

Not business as usual at academic programs

By Tamara Traubmann, Hagai Amit and Sarit Menahem

An extensive study of business schools and business administration departments of universities and colleges here paints a gloomy picture: The quality of teaching and research at many institutions, including leading universities, is drifting downward dramatically due to dismal budgets. The Council for Higher Education (CHE) commissioned an international panel of experts to conduct the study. In the wake of its findings, the CHE will postpone approval of plans for new business programs until the end of this year. By that time, the CHE will have compiled its plan to adopt the report's conclusions, including possible recommendations to close those programs, which don't meet required academic standards.

The CHE routinely inspects the quality of different academic fields. *Haaretz* reported in March that the CHE was harshly critical of computer science programs and demanded that institutions implement immediate measures to improve standards.

Findings from the report, which will be published in full in the Hebrew edition of *TheMarker Week*, read as follows.

The universities

Ben-Gurion University came out ahead in the report. Describing teaching there as "positive," the committee wrote it "believes Ben-Gurion University is on the right track." Still, it must strengthen research in business administration core courses and ties with industry.

The committee also thought highly of the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology, which it believes has a strong commitment to the quality of its teaching and publishing high-end research. Likewise, the teaching infrastructure and technological means within the faculty are at a very high level.

The Open University received high marks for its business administration program, and the report suggested additional ways of improving it. The committee stressed the commitment of its lecturers, use of advanced technologies to allow long-distance

instruction as well as good communication between faculty and students. The school, continued the report, "opens additional options for higher learning." At the same time, the committee remarked the average time for completing a degree - about five years - demands close supervision to make sure learning materials are kept up-to-date in such a dynamic field.

The committee was more critical of other universities. The Hebrew University requires, in its opinion, strong leadership in the field of business administration and its top officials urgently need to discuss the vision and goals of its school.

The general problems of teaching business administration are widespread at Haifa University's school of management. There are many programs, but also an acute lack of senior teaching staff, primarily for core courses.

The committee noted that if Tel Aviv University at one time reached international standards in business administration - it no longer does. Doctoral students and external instructors carry the bulk of the teaching load.

The school at Bar-Ilan University is "weak to the point of being marginal," according to the report. Thus the business school needs a strategic plan for the future. The number of senior faculty is very low, while the number of external teachers is very high.

The colleges

Among colleges, the Interdisciplinary Center won high marks for establishing a modern institution in the American tradition. The school there puts an emphasis on central disciplines in business administration, and studies are based on the institution's interdisciplinary outlook. The school has many achievements relative to its years, but still needs to improve in several areas, including recruitment of new faculty in core courses and expanding research support.

The College of Management was credited with having a "community" atmosphere, but a great part of the studies are taught by part-time instructors who should be replaced by full-time faculty.

The committee liked the special atmosphere of coop-



Dan Keinan

Bar-Ilan's Center of Economics and Business did not score well.

eration and lack of competition at the Ruppin Academic Center. However, it noted as weak the fact that its faculty is composed of retirees from other universities.

The program at the College of Judea and Samaria lacks vision, does not operate in a research atmosphere. Its department lacks sufficient

knowledge of English, the current lingua franca of international business.

Similarly, Ono Academic College's bachelors and MBA programs are weak by any measure. The program needs major reform. It did win praise for the social service it provides for the ultra-Orthodox students in the school.