



New Trends in Continuing Higher Education: Who Attends the Privatized Executive Master's Programs and Why? The Israeli Case

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Introduction

- The recent marketing of public universities due to budgetary cuts has resulted, among other things, in the opening of unsubsidized executive master's programs in a variety of fields.
- This raises the issue of students' stratification between the executive and the regular and subsidized master's programs.



- The critical literature on university marketing, claiming that this process produces more inequality at the university, would predict that the executive master's students arrive from more established backgrounds than the regular students.
- It will also claim that the study motivations of the executive students are more practical and career oriented than those of the regular master's students.



- Tel Aviv University, the focus of this study, is a pioneer in the area of executive master's programs in Israel, opened since 2002 under the slogan of reaching out to 'the civic society' in order to gain its support.
- Until now 16 executive programs were opened, mainly in the social sciences and the humanities. Their students enroll in one-year programs, for two days a week, pay at least twice the subsidized tuition, and constitute over a quarter of the total master's degree recipients on a yearly basis.



- In order to address the above issues we concentrate on 7 executive programs which have parallel regular master's programs. Our analysis is based on questionnaires administered in 2006 to 254 students of the executive programs and 178 students of the parallel regular programs.
- We first compare the social and demographic background of the students in the two program types.

Table 1: Student Characteristics by Program Affiliation

	Executive Programs (n=254)	Regular Programs (n=178)	t-test	Logistic Regression
Gender: Men	0.55 (0.50)	0.37 (0.48)	- 3.81*	0.43 (0.26)
Age	36.29 (8.42)	30.62 (6.90)	- 7.66*	0.50* (0.02)
Region: Tel-Aviv area	0.37 (0.49)	0.53 (0.50)	3.31*	- 0.37 (0.25)
Religiosity: Secular	0.71 (0.46)	0.87 (0.34)	4.26*	-1.13* (0.32)
Jews vs. Arabs	0.92 (0.27)	0.95 (0.22)	1.19	- 0.49 (0.58)
Ethnicity: Ashkenazim	0.69 (0.46)	0.73 (0.45)	0.93	0.04 (0.28)
Parental Education: Academic	0.22 (0.42)	0.38 (0.49)	3.39*	- 0.21 (0.29)
B.A: University vs. College	0.70 (0.46)	0.81 (0.39)	2.62*	-0.61* (0.29)
Occupational Prestige	71.19 (13.20)	65.52 (14.69)	- 4.20*	0.02^ (0.01)
Supervision: 4+ people	0.46 (0.50)	0.25 (0.44)	- 4.38*	0.07 (0.28)
Income	3.71 (1.13)	2.62 (1.20)	- 9.25*	0.60* (0.12)
χ^2				126.03*
-2 Log likelihood				425.61
Naglekerke Pseudo R ²				0.36
N				432

P < 0.05*

[^]*P* < 0.07



Findings

- The logit regression shows that students in the executive programs have higher income and occupational prestige, but that they also originate from more traditional (and less educated) families.
- Furthermore, their study motivations are not significantly different from those of the regular programs' students.

Table 2: Factor Analysis of Study Motivations


	Item	Mean	S.D	Factor Loadings (defining items)
1. Social - Normative	The norm is to get a master's degree	2.39	1.22	0.73*
	My colleagues at work have higher degrees	1.87	1.07	0.72*
	To gain status and prestige	2.71	1.30	0.70*
	The university's prestige	2.81	1.35	0.65*
	To meet people like me	2.48	1.30	0.61*
	My work allows me to study	3.37	1.29	0.40*
2. Professional	To improve my chances in the labor market	3.65	1.24	0.84*
	To advance in my work	3.54	1.37	0.84*
	To raise my wages	3.28	1.38	0.79*
	To learn how to change my work organization	2.71	1.46	0.52*
3. Personal Development	To develop myself	4.53	0.71	0.77*
	To study a subject that interests me	4.48	0.79	0.76*
	To practice research	2.57	1.37	0.48*



Table 3: Students' Motivations To Study by Program Affiliation

	Executive Programs (n=254)	Regular Programs (n=178)	t-test
1. Social - Normative	-0.02 (0.98)	0.02 (1.93)	0.43
2. Professional	-0.03 (0.99)	0.04 (1.02)	0.70
3. Personal Development	-0.03 (0.99)	0.10 (1.02)	0.81

P < 0.05*



It thus appears that that the executive programs opened the opportunity for graduate studies to students who are currently more established, but originate from lower social and educational backgrounds, and probably could not devote the time to the full-scale studies offered by the regular programs. Therefore, the executive programs may be considered as promoting the social mobility of the junior to mid-range executives.

But do their employers support their studies?



Table 4: Major Sources of Tuition Funding

	Executive	Regular
Parents or relatives	20%	38%
Place of work	26	11
Loans	6	2
Scholarships	4	13
None (self-funding only)	44	36
Total	100%	100%



Conclusion

- It therefore appears that while the executive programs have opened the gate for graduate studies to new groups of students, it remains to be seen whether they will promote in reality the social and occupational mobility of the executives.

A collage of school supplies including a pencil, a ruler, and a protractor, overlaid with a semi-transparent orange banner containing the text "Thank you for your time".

Thank you for your time