

Do Interventions for Increasing Minorities' Access to Higher Education Work? The Case of Ethiopians in Israel

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Abstract : In many countries, much efforts and resources are devoted to empowering and integrating minorities within the mainstream population. Major ventures in this route are crafted in higher education institutions where different outreach programs and methods such as lenient entry requirements, monetary incentives, learning skills workshops, tutoring and mentoring, are utilized. Although there is some information regarding these programs, their effectiveness still needs to be thoroughly examined. The Ethiopian community in Israel is one of the minority groups that has been targeted by sponsoring foundations and higher education institutions with the aim to ease the access, persistence and success of its young people in higher education and later in the job market. The evaluation study we propose to present focuses on the implementation of a program designed for this purpose. This program offers relevant candidates for study at a prestigious university a variety of generous incentives that include tuitions, living allowance, tutoring, mentoring, skills and empowerment workshops and cultural meetings. Ten students were selected for the program and they started their studies in different subject areas before three and half years. A longitudinal evaluation has been conducted since the implementation of the program. Data were collected from different sources: participating students, program coordinator, mentors, tutors, program documents and university records. Questionnaires and interviews were used for collecting data on the different components of the program and on participants' perception of their effectiveness. Participants indicate that the lenient entry requirements and the monetary incentives are critical for starting their studies. During the first year, skills and empowering workshops, tutoring and mentoring were evaluated as very important for persistence and success in studies. Tutoring was perceived as very important also at the second year but less importance is attributed to mentoring. Mixed results regarding integration in the Israeli culture emerged. The results are discussed with reference to findings from different settings around the world.

Keywords : access to higher education, minority groups, monetary incentives, tutoring, mentoring

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