

As Hebrew University President Prof. Menachem Magidor noted, for many long years Israel had only research universities; and many Israelis are comfortable with a system that has served them so well. Thus, while talk of "reinventing" the university (renegotiating its goals as well as means) is fashionable abroad, Israeli speakers generally preferred "reforming" it, to make it work better with less, or "refurbishing" it, by educating society to fund it more generously. Tracing the growth of Israeli higher education expenses as a percentage of GDP, Magidor argued that Israeli society will *simply not pay much more*, and that "half-price" teaching-oriented colleges will need to take more professional-track students, allowing research universities to concentrate ever more funds on each of their research-track students.

than as A-league training-intensive institutions. It is even more important that Israeli employers not regard such graduates as "B-league."

Prof. Jacob Ziv pointed out the importance of student mobility between the two systems, an option which already exists at the Technion. Prof. Robert Rosenzweig (USA) particularly worried about the social consequences of specific socioeconomic or ethnic groups, such as Hispanics in the U.S. or Sephardim in Israel, concentrating in such institutions, if they perpetuate lower self-esteem and social status. Holland's Prof. P.J.D. Drenth described an innovative approach to opening up academic admissions at Dutch medical schools. The best applicants are admitted, the worst are rejected, and students

publicize and reward, which leads to insufficient esteem for teaching. In contrast, Fender posited that, given the inherently competitive nature of academics, an Israeli university teaching assessment, no matter how methodologically flawed, could still focus faculty attention on teaching quality and automatically increase self-esteem. Israel Academy Executive Director, Dr. Meir Zadok, agreed and pointed out the contributions that Social Science research could make to improving such assessment efforts.

Magidor argued that Israel needs to make "hard choices" about which research departments and topics to support, and where, based on demonstrable competitive advantages. This is an already integral part of the Netherlands' innovative

Colleges and Change: Enviably or Unavoidable?

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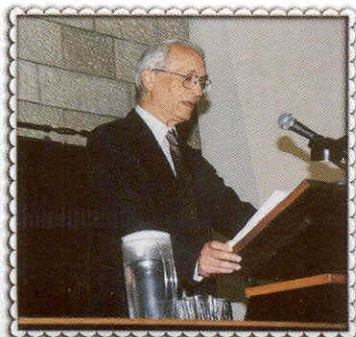
Unfortunately, many Israeli institutions find it difficult to adjust to the new pluralism, even while reluctantly accepting its economic necessity. In contrast, U.S. speakers pointed out the educational benefits of America's smaller, more personal and teaching-intensive liberal arts colleges; and Britain's Prof. Brian Fender wryly noted that having a Business School, a prominent feature of many Israeli colleges, has hardly tarnished Harvard's image! However, he also warned that negative expectations can be devastatingly self-fulfilling. Thus Israel's grand experiment with colleges could falter if their staff and students see themselves as B-league universities, rather

from the large middle group are selected by a weighted lottery.

The best researchers are not necessarily the best teachers, but good teaching is important to everyone, argues Prof. Ruth Arnon, Chairperson of the Israel Academy's Division of Sciences. Stimulating teaching assignments and contact with students can keep researchers from becoming too narrow or stale, while good teachers attract good students. However, former PBC Chairman Prof. Amnon Pazy and former Hebrew University President Prof. Hanoach Gutfreund worried that teaching quality is too difficult to measure,

national "research schools" system (interinstitution centers of excellence), described by Prof. Drenth. Dutch universities also do their own, jointly run national academic assessments, using publicity rather than funding to promote change.

Bob Rosenzweig questioned whether Israel's established research universities have sufficiently flexible internal structures to actually make such hard choices. Israel's legally chartered University Senates are not particularly nimble; but there are other, supra-university systems (PBC, ISF, TELEM, etc.) which could help play such a role.



Israel Academy President
Prof. Jacob Ziv (Israel)



Israel Academy Executive Director
Dr. Meir Zadok (L) speaking to
Prof. Thorsten Nybom (Sweden)



PBC Chairman
Prof. Nehemia Levtzion (Israel)