



مركز دعم التعليم العالي في المجتمع العربي
המרכז לקידום השכלה גבוהה בחברה הערבית
Center for Advancement of Higher Education in the Arab Society

Via Dolorosa

**14 Obstacles to the access of the Arab-Palestinian society to higher education
in Israel and 10 Recommendations for their removal**

Raja Zaatry & Muhammad Khalaileh

Hirak - Center for the Advancement of Higher Education in Arab Society, June 2013

Via Dolorosa

**14 Obstacles to the access of the Arab-Palestinian society to higher education
in Israel and 10 Recommendations for their removal**

Editors: Raja Zaatry & Muhammad Khalaileh
Graphic Design: Wael Wakeem

© All rights reserved for Hirak Center, June 2013.

Hirak Center for the Advancement of Higher Education in the Arab Society

Chairwoman: **Khulood Badawi**

Director: **Raja Zaatry**

Founders: **Sharaf Hassan, Jamal Atamneh, Nakad Nakad, Shadi Shweiry, Raja Zaatry, Khulood Badawi, Fadi Abu Younes, Shadi Khalilieh, Samer Swaid, Reem Hazzan, Abed Kanaaneh.**

Hirak Center for the Advancement of Higher Education in the Arab Society

Website www.arab-education.org/hirak

FB Page [Hirak Center](#) [مركز حراك](#)

E-mail hirak.center@gmail.com

Table of Contents

Introduction

Arabs in Higher Education - Present Situation (Table)

Executive Summary

Obstacles

1. Socio-Economic Status
2. The School Framework
3. Access to Pre-academic Preparatory Classes
4. The Psychometric Examination
5. Age Restrictions
6. Admission Interview
7. Access to Scholarships
8. Access to Accommodation
9. Geographic Periphery - Access to Public Transport
10. Absence of Professional and Academic Guidance, Counseling and Advice
11. Restrictions on Freedom of Expression
12. Language, Religion and Culture
13. Access to Advanced Degrees
14. The Labor Market and Employment Opportunities

Recommendations

1. Tuition Fee: Reduction and Differential Subsidization
2. Substantial Equality for Arab Education
3. Revolution in the Pre-Academic Preparatory Classes
4. Psychometric By-Pass Program
5. Cancellation of Age Restrictions
6. Adapting Admission Interviews and Making them More Flexible
7. Cancellation of Discrimination and Exclusion Regarding Scholarships, Accommodation, Budgeting and Transport
8. Respect for Freedom of Expression
9. Respect for the Language, Religious Holidays and Culture of Arab Students
10. Encouragement and Incentives for Young Researchers

Introduction

This report is designed to shed light on the situation of Arab-Palestinian citizens in the higher education system in Israel, including its accessibility for them and their access to it.

The Arab-Palestinian society, about 20 percent of the country's citizens, is a national minority suffering from national discrimination and systematic exclusion from the Israeli society and economy. All indices indicate profound disparities between Jewish and Arab citizens, in favor of the former.

Higher education is one of the few, if not the only means of socio-economic mobility available to Arab society, on both the personal and group levels. The report issued by the OECD in 2011, which dealt with the issue of higher education in the Galilee, stipulated that the greatest challenge faced by the State is to reduce the social and economic gap between Arabs and Jews.

Higher education does not lead to full equality of opportunity of course, but it can serve as a good tool for young Arab people to deal better with exclusion, and to integrate socially and economically.

At the same time, the percentage of Arab students studying for a BA degree in Israeli universities totals only 12% - about half their percentage in the students' age group. This begs the question of why reality indicates such extreme under-representation of Arabs' participation in higher education.

The answer to this question lies in the obstacles - 14 of them - listed in this report. The picture emerging from the report is lack of equality of opportunity, whether before the attempt to acquire an academic degree, during the processes of classification and admission, or in the course of and after completing their studies. The road of young Arabs to the acquisition of a higher education is fraught with difficulties and obstacles. That is their Via Dolorosa.

Data

Arabs in Higher Education - Present Situation (*)			
	Method of Comparison	Arabs	Jews
Percentage of total students	Overall (**)	28%	72%
Studying in 12 th grade	Internal (***)	65%	95%
Sitting for Matriculation exams	Internal	60%	78%
Eligible for Matriculation Certificate	Internal	31%	55%
Complying with minimum conditions	Internal	23%	47%
Psychometric exams	Internal	432 pts	555 pts
Psychometric - English	Internal	87 pts	111 pts
Psychometric - Quantitative	Internal	99 pts	113 pts
Psychometric - Verbal	Internal	92 pts	110 pts
Studies in pre-academic preparatory classes	Overall	6.4%	93.6%
Prep. classes graduates continuing studies	Internal	51.6%	55.6%
Candidates for BA studies	Overall	13.2%	86.8%
Admitted for BA studies	Overall	10.7%	89.3%
Denied admission to BA studies	Internal	30%	17%
Denied admission to MA studies	Internal	41%	21%
BA students (universities)	Overall	12.1%	87.9%
MA students	Overall	8.2%	91.8%
Doctoral students	Overall	4.4%	95.6%
BA graduates	Overall	9.6%	90.4%
Students who complete their BA normally	Internal	12%	53%
Students who complete their BA one year late	Internal	41%	67%
Members of the academic staff	Overall	2.7%	97.3%
Member of the administrative staff	Overall	1.5%	98.5%

(*) **Sources:** The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), The Council for Higher Education in Israel (CHE), National Institute for Testing and Evaluation (NITE), The Knesset.

Overall Comparison ():** The figure refers to the general population.

Internal Comparison (*):** The figure refers to national group.

Executive Summary

This report diagnoses 14 obstacles facing the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israeli in the higher education system, that lead to the under-representation of Arab students in Israeli universities:

1. **Socio-Economic Status:** Half of Arab families and two thirds of Arab children live in poverty. Arab students who drop out or terminate their studies do so for economic reasons.
2. **The School Framework:** Only 23% of Arab high-school graduates comply with minimum conditions for admission to higher education (compared with 47% of the Jews). The current situation of the Arab education system does not encourage pupils on critical thinking and analysis and drawing conclusions
3. **Access to Pre-Academic Preparatory Classes:** The rate of Arab students who participate in pre-academic preparatory classes is only 6.4%. These classes suffer from low image & geographic remoteness from the Arab towns, and they do not sufficiently adapt their curriculum to Arab students. The financial support provided by the Higher Education Council is granted mainly to those who have completed their military service.
4. **The Psychometric Examination:** In 2011, the gap between the grade of examinees in Arabic and Hebrew was 123 points (432 compared with 555). The majority of countries in the world do not make use of the psychometric method as a condition of admission to higher education. In Israel, the psychometric grades are given high preference when weighting the admission conditions, often at the rate of 1:3.
5. **Age Restrictions:** Stipulating a minimum age for commencement of studies prevents young Arabs from enrolling at universities after completing their high-school studies. On the other hand, students seeking admission in the framework of the IDF academic reserve are exempt from this restriction.

6. **Admission Interview:** Arab students face significant difficulty in expressing themselves in professional and fluent Hebrew, as well as other cultural obstacles, when standing in front of a professional panel for an examination that is not in their mother tongue.
7. **Access to Scholarships:** When applying the tests for eligibility for many points are given for military service & national preference regions. Arab local authorities cannot afford distributing scholarships to students.
8. **Access to Accommodation:** Arab students suffer from a serious lack of accommodation. In tests for eligibility for accommodation services (students' dormitories), many points are awarded for military service. The increase in racist phenomena in Israeli society exacerbates the problem and forces to pay exorbitant prices, and thus racism also becomes an economic player, increasing demand and reducing supply.
9. **Geographic Periphery - Access to Public Transport:** The situation of the public transport system in the majority of the Arab towns is very bad. Significant portion of Arab students live with their parents and commute daily to the universities and colleges. The infrequency and unavailability of the buses and the cost of the journey, make the road from home to university lengthy, expensive and fatiguing.
10. **Absence of Professional and Academic Guidance, Counsel and Advice:** 30% of Arab candidates for first year BA studies are rejected. The percentage of dropouts between the first year and second year among Arab students is 15%. New Arab students find it hard to acquire basic academic skills. In a significant number of institutions of higher education there are no academic guidance and counseling programs for Arab students. This causes for the phenomenon of "foot-dragging" in studies: only 12% of the Arab students complete their BA in the normal time, compared with 53% of the Jewish students.
11. **Restrictions on Freedom of Expression:** Arab students encounter many difficulties in expressing their political opinions and stands. There is an inverted ratio between the percentage of Arab students and the level of

freedom of expression in institutions of higher education - the higher the percentage the more severe are the restrictions on freedom of expression.

12. Significant number of institutions of higher education impose various restrictions on public activities, including the persecution of Arab students due to their political activity.

13. **Language, Religion and Culture:** Academic studies and the entire administration are held only in Hebrew. The visibility of Arabic on campus is insignificant and offensive: Religious holidays of the Arab denominations are not recognized. Very often the institutions and the students' associations are both ignoring the cultural needs of the Arab students, and heaping up various difficulties on Arab cultural events.

14. **Access to Advanced Degrees:** The percentage of Arab students out of those studying for MA degrees in Israel is 8.2%. In the case of doctoral studies the percentage plummets to only 4.4%. The percentage of Arab candidates for MA degrees who are rejected is double that of the Jewish students (41% compared with 21%). There is a shortage of appropriate research scholarships for Arab researchers. The percentage of the Arab members of the academic staff is very low - 3%. That means less than 300 Arab lecturers.

15. **The Labor Market and Employment Opportunities:** The higher the level of education - the greater the gaps in salaries between Jews and Arabs. Arab men with an academic education earn about NIS 3,500 less than Jewish academic. Arab graduates an average of NIS 2,300 per month more than high-school graduates and only about NIS 5,000 more than middle-school graduates. In 2015 there will be 30,000 unemployed Arab academics, mostly women.

The report also suggests 10 policy recommendations to overcome & remove these obstacles:

- 1 **Differential Tuition Fee:** initiation a policy of differential subsidization of the tuition fee should be initiated, based on socio-economic status.
- 2 **Investing in Arab Education:** Allocating resources for closing cumulative deficits in Arab Education, including self-management of the Arab education system; Opening information centers in the Arab towns; Developing a special academic orientation and counseling system for Arab high-school students.
- 3 **Revolution in the Pre-Academic Preparatory Classes:** Enhancing awareness; Re-examining the curricula; Opening classes in large Arab towns; Finding a "compensation mechanism" for the military service criterion.
- 4 **Psychometric By-Pass Program:** examining alternative methods, such as the "aggregation" method & the "supplementary studies" method; stipulating that the psychometric exam will constitute no more than 50% of the weighted admission grade; Holding exams in Arab towns.
- 5 **Cancellation of Age Restriction:** Cancellation of all sweeping age restrictions; Taking into account the date of publication of the Matriculation results as is the case with the IDF reserve students.
- 6 **Adapting Admission Interviews and Making them more Flexible:** Recognition of and consideration of linguistics and cultural obstacles for Arab students; Financing special preparatory.
- 7 **Cancellation of Discrimination and Exclusion Regarding Scholarships, Accommodation, Budgeting and Transportation:** Defining Arab students as a "population deserving of promotion"; Defining alternative test for Arab students; Taking into account accessibility to public transport and developing new infrastructure in Arab towns; Public budgeting for the Nazareth Academic Institution.

- 8 **Respect for Freedom of Expression:** Desisting from persecuting students due to their political activities; Re-examining the rules and regulations; Amending the Students Rights Law.

- 9 **Respect for the Language, Religious Holidays and Culture of Arab Students:** Making available appropriate services in Arabic; Employing Arabic-speaking administrative personnel; Increasing the visibility of the Arabic language on campus; Encouraging teaching and research in Arabic; Allocating an appropriate equal portion of the budget to Arab cultural activity; Determining the principal religious holidays of the Arab denominations as official holidays.

- 10 **Encouragement and Incentives for Young Researchers:** Amplification and deepening scholarship programs for Arab researchers; Affirmative Action in accepting new lecturers.

Obstacles

1 Socio-Economic Status

Socio-economic status has a decisive effect on access to higher education: the higher the socio-economic status, the higher the rate of acquisition of a higher education. This is expressed by the disparity between the well-established towns/villages and the weaker ones - there are very few students in the latter.

The Arab population is ranked mostly in the lower socio-economic groups. In 2011, about 66% of Arab children in Israel were living in poverty, three times the percentage of Jewish children (about 24%) who were below the poverty line.

The Shohat Report showed a correlation between candidates who do not comply with minimum conditions for admission to institutions of higher education and their lower socio-economic status and geographic location at the periphery of the country. Thus for instance, 30% of the Arabs who enroll for BA studies are rejected, compared with 17% of the Jewish applicants.

Socio-economic status affects not only the prospects of admission but also prospects of success in the course of the studies: 59% of the Arab students (compared with 50% of the Jewish students) require their parents' assistance to pay tuition fees and to cover the expenses involved in their studies. The extent of assistance is also greater for the Arab students (NIS 17,319 compared with NIS 14,310 for Jewish students). Considering the socio-economic status of Arab families, this is a very heavy economic burden.

In light of the inequality of access to accommodation, scholarships and public transport (see obstacles 7, 8 and 9 below), the Arab students' needs are greater than those of the Jewish students, while the labor market is less open and accessible for the Arab students: only 50% of them (compared with 75% of Jewish students) work during their studies. The average wage of the Jewish students is about 12% higher than that of the Arab students (NIS 3,243 compared with NIS 2,907).

As distinct from the Arab students, the majority of Jewish students commence academic studies after military service and previous employment experience.

The significance of this is that two important resources - military deposits and savings - on which approximately half the Jewish students rely (46% and 56% respectively), are unavailable to their Arab peers (4% and 22% respectively). Therefore, more Arab students are forced to take loans (27% compared with 19%).

Compared with 50% of Arab students who contemplated discontinuation of their studies due to their economic situation, only 36% of the Jewish students considered doing so. It may be assumed that a considerable part of the Arab students who drop out or terminate their studies do so for economic reasons.

2 The School Framework

The school framework plays a critical role and has important functions in the development of learning skills, of expectations, aspirations and academic skills, and the school can be viewed as the link between the student's social status and his prospects of integrating into higher education based on his preparation for matriculation exams and his psychological infrastructure.

The educational gaps between Jews and Arabs do not begin at the high school stage but much earlier. Thus for instance, the "MEITZAV" exams ("School Effectiveness and Growth Indices"), which examine the four principal fields of knowledge (Hebrew / Arabic, Mathematics, English and Science & Technology) evidence the significant differences between Arabs and Jews.

The Arab educational system receives a much smaller budget than does the Jewish system. In 2004, Jewish schools received an average of NIS 4,935 per student, compared with NIS 862 per Arab student.

However, the financial gap is not the only problem. Arab educational personnel point an accusing finger at the pedagogic policy of the Ministry of Education, which forces "Zionist" values and content on Arab students, and ignores their unique national and cultural identity. Furthermore, the teaching method in the Arab schools is based more on the traditional methods of memorization and text comprehension at the basic level, and less on critical thinking and analysis and drawing conclusions. It is also affected by the historic inaccessibility of Arab society to higher education, as well as by the current shortage of manpower (teaching personnel, educational consultants, etc.), crowded classrooms and poor infrastructure in the majority of the Arab schools.

The end-products of the Arab educational system are self-evident: Only 65% of Arab youth in the 17-18 age group study in 12th grade (compared with 95% of the Jews). Only 60% of Arab teenagers sit for the Matriculation exams (compared with 78% of the Jews). Only 31% of Arab youth are eligible for Matriculation Certificates (compared with 55% of the Jews). And only 23% of Arab high-school graduates comply with minimum conditions for admission to higher education (compared with 47% of the Jews).

This means that only one in every four Arabs is admitted to academic studies compared with one out of every two Jews.

3 Access to Pre-Academic Preparatory Classes

Only about 780 Arab students out of about 12,250 (6.4%) participate in pre-academic preparatory classes. A few hundred do it in frameworks specific to the Arab sector. The percentage of those continuing on to academic studies is even smaller.

In addition to problems such as lack of awareness of the very fact of the existence of the preparatory classes, their low image and geographic remoteness from the Arab towns/villages, the preparatory classes do not sufficiently adapt their curriculum to the needs of and obstacles confronting the Arab students. Therefore, there are high drop-out percentages and subsequent failure to integrate into academic studies.

Another problem - economic - lies in the fact that the financial support provided by the Higher Education Council is granted mainly to those who have completed their military service (the Planning and Budgeting Committee does not support the Arab preparatory class students who study as individuals, but only those studying in particular and defined frameworks). In 2001, the report by the Sub-Committee on the Advancement of Higher Education among the Arab Population (hereinafter - the "Al Haj" Committee) of the Planning and Budgeting Committee recommended to find a solution for the problem of the subsistence scholarship by means of a "compensation mechanism" for the military service criterion. However the recommendation was never actually implemented.

It should be noted that the Higher Educational Council rejected repeated attempts by the Nazareth Academic Institution to develop a pre-academic

preparatory class in the city, to be adapted by experts closely familiar with the needs of and obstacles confronting the Arab students.

4 The Psychometric Examination

The psychometric exam is considered one of the dominant and most important components in the admission exams to university and constitutes the basis for the minimum conditions of the admission policy. Therefore, it is also one of the major obstacles confronting Arab applicants. According to the data of the National Institute for Testing and Evaluation for 2011, the average grade of examinees in Arabic is more than 120 points lower than the average of examinees in Hebrew (432 compared with 555). The average grade of Arab women is even lower.

The National Institute for Testing and Evaluation contends that the examination serves as an objective tool to predict the capability of academic success in institutions of higher education. A great deal has been written on the problems entailed in the content of this exam, deriving first and foremost from its being biased in the direction of Western Anglo-Saxon culture, suited to groups with a Western culture orientation which is part of the ruling culture in the State of Israel. This excludes people from groups and sectors who do not belong to that culture, among them applicants of Asian and African extraction, new immigrants and members of the Arab population.

Many empiric studies cast doubt on the extent of the success of this means of predicting the prospects of success of candidates from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The report by the Sub-Committee on the Advancement of Higher Education among the Arab Population of the Planning and Budgeting Committee (2001), which was unanimously adopted by the Planning and Budgeting Committee and the Higher Education Council states: "...There are a number of problems connected with the psychometric examination itself. This exam is intended and designed mainly for students with a background in Western culture. Therefore the exam is not appropriate for Arab students or even for Jewish students from oriental countries."

Many faculties and circles in various institutions, especially in the more desirable subjects, where there is a shortage of Arab graduates, give high preference to the psychometric grades when weighting the admission conditions, often at the rate of 1:3.

It is noted that the majority of countries in the world do not make use of the psychometric method as a condition of admission to higher education.

5 Age Restrictions

Israeli universities stipulate a minimum age for commencement of studies in some courses, which prevents thousands of young Arabs from enrolling at universities immediately after completing their high-school studies.

This condition discriminates mainly against Arab candidates. Students seeking admission in the framework of the IDF academic reserve, i.e. immediately after completing their high-school studies, are exempt from this restriction.

The age restriction also appears indirectly in the determination of the last date on which the applicant is required to present his Matriculation Certificate, prior to the date on which the Ministry of Education publishes the results of the Matriculation exams. In this context there is also an exception constituting a concession for the "IDF Reserve" students, for whom the universities agree to postpone the last date for submitting the Matriculation exam results.

This condition is applied mainly for studies in the fields of nursing, medicine and social work - all professions where there is a significant shortage of personnel in the Arab population and where the practitioner's language is of great importance.

The principle of age restriction constitutes the guideline for policy-makers in the Israeli universities, giving consideration to the structured lifestyle of the Jewish students who enter the higher education institutions after completing their military service.

These criteria ignore the unique culture and society of the Arab students and constitute an impediment to their integration and admission to the universities.

The age restriction policy adopted by the universities in Israel has no parallel anywhere in the world. No academic institution in the world restricts the commencement of studies to students aged 20 and over.

6 Admission Interview

After calculating the weighting of the grades achieved by the applicants (psychometric examination + Matriculation Certificate), some of the students go on to an oral examination, i.e. an admissions interview to examine the applicant's personal qualities and to predict the extent of the correlation between them and the field of studies, and their prospects of success.

Arab students who completed their high-school studies only a short time ago, have significant difficulty in expressing themselves in professional and fluent Hebrew, as well as other cultural obstacles, when standing in front of a professional panel for an examination that is not in their mother tongue, and is a critical examination that determines their future. This constitutes an impediment for the Arab applicants and reduces their prospects of being admitted to the university.

7 Access to Scholarships

When applying the tests for eligibility for scholarships - of the Ministry of Education, the universities themselves and other public entities - many points are given for military service, from which the majority of Arab students are exempt. This places the Arab students at an unequal starting point compared with their Jewish peers.

Other criteria, such as national preference regions, discriminate against the Arab students.

Furthermore, the Jewish local authorities distribute many scholarships to students in their jurisdiction, a situation which does not presently exist in the Arab towns/villages due to their serious financial condition.

Due to the socio-economic situation in Arab society, alternative sources for scholarships are still few and do not fulfill the extensive requirements - as compared with the Jewish population in which there are institutionalized assistance mechanisms for students.

8 Access to Accommodation

Arab students suffer from a serious lack of accommodation. In tests for eligibility for accommodation services (students' dormitories), many points are awarded for military service, from which the majority of Arab students are exempt. This in many cases leads to the Arab students being pushed to the bottom of the ladder, and to their being placed at an unequal starting point compared with Jewish students.

Furthermore, due to the increase in racist phenomena in Israeli society in recent years - such as the publication of the "Rabbis' letter" and Halachic rulings prohibiting rental of apartments to non-Jewish tenants - many Arab students find it difficult to rent apartments in the cities in which they study. Even those who do succeed in finding a solution are forced to pay exorbitant prices, and thus racism also becomes an economic player, increasing demand and reducing supply.

In the shadow of the socio-economic situation and other social and cultural challenges confronting the Arab students, the accommodation problem has a significant effect on their academic achievements.

9 Geographic Periphery - Access to Public Transport

In the majority of the Arab towns/villages, the situation of the public transport system is very bad, and in dozens of Arab villages there is no public transport at all. The student population is considered to be totally depended on public transport, and in Arab society the dependence is much higher because the majority of institutions of higher education are located in the Jewish towns.

Due to their socio-economic situation, the lack of accommodation and the fact that the majority of the Arab population is rural and traditional, a significant portion of Arab students, especially the female students, continue to live with their parents during their studies, and commute daily to the universities and colleges.

The infrequency and unavailability of the buses (a large percentage pass at the entrance to the villages and do not enter them), and the cost of the journey, make the road from home to university lengthy, expensive and fatiguing. Thus, for instance, a student who lives 50 km from the university, who has to be in class at 8:00 in the morning, must leave home at least two hours before the time of the lecture, change buses twice and sometimes three times, and must bear costs of many hundreds of shekels a month.

10 **Absence of Professional and Academic**

Guidance, Counsel and Advice

A. Before Studies

The absence of good-quality and available information concerning the higher education system, study options and admission conditions, and the absence of educational counsel and professional and academic guidance for candidates lead to a situation in which Arab students know very little about higher education prior to enrolling.

The majority of the information is assembled by parents and acquaintances with an academic education. Only in the relatively well-established Arab towns/villages, with a tradition of higher education, there are fairs which make the above information accessible, usually organized by local entities (the local

students' organization or the local authority), with no assistance by the institutions of higher education.

It should be noted that the fact that all higher education institutions are located in the Jewish towns places them outside the natural physical and emotional space of young Arabs, the majority of whom come to university for the first time in their lives for the psychometric examination.

The result of this situation is that about 30% of Arab candidates for first year BA studies are rejected, compared with 17% of the Jewish candidates. Moreover, the percentage of dropouts between the first year and second year among Arab students is 1.5 time higher than the percentage of Jewish dropouts (15% compared with 11%).

B. During Studies

Both due to academic challenges and to difficulties in social and cultural adjustment, the Arab student's first year is considered difficult, and "most critical". For that reason, relative high (approximately 15%) dropout rates are recorded in this population, and their grades in the first year of study are significantly lower compared with the second and third years.

Furthermore, new Arab students find it hard to acquire basic academic skills, which is expressed in difficulty in academic writing and in studying for exams.

In a significant number of institutions of higher education there are no academic guidance and counseling programs for Arab students. Some of the institutions do have such programs, with encouraging results, but their scope is limited and very often they depend on private contributors.

This situation is one of the major causes for the phenomenon of "foot-dragging" in studies: only 12% of the Arab students complete their BA in the normal time (compared with 53% of the Jewish students).

11 Restrictions on Freedom of Expression

Although the right of freedom of expression is established in the Student's Rights Law (2007) and in the Rules and Regulations of the majority of the institutions of higher learning, Arab students encounter many difficulties in expressing their

political opinions and positions, to the extent of serious restrictions and real violations of this right, often even emptying it of all content.

There is an inverted ratio between the percentage of Arab students and the level of freedom of expression in institutions of higher education - the higher the percentage the more severe are the restrictions on freedom of expression. In recent years a clear regression has occurred in freedom of expression in general and the policy of imposing various restrictions on public activities, expressed in cancellation or early prevention of public events initiated by Arab and/or Left-wing students; in the prohibition of participation by Arab public personages in public events on the campus; and in the persecution of Arab and/or Left-wing students due to their political activity.

Beyond the direct damage entailed by the violation of their freedom of expression, these restrictions deepen the sense of alienation and discrimination of the Arab students, and make it all the more difficult for them to adapt academically and socially.

12 Language, Religion and Culture

A. Arabic Language

Arabic is the mother tongue of the Arab minority, and constitutes an important component of its identity and collective being. Arabic is an official language in the State of Israel, and is the language of study in all Arab schools in the country.

Academic studies, on the other hand, are held only in Hebrew. Even courses which teach the Arabic language and Arabic literature are held in Hebrew, even when the teachers are Arabs.

Furthermore, the entire administration of the higher education institutions is conducted in Hebrew. Only 1.5% of the members of the administrative staff are Arabs. The majority of the information and basic services are not available in Arabic. Arabic is also absent from all logos of the institutions of higher education (except Haifa University, which attempted to remove the Arab lettering from its logo and then put it back due to heavy public pressure). The same is the case with respect to the websites of the institutions of higher education and of the Students' Association. On the website of the Hebrew University, for instance, the only page in Arabic can be found in the section on enrolling students from

abroad. In many institutions great effort and extensive struggle are required in order to include Arabic letters in the keyboards of the computers in the library and in general.

The visibility of Arabic on campus - in the signs, computers, library, etc. - is quite insignificant, and even where there is Arabic lettering it is often humiliating and offensive: basic spelling and grammatical mistakes evidence the contempt in which Arabic language and those who speak it are held.

B. Arab Religious Holidays

The official lexicon regularly uses the term "minority group students", as an expression of non-recognition of Arabs as a national group, but just a collection of religious minorities. However, this is not expressed by official recognition by the majority of institutions of higher education of the religious holidays of the Arab denominations: Moslems, Christians and Druze.

These religious holidays are not indicated in the calendars of the institutions of higher education, as distinct from the Jewish religious holidays, which are noted in detail and even constitute a decisive consideration in setting the dates for the beginning and the end of the academic year and for semester vacations.

On the other hand, many Arab students refrain from celebrating with their families, for fear that their absence from a lecture, examination or other academic assignment will not be recognized by the lecturer, the course or any entity in the institution.

The majority of the institutions do not apply a fair and clear policy on this subject. And even when the holidays are recognized for one reason or another it is done as a gesture of leniency, as a favor and not as a right.

The Haifa University recently decided on three new vacation days for all students, based on the important religious holidays of the Arab denominations - Christmas, the last day of Ramadan (Eid el-Fitr) and Eid el-Adha.

Such action should be taken for granted in every institution of higher education, and all the more so in a university where one in three students is an Arab. Such a step should raise questions such as - Why has it not been done up to now? And why is it not done in other places (in 13 institutions of higher education the percentage of Arab students is over 10%).

However, instead, this action aroused the anger of the OMETZ organization, which approached the Minister of Education, contending that the decision would "open the door to a serious problem (...). Now the Moslem students will be able

to demand that a Mosque be built for them on campus, the Christians will demand to build a Church and the Druze - a house of prayer for their faith. All of which, of course, will come out of the University's budget..."

In this context it should be noted that every institution of higher education has one or more synagogues, serving the Jewish students. The majority of the institutions do not allocate places of prayer for students of other faiths. And when they do, they only do so after a long and tiring struggle, and usually in a very obscure place, and again, as a "gesture of leniency" and as a favor, not a right.

C. Arab Culture

The cultural services provided by the institutions and the students' associations are designed mainly for the Jewish students, with a certain measure of consideration for the cultural and ethnic pluralism of the various Jewish groups (Orientals, Russian immigrants, and the like).

On the other hand, in the majority of institutions no services based on Arab culture or Arabic language are provided. Often, large cultural events organized by the institutions and the students associations, such as "Students' day", are organized on days that are sensitive for the Arab students (such as the Nakba Day on May 15, Jerusalem Day, and more).

Some of the students' associations allocate very modest budgets for cultural services for Arab students. Very often the resource and its size depend to a great extent on the political inclinations of those heading the association.

It should be noted that the cultural deprivation of the Arab students is greater than their Jewish peers. For the latter there is generally a large and varied supply of cultural services, both on and off campus.

Very often the institutions and the students' associations are not satisfied with ignoring the cultural needs of the Arab students, but even heap up various difficulties - both financial and administrative - when the [Arab] students initiate their own cultural events on campus.

Failure to honor the language, religious holidays and culture of Arab students creates for them a strong sense that they are not wanted on campus - a feeling that is in many cases reinforced by the institutions due to their failure to respond to legitimate demands regarding the above issues.

Very often, the very fact of the demand to honor linguistic, cultural and religious rights is perceived as a desire for separatism and extremism, undermining the character of the university or college.

Needless to say, this state of affairs deepens the Arab students' sense of alienation and discrimination, and exacerbates the academic and social by-products of the "culture shock".

13 Access to Advanced Degrees

The percentage of Arab students out of those studying for MA degrees in Israel is 8.2%. In the case of doctoral studies the percentage plummets to only 4.4%.

As explained above, during their BA studies, Arab students encounter many difficulties and obstacles, whether academic, socio-economic or cultural-political. Even those who survive and continue in their studies do not gain much, and the damage they incur is expressed in their academic achievements, especially in the first year. The percentage of Arab candidates for MA degrees who are rejected is double that of the Jewish students (41% compared with 21%).

There is a shortage of appropriate research scholarships for Arab researchers. The MAOF program of the Higher Education Council grants each year 4-7 three-year scholarships to Arab researchers. The Higher Education Council recently announced 50 new scholarships for outstanding Arab students for MA and post-doctoral studies. This is a welcome act in itself, but it cannot rectify the meager number of Arab researchers, and it is not sufficient to redress the fact that the amount in question is a very small part of all the resources allocated by the Planning and Budget Committee for research, estimated at approximately NIS 350 million each year.

The percentage of the Arab members of the academic staff is very low - 3%. That means less than 300 Arab lecturers. It should be noted that compared with the relatively large number of ex-university research institutes in the Jewish sector, the number of such institutes and organizations in the Arab sector is almost zero, and their resources are very limited, since they are usually not supported by the State.

14 The Labor Market and Employment

Opportunities

An examination of the feasibility of acquiring a higher education occupies the minds of a significant number of those eligible for a Matriculation Certificate. Many students think of the labor market and its flexibility and future employment possibilities after achieving their BA degree. Students are affected by the condition of the labor market and its openness and the relationship between supply and demand.

The data indicate a paradoxical trend: the higher the level of education - the greater the gaps in salaries between Jews and Arabs. In 2010 there were 13,500 unemployed Arab academics. This number is expected to rise to 30,000 in 2015. The phenomenon is most frequent among women: approximately 75% of unemployed Arab academics are women. About half of these are employed in work that does not require an academic education (compared with one third of Jewish female academics).

Arab men with an academic education earn an average of NIS 2,300 per month more than high-school graduates, but about NIS 3,500 less than Jewish academic graduates.

Moreover, an examination of the average monthly income of 8th grade graduates compared with graduates with 15 years of schooling in the Arab sector shows that there is almost no difference in salary, which is only about NIS 5,000.

These figures can explain why less Arab men and more Arab women are knocking at the doors of the higher education institutions.

Recommendations

1 Tuition Fee: Reduction and Differential

Subsidization

Contrary to various government programs, the university tuition fee should be preserved at its present level (approximately NIS 10,000 per year), and the aspiration should be equalize it with the average wage in Israel (approximately NIS 8,700).

In addition, a policy of differential subsidization of the tuition fee should be initiated, based on socio-economic status.

2 Substantial Equality for Arab Education

At the policy level, the Ministry of Education should allocate all resources necessary for immediate implementation of the reports and recommendations of the Joint Committee of the Ministry of Education and the Follow-up Committee on Arab Education (of 2007).

In addition, the Ministry of Education should agree to the demands of Arab society concerning the establishment of an Arab State Education Administration, alongside an Arab Pedagogic Secretariat.

On the immediate level, awareness of the importance of higher education should be enhanced by:

(a) opening information centers in the Arab towns/villages themselves (6-7 in the major towns, in cooperation with the Arab local authorities). Experience shows that where more information is accessible geographically, linguistically and culturally, this helps to enhance awareness. Such centers can also constitute

a focus for students and graduates on issues such as employment, advanced degrees, and the like;

(b) developing a special academic orientation and counseling system for Arab high-school students in cooperation with Arab professionals, and financing/subsidizing academic orientation services in Arab schools in cooperation with Arab educational organizations;

(c) adding positions of educational counselors in the Arab educational system.

(d) initiating projects with the aim of introducing the academic world to high-school students from the geographic periphery to courses on which there is no awareness among the Arab population. The projects will be operated in cooperation between the universities and the high-schools.

3 Revolution in the Pre-Academic Preparatory

Classes

(a) Enhancing awareness (among other things, by making information accessible by means of the above information centers).

(b) Re-examining the curricula in general, and those designated specifically for the Arab sector, in cooperation with Arab professionals, adapting them to their special needs and obstacles.

(c) Encouraging the opening of preparatory classes in academic institutions in the large Arab towns (e.g. in the Nazareth Academic Institution or even in the information centers themselves).

(d) Cooperation with schools in the town/village where the preparatory classes will be set up and initiating approaches to students with medium grades to participate in these classes.

(e) Defining the population of Arab students as a "population deserving of promotion", as recommended in the report by the Sub-Committee on the Advancement of Higher Education among the Arab Population (the "Al Haj" Committee, 2001) of the Planning and Budgeting Committee.

(f) Finding a solution to the problem of the subsistence scholarship ("compensation mechanism" for the military service criterion, as recommended by the above Sub-Committee).

(g) Developing a dedicated guidance/counseling system for graduates of the preparatory classes and helping them to assimilate in the various academic institutions.

4 Psychometric By-Pass Program

The recommendation in principle is total cancellation of the psychometric exams, but in light of the universities' insistence on this classification tool, it is necessary to examine alternative methods, such as the "aggregation" method (introduced in the 2003/2004 academic year, which led to a significant increase in the admission of Arab students, but was cancelled due to the racist considerations of the Minister of Education at that time, Limor Livnat), or such as the "supplementary studies" method decided by the Technion recently, a method adopted by thousands of universities worldwide.

In addition, the following action should be taken:

- A. To stipulate that the psychometric exam will constitute no more than 50% of the weighted admission grade.
- B. To have Arab professionals participate and integrate in writing the exam, especially the verbal section.
- C. To introduce preparatory lessons for the psychometric exam in the course of high-school studies.
- D. To hold exams in the education and higher education institutions located in the Arab towns/villages.

5 Cancellation of Age Restriction

- A. Cancellation of all sweeping age restrictions as a condition of admission.

B. The universities must take into account the date of publication of the Matriculation results by the Ministry of Education when setting the last date on which the applicant must present his Matriculation Certificate, as is the case with the IDF reserve students.

6 Adapting Admission Interviews and Making them

more Flexible

A. Recognition of and consideration for the fact that interviews in Hebrew constitute an obstacle for Arab students, and involving Arab-speaking interviewers.

B. Financing special preparatory meetings of Arab candidates for personal interviews (e.g. at the information centers proposed above).

7 Cancellation of Discrimination and Exclusion

Regarding Scholarships, Accommodation, Budgeting and Transportation

A. The Arab student population should be defined as a "population deserving of promotion", as recommended in the Al-Haj Sub-Committee Report, and this criterion should be accepted as an alternative to military service.

B. Compensatory mechanism - defining an alternative test for Arab students that will place them at a starting point similar to that of Jewish students (as recommended by the Sub-Committee), especially for first-year students.

C. When calculating the geographic distance of a town/village, factors such as accessibility to public transport (inside the town/village and from there to the university), availability (frequency and cost) and the time required to reach the campus must all be taken into account.

D. Developing new infrastructure for public transport in the Arab towns/villages (in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport and the local Arab authorities).

E. Public budgeting for the Nazareth Academic Institution - acquiescence to the budgeting demands of the Nazareth Academic Institution, including opening an academic preparatory class and development of a specific program for Arab students in the preparatory class.

8 Respect for Freedom of Expression

A. The institutions of higher education must actually respect freedom of expression on campus, desist from persecuting students due to their political activities, re-examine the rules and regulations and remove the draconian restrictions on freedom of expression.

B. The Knesset should amend the Students Rights Law, and remove from it all clauses enabling the institutions of higher education to "freeze" freedom of expression.

9 Respect for the Language, Religious Holidays and

Culture of Arab Students

A. The institutions of higher education and the Students' Association should be obligated to make available appropriate services in Arabic in every possible instance: Internet, when receiving the public, written publications and the like.

B. They should employ Arabic-speaking administrative personnel in all departments, giving preference to departments having direct contact with students (enrollment, students' administration, libraries, course secretariat, etc.).

C. The visibility of the Arabic language should be increased on campus, including signs, computerization and library, taking care of accuracy in spelling and grammar.

D. Teaching and research in Arabic should be encouraged, including by public budgeting of the Nazareth Academic Institution.

E. A portion of the budget should be allocated to Arab cultural activity, to be determined by a representative committee and/or entity of Arab students, at a rate that is at least no less than their percentage in the institution.

F. The institutions of higher education should be obligated to determine that the principal religious holidays of the Arab denominations are official holidays. There should also be certain alleviations for Arab students on fast days and similar religious holidays.

10 Encouragement and Incentives for Young

Researchers

A. Scholarship programs should be increased for Arab researchers, including increased participation by the Council for Higher Education in the MAOF Foundation budget up to NIS 5 million by 2015, and to NIS 10 million per annum by 2020.

B. A policy of Affirmative Action should be introduced in accepting new Arab lecturers onto the regular and senior academic staff, including setting measurable targets (5% by 2020).

C. Initiating research programs jointly with Arab research institutes, including programs for the enrichment of research skills of Arab students for advanced degrees.