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Author

YOGEV, Abraham

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The stratification of students in Israeli universities : persistent outcomes of an educational expansion policy

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Abstract

Expansion trends of higher education systems involve the planned growth of new universities, frequently stratified lower than established ones in academic breadth and excellence as well as in the socio-demographic origins of their students. The persistence of this internal stratification of the university system subsequent to its expansion remains a controversial issue. Between the early and mid-1990s the Israeli Council for Higher Education has expanded the three "target" universities, aimed at peripheral or specific sectors. Compared to the three established elitist institutions, these universities have concentrated on the liberal arts and attracted students of lower social origins. The present study examines the stratification of students into elitist and target universities a few years after this particular expansion policy was abandoned in favor of college accreditation. Though the overall growth rate of university freshmen since 1995 has subsequently declined, the relative share of the target universities is still steadily growing. Our analysis of data from a 1999 national survey of

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freshmen in all six universities reveals that students of the target universities still tend to originate from lower status groups and ethnic minorities regardless of academic ability. Furthermore, their general study motivations, particular study considerations, and institutional choice orientations are more practical and vocationally oriented than those of students in the elitist universities. It therefore seems that expansion policies of university systems should not overlook their long-term consequences for the stratification of universities and their students. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Yogev, Abraham, E-Mail: yogev@post.tau.ac.il