

# Vocational schools are doing a poor job, study says

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Vocational-school pupils are not adequately trained to meet the challenges of the labour market, since over 60 per cent of them fail to get jobs in the fields they were trained for, according to a comprehensive study to be released soon.

The chief scientist of the Joint Distribution Committee-Israel, Dr. David Harman, revealed this yesterday at a symposium at the Hebrew University on educational opportunities for the disadvantaged. The complete study will be published in several months.

Also at the symposium, Hebrew University social work professor Eliezer Jaffe presented the results of a four-year experiment in which 80 students from disadvantaged backgrounds who failed to meet the formal university entrance requirements were nevertheless allowed to study social work.

Jaffe said that the results — showing the "below-standard" students performing

almost as well as the others — constitutes an "assault on the conventional objective university entrance requirements."

Harman noted that since the mid-1960s the vocational school network has absorbed increasing numbers of pupils whose parents came from Islamic countries. They were "shunted into vocational schools simply as a way to keep them in school, without providing adequate programmes to help them overcome their 'disadvantaged' status."

He said that the vocational schools run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs have a somewhat better record than those operated by the Education Ministry in matching the skills taught to the opportunities in the job market. The Education Ministry has claimed that 70 per cent of its vocational pupils work in the fields they were trained for, but Harman said that this widely-publicized figure is based only on the graduates of elite vocational schools.

He said that since it costs three times as much to educate a vocational school pupil

as it does a pupil in an academic high school, the poor performance of these schools is a double loss to the economy.

Education Ministry figures show that in 1980/81 pupils whose parents came from Islamic countries comprised 57 per cent of the 14-17 age group, but only 40 per cent of academic high-school pupils. They made up 64 per cent of vocational high-school pupils. At the university level, in 1972, 12 per cent of all students came from families which originated in Islamic countries, while today their share stands at 25 per cent.

Jaffe said the experiment was stimulated by dissatisfaction with the fact that the university entrance requirements, based on an average of matriculation scores and an aptitude test, had kept the portion of social-work students from such backgrounds down to 10 per cent. This was particularly undesirable, he said, given that over 85 per cent of social workers' clients have their origins in Islamic countries.

The 80 candidates selected for the experi-

ment were taken from applicants with above-average entrance exam scores who came from large families in disadvantaged areas and whose mothers had a low level of formal education.

The JDC-Israel provided funds to pay their tuition fees and pocket money, and to offer tutoring for those who needed it. The participants were "undercover" students in that only Jaffe and his research assistant knew their identities, so that the teachers would not treat them any differently.

Jaffe said that a request from the School of Social Work to formalize the programme, and requests by the faculties of law and medicine to start similar programmes, were turned down by the academic authorities of the university.

He said that the entrance requirements for universities were not a scientifically objective criterion above public scrutiny, but a process determined by values that required public intervention on behalf of the disadvantaged.