



Rashi Foundation
קרן רש"י

Katzir Scholarship Program 10 years of activity

Summary Evaluation Report

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Executive summary

The acquisition of a higher education is a significant factor in professional success, employment, the potential for increasing the chances for upward mobility, high salaries, an increase in the sense of job satisfaction and acquisition of socially respected and valued social status. Studies show that poor education is an obstacle to employment. Likewise, they also show that ethnic origin, parental education level, and community of residence also influence achievements in the educational system.

According to Planning and Budgeting Committee data, there were 66 institutions of higher education operating in Israel during the 2010/11 academic year, with around 293,000 students. The 1990s and the beginning of this century marked a significant change and turning point for Israel's higher education system. The number of students for all degrees grew rapidly: from 76,000 in 2009/10 to 166,000 in 1999/2000, and 237,350 in 2009/10. At the same time, there are less students on the main university campuses, while the number studying in academic and private colleges is rising.

The residents of the periphery are still applying for academic studies in small numbers. This can be explained in various ways, such as a lack of motivation to study, a poor self-image, and anxiety over the cost of academic studies. Many young men and women in these towns and cities still regard academic studies as an impossible goal, and they disqualify themselves from the start, feeling they are unsuited. This fear is caused by lack of belief in their own abilities, and being deterred by the financial difficulties which are part of academic studies: tuition fees, living costs, and loss of earnings, which are sometimes also needed to support a family. Without financial aid, there are low chances of success and perseverance in studying, especially when we are discussing students from a weak socioeconomic background.

Katzir Scholarships program

The premise of those initiating the Katzir Scholarships program is that investment in improving the human capital of young people from the periphery can create social change and affect their family and economic strength, as well as increasing their chances of breaking the intergenerational vicious circle through development and higher education. The program aspires to achieve its goals through a variety of scholarship tracks for academic studies for bachelor's degrees aimed at different target groups, all coming from a difficult socioeconomic background and from the periphery.

During the decade of the foundation's activity, a total of over 12,000 scholarships have been awarded, worth over an estimated NIS 60 million. The scholarship for each student runs from NIS 7,000 to NIS 20,000 per annum, and he or she receives it for the three or four years of study for a degree. Correct to 2010/11, the scholarships were granted in ten different tracks, adapted for various target groups: ranging from single mothers, those from the periphery with a difficult socioeconomic background, and youth village graduates.

Evaluation goals

This is a summative evaluation, and evolves from a desire to examine how much the program goals have been achieved.

Methodology

The information was collected by means of a telephone survey during May-June 2011. The sampling was designed in such a way that there would be full representation of all Katzir graduates during the first decade, in the various institutions and study tracks. We interviewed 400 graduates who had completed their studies from 2001-2011 (that is, from the beginning of the foundation's activities until now).

Study limitations

There was no matching group for the Katzir Fund graduates questioned in the graduates telephone survey. As a point of reference, it would have been better to question graduates with bachelor's degrees from similar backgrounds who had not been supported by the scholarship fund. This limitation makes it difficult for this study to isolate the unique contribution of the Katzir Scholarship. At the same time, the corpus of knowledge which has accumulated from the various sources of knowledge allows us to estimate the unique influence of the scholarship fund.

Principle findings

The Katzir Scholarships program is intended to improve the chances of young people from the periphery to acquire a higher education, as well as advancing their future wellbeing. The program is meeting its goals very well.

Employment and income

Most of the scholarship recipients were compelled to work, despite the scholarship, while studying for their bachelor's degree. The students of engineering and exact sciences have the lowest working rate.

Almost all the graduates were integrated into the employment market, and around one third earn a salary higher than the average monthly wage. 60% of the graduates who are employed began to work in their current place of employment during the past two years. 28% of them hold an administrative position. At the same time, only 60% – even fewer among humanities and social science graduates – are currently working within their chosen professional-employment track.

Place of residence and volunteering

The data shows that many graduates do not move to the center of the country, and choose to live and work in the periphery as well as being involved in the community through volunteering. This choice may emanate from several factors: economic difficulties, family obligations, success in finding suitable work in the periphery, or, alternatively, compromising on an unsuitable place of employment but which doesn't require moving.

It is important to note that the issue of the Katzir graduates' residence and employment reflects a certain clash between the Rashi Foundation's various interests: while the Foundation strives to strengthen the periphery and the graduates who remain to live and work in their natural region significantly contribute to this, it also wishes to help these young people change their life circumstances and improve their status in Israel's socioeconomic structure, which will meet with more success when working or living in the central region. We can resolve these interests by developing employment, living conditions, transportation, education and social welfare in the periphery. Undoubtedly, at the same time, increasing access to higher education for periphery residents is essential for strengthening society in Israel and the state.

Regarding volunteering, volunteerism in Israel has a considerable effect on many fields: volunteering contributes to the individual and society and reflects the level of a person's involvement in his community. In many cases this involvement is a result of having received something from the community and the desire to give back, emanating from appreciation. According to Central Bureau of Statistics data, 14% of the population volunteers in Israel. Among academics, those with at least a bachelor's degree, there is a 6% volunteering rate. We saw in the case of Katzir scholarship recipients that one out of every five graduates (21%) volunteers within the community, for an average of 12 hours monthly.

Perspectives regarding higher education as leverage to social mobility

Many studies have demonstrated that one of the the best variables in predicting a person's education level is his parents' educational level. The figures show a very positive perspective among the graduates and great appreciation for the power of education as a lever to social mobility. This perspective is expressed in close to a third of the graduates continuing their education. 71% of those who did not continue studying noted that they intend to do so in the near future.

In addition, 70% of the graduates said that their career path will develop to a great or very great extent due to their bachelor's degree. These perspectives are of tremendous importance for changing the graduates' lives, but no less, for their children who will be educated according to these values and will, therefore, increase their chances of breaking out of the intergenerational cycle.

The challenge for the future

The existing programs help the students after they have already overcome the main obstacles to entering higher education: changing their awareness, meeting the entrance requirements, coping with the economic challenge, breaking down social blocks and more. The next step is developing programs which will attract young people from weak socioeconomic backgrounds in the periphery to academic studies, and support them during their entry into the doors of the higher education institutions (improving matriculation results, the psychometric exam, choosing where to study, and perseverance during their studies) and even after completing their studies (guidance, implementation etc.).