

# ESPRIT

## Enhancing the Social Characteristics and Public Responsibility of Israeli Teaching through a HEI-Student Alliance

Kfar Maccabiah – 15 June 2017



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The Esprit project was a multi-institutional, multi-national consortium of 11 institutions – 6 in Israel and 5 in Europe. It's duration was from 2014 to 2016.



# SUSTAINABILITY???

There is a need to distinguish between two kinds of sustainability:

1. Non-measurable sustainability
2. Measureable sustainability

This presentation will focus primarily on measureable outputs although we believe that non-measurable sustainability is no less important.



The ESPRIT project was comprised of numerous elements and a number of workpackages.

There were four central tasks/workpackages which can be related to in terms of measurable outputs.

We will concentrate on the two most important



1. Already during the development and formulation stage of the ESPRIT project, it became clear to those involved that there was enormous variance in the way each individual understood social responsibility in the higher education context. It was, therefore, imperative to jointly develop a consensual, viable working definition of “Academic Social Responsibility” that would guide the work of the project and serve as a compass for HE institutions.



2. The second task was to develop and execute a national survey, mapping the current state of social engagement in Israeli HE institutions and outlining needs for improvement. The results of this workgroup are presented in the handbook – “Mapping Social Engagement and Responsibility”. On page 11 of this handbook can be found the working definition of “Academic Social Responsibility” developed by the Consortium and referred to a moment ago.



3. The 3rd task was to develop models & methodologies for the design of curricula with a social engagement component. These models were subsequently used to develop pilot courses in all the Israeli partner institutions. Following the implementation and evaluation of the pilot courses, the findings were collected in another handbook.



In Nov 2016, 1 month before conclusion of the project there was a conference at Bezalel to present to teachers, stakeholders & decision makers the results of the “Courses” working group. This event was attended by 80 individuals from more than 30 HEI’s. The participants urged that this process continue.

Next week there will be a workshop/conference at BGU, organized by Prof Dani Filc, the academic head of ESPRIT, to continue this momentum (you are all invited!).

It is hoped that an informal organization/network will evolve to continue the work begun in Esprit.





## SBT = SOCIAL BENCHMARKING TOOL

4. The final task was to develop a rigorous benchmarking tool to analyze universities and colleges according to their social missions and performance thereof. Although familiar models exist to rank higher education institutions, these models focus solely on teaching and research functions, overlooking the “third role” of academia. ESPRIT added another dimension - one which recognizes that alongside academic achievements, institutions are measured by other qualities including social characteristics and behavior. The Social Benchmarking Tool was piloted among the Esprit Israeli institutions. Moreover, it was hoped that the outcomes of the SBT (the SOCIAL BENCHMARKING TOOL) will have the potential to be adapted for international use.



The Development of the SBT was led by NUIS and also resulted in a handbook and report for the use by other institutions.

We understood, when developing the project, that the SBT, if we could create it, would require financial support beyond the life of the project. Although, from the very beginning of ESPRIT, discussions were held with the CHE and efforts were made to recruit NGO's and private foundations – we are left with a certain feeling of failure. We have created something that exists nowhere else in the world and it should be sustained.



However, the most notable outcome is the tool for benchmarking social responsibility in academic institutions. It is clear that through this tool helps assess the degree of HEI management's transparency in decision-making and thus promotes greater transparency and social responsibility. We encourage you to continue to embed this tool in the existing partner HEIs to continue to overcome any resistance to it. We also encourage you to inform other HEIs in Israel about this tool and encouraging them to use it where appropriate.



I believe I can say, on behalf of all the Esprit partners, that the experience of these three years has been an extraordinary enrichment process. I think that every individual that was seriously involved in the project underwent considerable personal development, acquiring significant skills and professional experience characterized by personal growth. We witnessed the development of numerous inter-institutional personal and professional relationships which will endure long beyond the project.



Thank you for your attention...

