

THEY'VE BEATEN THE PSYCHOMETRIC TEST

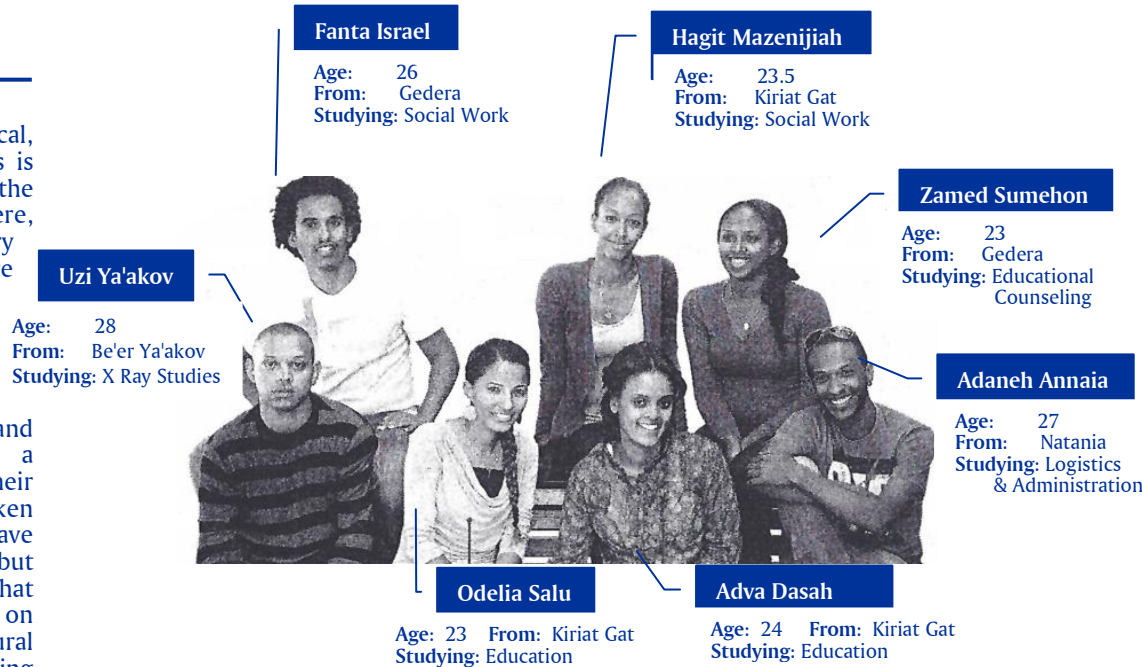
ENORMOUSLY SUCCESSFUL ACADEMIC PILOT PROJECT: 34 STUDENTS OF ETHIOPIAN DESCENT WHO FAILED THEIR PSYCHOMETRIC TESTS HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED TO PRESTIGIOUS FACULTIES ON THE BASIS OF AN INNOVATIVE CLASSIFICATION TEST THAT ASSESSES LEARNING POTENTIAL RATHER THAN ACTUAL PERFORMANCE • THEY ALL COMPLETED THEIR FIRST YEAR WITH EXCELLENT GRADES.

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Reporter on Education

The demand for medical, accountancy and psychology studies is one of the highest there is and the acceptance conditions are very severe, however this year students with very low psychometric grades were accepted – and they are considered to be a great success.

Thirty-four students of Ethiopian descent are studying in prestigious faculties at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Bar-Ilan University as part of a revolutionary pilot project. Had their psychometric test results been taken into consideration they would not have been accepted to academic studies but the universities understood that what was preventing them to do well on their psychometric tests were cultural barriers rather than a lack of learning skills or poor potential. For this reason a decision was made to administer revolutionary classification tests – an initiative of Feuerstein Institute-The International Institute for the Enhancement of Learning Potential, headed by a recipient of the Israel Prize in Education, Prof. Reuven Feuerstein.

Rather than assessing the functioning of students under time-pressured exam conditions, the method predicts their long-term learning potential. Rather than assessing the subjects' level in the current exam, it appraises what level they have the potential to reach. How does the method work? During the process of the test the subject is taught learning



and teaching strategies and an appraisal is made of how well he/she uses them.

The rector of Bar-Ilan University, Prof. Haim Teitelbaum says that the admission of students of Ethiopian descent on the basis of the Feuerstein method has been a tremendous success – way beyond expectations. They all do well and some have completed their studies with honors. "The psychometric test in its accepted form does not reflect the ability of students who were not raised within the Israeli culture," says Prof. Teitelbaum, "the program allows them to take an alternative exam that classifies them for academic studies fairly and impartially.

The rector of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Prof. Sarah Stroumsa said, "The program brings good tidings because now people can be tested in different manners and not just through psychometric tests or matriculation exams." The project includes different aspects of support for the students to ease their adaptation to university life and the funding comes from the Kaylie-Yacobi Foundation, JDC-Israel and the New York Federation.

One of the students is Fanta Israel (26) from Gedera. With a grade of 359 on his psychometric he was refused admission to the School of Social Work at Bar-Ilan University. Thanks to the new system he was given another

chance and he has completed his first year of studies with honors and an average grade of 87. "I have friends who completed high school with an average of 90 or more on their matriculation but their chances are shattered in the psychometric test. We have been given an opportunity and we have proved that we are here because we have a right to be and not as a favor," he said yesterday.

During 2005, an application was made to Feuerstein Institute by Brigadier General (Res.) Eliezer Stern who at the time was the IDF's Chief Educational Officer. He was applying to the Institute regarding difficulties that the IDF was experiencing integrating soldiers of Ethiopian descent. They were getting low grades on the military psychometric test and consequently being placed in clerical, services and administration jobs.

Thanks to Stern's initiative they began undergoing a different classification process and as a result, they are now placed in tracks that appropriately reflect their true potential.

Translation: Esther Toledano Boreda