

Rabbi Y.D. Grossman

Nourishing Israel's Future Migdal Ohr-
Underprivileged children
www.migdalohr.org

Budget

Search our directory for accounting
solutions & more for your business.
www.business.com

Study Abroad in Israel

8 Wk Session. High School S
Live and Learn in Israel!
www.AlexanderMussHSI.org



Subscribe to Print Edition

Mon., October 13, 2008 Tishrei 14, 5769



Israel Time: 02:22 (EST+7)

HAARETZ.com

[Back to Homepage](#)

web haaretz.com

TV [Haaretz Toolbar](#) [Diplomacy](#) [Defense](#) [Jewish World](#) [Opinion](#) [National](#) [Print Edition](#) [Car Rental](#)
[Books](#) [Haaretz Magazine](#) [Business](#) [Real Estate](#) **Easy Start** [Travel](#) [Week's End](#) [Anglo File](#) [Singles](#)

A decisive blow to higher education

By Ami Volansky

Tags: [Budget](#), [Israel News](#) >>

The economic arrangements bill for 2009 included a proposal to do away with the committee that deals with planning and budgeting for higher education in Israel, and to transfer it in effect to the Education Ministry. Everything is now mixed up and memories are frighteningly short.

In 1973, the authority for higher education planning and budgeting was transferred from the Education Ministry to a committee chosen by the Council for Higher Education. Cabinet ministers and Knesset members from across the political spectrum - including Elimelech Rimalt, Esther Raziell-Naor, Menachem Begin, Shoshana Parsitz, Yigal Allon, Zeev Sherf and many others - were interested in warding off the danger of politicization from academia and the sciences, and distancing it from what happens in "popular democracies" and "totalitarian regimes" (as Rimalt phrased it) or from the "imperialist nature" of a government office (as then-justice minister Yaakov Shimshon Shapira put it).

The government's decision to set up the planning and budgeting committee turned out in later years to have been an impressive achievement. The committee is headed by a renowned professor who is well versed in higher education in both Israel and abroad, and who is elected to the position for a limited term of office. Alongside him on the committee sit four senior academics as well as two public figures.

In the past decade, the committee showed how to double the number of students, helped train high-tech workers, supplied the means for training additional doctors (whose numbers are so sorely lacking in hospitals) and employees in other vital fields. It also beefed up the research budgets by 500 percent, established binational foundations for research, created partnerships in research and development in Israel and abroad, helped

Advertisement

[Compensation Total Reward](#)

Online Planning and Management Merit,
Bonus, Stock, Total Rewards
www.focalreview.com

[High School in Israel](#)

8 Week Study Abroad Sessions! Visit Our Site,
Explore The Program
www.AlexanderMussHSI.org

[Why Your Stomach is Fat](#)

I fought with excess belly fat for years until I
found this 1 trick.
www.TruthAboutAbs.com



Ads by Google

develop the technology field, encouraged the establishment of research institutes, advanced higher education in peripheral areas - and contributed toward the fact that in the 1990s the higher education system was expanded in

Read & React

[Gideon Levy: Acre Jews warn 'Arabs will kill you with knives'](#)
Responses: 126

[Conspiracy theory on Jews' role in Lehman Brothers collapse gains popularity](#)
Responses: 157

[Amos Harel: Gilad Shalit is still in captivity - who is to blame?](#)
Responses: 37

[Adar Primor: Will Haider's death pave the way to a unified far-right in Austria?](#)
Responses: 16



Print



Send to a friend



Send response

More Headlines

02:21 Sources: Hamas has raised price of Shalit deal in wake of Kuntar release

22:52 Driver who sparked Acre riots: I'd sacrifice myself to bring back coexistence

00:33 Labor Party, Kadima expected to sign coalition agreement

20:30 TASE defies grim forecasts, ends day with moderate losses

20:32 Olmert: Israeli Arabs have long suffered discrimination

01:59 Israel to allow 700 additional armed PA troops into Hebron

00:45 Ultra-Orthodox wig shop unveils 'Sarah Palin Wig'

an impressive manner in every respect.

Now the proposal is that all these spoils be put in the hands of the Education Ministry instead of experts from academia. In paradoxical fashion, the more the committee achieved, the more its status and authority were eroded. Public figures in the Knesset demanded the registration of more institutes of higher education, even though there were already 64. In addition, academic freedom suffered at the hands of bills that aimed to curtail it, there was increased pressure to reduce tuition, private institutions demanded that their tuition fees be subsidized by the state, colleges demanded the status of universities, and foreign institutions infiltrated the higher education system in Israel and encouraged a culture of short cuts on the way to getting an academic degree.

The committee faced these burgeoning pressures almost without any public or political support, and this lack of support made it possible to cut about 20 percent of its budget. This terrible blow is being felt today in all spheres of academic life, and the expression par excellence of this is the 40-percent drop in the ratio between the number of senior staff on university faculties and the number of students. Currently it is similar to the ratio in the high schools: 25 students for every senior academic staff member, as opposed to 15 in the 1990s.

Before anyone falls in love with the alternative suggested in the economic arrangements bill, it is worthwhile learning a bit about the complexity involved in administering matters of higher education. This is a field with many sensitivities and contradictions, and tremendous complexities. A decision lacking in responsible perspective is likely to bring about inestimable damage to the future of science. The status of the committee must be not only restored but upgraded. To this end, the committee itself must initiate changes in the budgeting criteria for research and teaching so as to give incentives for good teaching and intensify research activity. It must also increase the transparency of its activities and lead a policy of locating additional sources of funding for higher education.

It is imperative for the Knesset, the government, the institutions of higher education and the Council for Higher Education, under which the committee operates, to close ranks around the committee to make it possible to restore its status and authority as well as give it back the funds that were cut. Without recognition of the fact that stopping the erosion of the status of higher education starts with restoring the committee's status, the academic system will continue to roll down a slippery slope.

The writer is a professor of education at Tel Aviv University and author of a book on higher education policy in Israel between 1952 and 2004.

based on Alaska governor's famous locks

01:09 N.Y. synagogues feel holiday pinch as financial crisis wears on congregants

20:14 Conspiracy theory faults Jews for Lehman Brothers' collapse

16:23 IN DEPTH / The 24 hours that could have saved Gilad Shalit

13:43 Hamas-Fatah reconciliation tops agenda in Abbas-Assad meeting

17:03 Gideon Levy / Acre Jews warn: Arabs will kill you with knives

18:44 Peres: Israel has learned from history - Iran won't surprise us

15:27 Iranian presidential candidate: Ahmadinejad's Holocaust comments are 'irrelevant'

09:43 ANALYSIS / Will Haider's death pave way to unified far-right in Austria?

21:14 Mideast Muslims: U.S. financial crisis is divine punishment

Previous Editions

Select Day

[Subscribe to Print Edition](#)

 [Bookmark to del.icio.us](#)

 [Digg It!](#)



Hair apparent

Ultra-Orthodox shop unveils 'Sarah Palin Wig' based on Alaska governor's famous 'do.



Protocols of Wall Street

'Report': Jewish execs sent \$400 billion to Israel before Lehman Brothers' demise.



[Home](#) | [TV](#) | [Print Edition](#) | [Diplomacy](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Arts & Leisure](#) | [Sports](#) | [Jewish World](#) | [Underground](#) |

[Real Estate in Israel](#) | [Travel to Israel with Haaretz](#) | [Hotels Israel](#) | [Restaurants Israel](#) | [Tourist attractions Israel](#) | [Shops](#)

[birthright Israel](#) | [Search engine marketing](#)

Haaretz.com, the online edition of Haaretz Newspaper in Israel, offers real-time breaking news, opinions and analysis from Israel and the Middle East. It provides extensive and in-depth coverage of Israel, the Jewish World and the Middle East, including defense, diplomacy, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the politics, Jerusalem affairs, international relations, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Israeli

Jewish life in Israel and the Diaspora.

© Copyright 2008 Haaretz. All rights reserved