who belong to the lower stratum of the disadvantaged ethnic group.

Our findings have some policy implications both for higher education institutions and for state policy makers. One implication regarding higher education policy stems from the fact that students at elite universities who majored in the humanities have higher odds of turning to FP programs in order to study fields that are demanded in the labor market. In a context where the low enrollment in fields of little demand in the labor market leads to the closing of departments, an avenue that allows graduates to study more demanded areas may increase enrollment in the humanities at the undergraduate stage.

An additional policy implication has to do with the overall social implications of such programs. As our findings show, FP programs, by enabling older students to use their self-acquired resources, offer a second opportunity to disadvantaged groups. At the same time these programs integrate with a wider social trend of lifelong learning, which also contributes to the updating of knowledge and skills of the labor force. In view of these benefits of the FP programs, it is plausible that government should seek ways to expand them.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics according to program

Proportions:			
Variable	For-profit mid-career	Regular	
Female	0.526	0.749	*
Mizrachi origin	0.319	0.236	*
Ashkenazi origin	0.378	0.325	
Arab	0.055	0.028	
Major in undergraduate studies – humanities	0.276	0.150	*
Major in undergraduate studies – social sciences	0.496	0.666	*
Major in undergraduate studies – other	0.291	0.199	*
Graduated from elite university	0.283	0.418	*
Graduated from non-elite university	0.458	0.368	*
Graduated from college	0.258	0.214	
Means and standard deviation			
Parental education	13.20 (3.708)	14.239 (3.708)	*
Father's occupational prestige	46.522 (1.427)	50.162 (1.323)	*
Graduation grade	83.279 (5.161)	86.834 (4.108)	*
Age	39.657 (7.604)	31.212 (6.967)	*
Income	7973.577 (3888.538)	3708.738 (3211.327)	*

* Difference significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Table 2. Logistic regression of the log-odds to study in a for-profit mid-career program

Explanatory variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Gender (male reference)			
Female	-0.929**	-1.097**	-0.532*
Ethnic origin (non-Mizrachim-reference)			
Mizrachim	0.502**	0.524**	0.719**
Parental years of schooling (centered)	-0.020	0.013	-0.056
Father's occupational prestige (centered)	-0.011**	-0.018*	-0.016*
Major in undergraduate studies (social sciences reference)			
Humanities		1.679**	1.701**
Other		1.326**	-0.916
Higher education institution (elite universities reference)			
Non-elite university		1.215**	0.789*
College		1.763**	2.209**
Graduation score		-0.173**	-0.117**
Age			0.159**
Income (*1000 ⁻⁰³)			0.305**
Interactions			
Mizrachim*father's occupational prestige	0.029**	0.029**	0.045**
Non-elite university*humanities		-0.746	-0.410
Non-elite university*other		-1.129*	-1.191
College*humanities		-0.306	-1.742
College*other		-1.422*	-1.896**
Parental education*income			0.029**
Missing values			
Ethnic origin	-0.391	-0.736	-0.950
Parental education	0.285	0.359	-1.198
Occupational prestige	-0.683	-0.657*	-0.526
Field of study		0.977	-0.145
Final grade		-1.856**	-4.290**
Intercept	0.309*	14.087**	3.810**
Pseudo R²	0.064	0.237	0.491

**p<0.05 *p<.10

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