The Educational Reform 2009

- **What is it about?**

- **What is going on?**

The Educational Reform was put into practice
in 2005 by the Greenlandic Government.
The Reform contains many initiatives
to strengthen education.
The present summary shows
how the Educational Reform has worked
and it points at measures that will strengthen
the future educational picture.

The entire evaluation report is available through the
Department for Culture, Education, Research and Church

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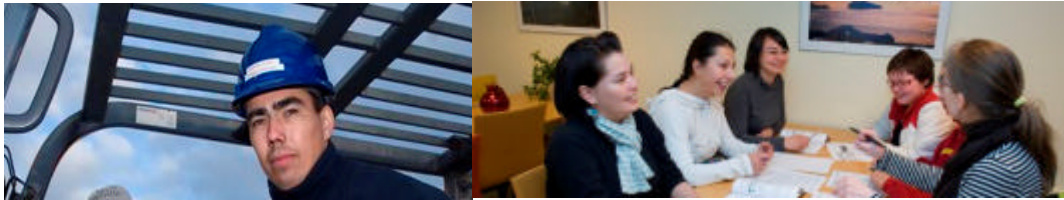
Why Education?

Because education means social change, better living conditions and improved health. Furthermore it involves
- organizational development and educational development in support of civil society (including poverty reduction),
- participation in (educational) developmental processes in segments (or isolated parts) of Greenland,
- participation in the global labor market,
- the family, opportunity and social mobility,
- power, culture and the politics of identity,
- changing teachers' and student councilors' work,
- higher education and lifelong learning.

The goal of the Greenlandic government is to increase the level of education in the population from 1/3 of the population in 2005 to 2/3 in 2020.
Focus is on students leaving the primary educational system. It is important that they continue their educational career.
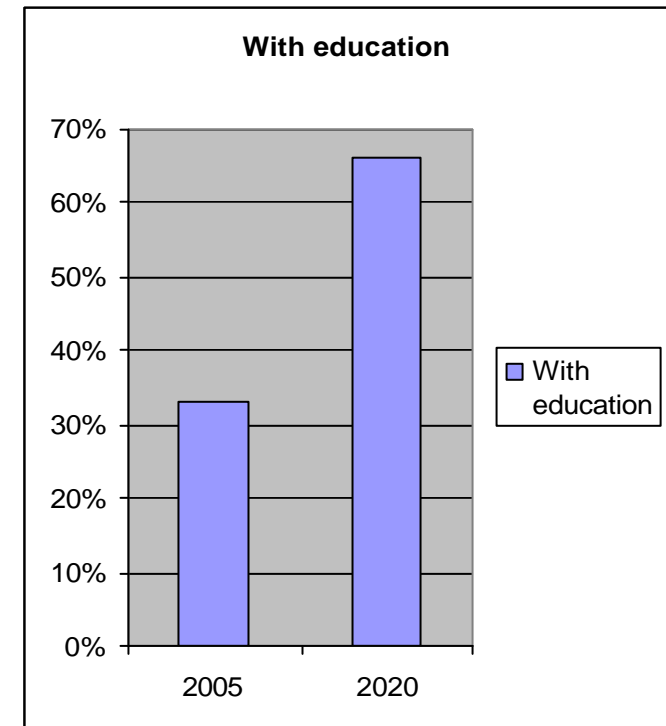
Consequently the Educational Reform involves (1) high school education, (2) vocational education and training and (3) higher education.

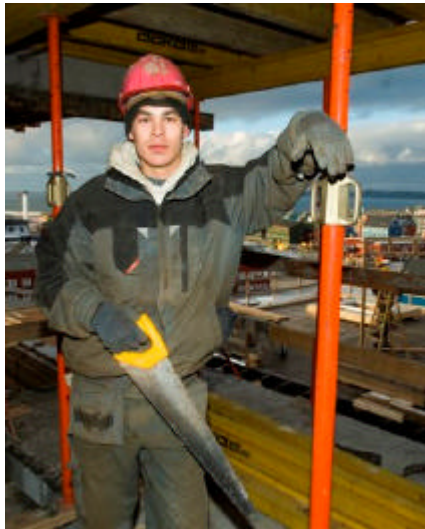## The Educational Reform is Successful
In 2008 significant changes have taken place:
More students in the educational system are receiving more education.
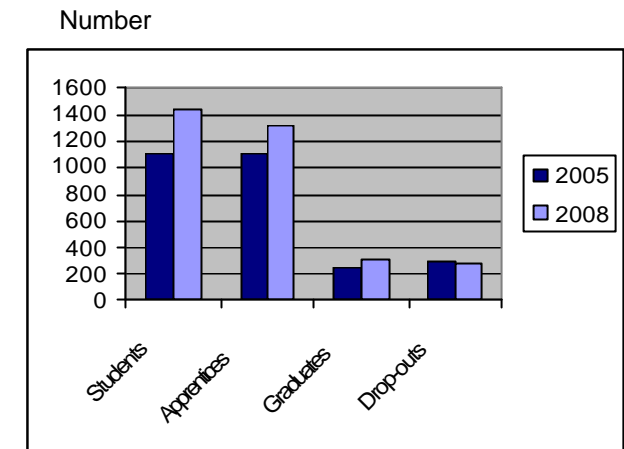
The problem is the drop-out.

Box 1

1

Vocational Education and Training

Here we observe the following during the period 2005-2008:
• number of students has increased by 31 pct.,
• number of apprentices has increased by 20 pct.,
• number of graduates has increased by 25 pct.,
• number of students not finishing the education has decreased by 3 pct.

Number

Box 2

High School Education

Here we observe the following during the period 2005-2008:

• number of students has increased by 17 pct.,
• number of graduates has increased by 37 pct.,
• number of students not finishing the education has increased by 34 pct.

Number

Box 3

Higher Education

Here we observe the following during the period 2005-2008:
• number of students has increased by 19 pct.,
• number of graduates has increased by 6 pct.,
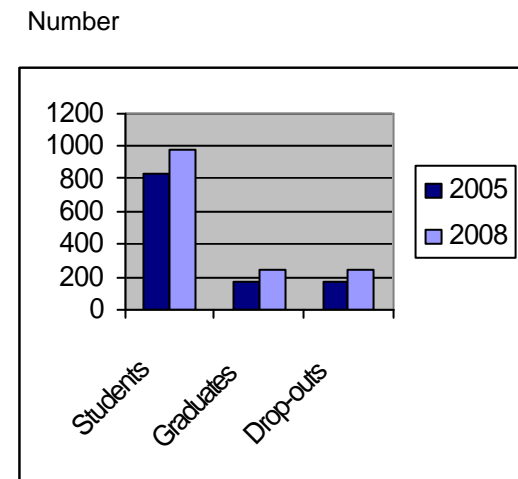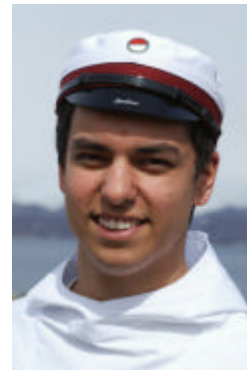• number of students not finishing the education has increased by 9 pct.

Big Drop-Out in the Educational System

It is relatively cheaper to get students to complete their present education compared to introducing new students into the educational system. From this follows that focus should be on the drop-ours, and the causal mechanisms behind. The follow up procedure can include effective and qualified help and support.

Problems that may lead to drop-out are discussed below. The underlying theory points at (too big) changes and differences between the systems.

Number
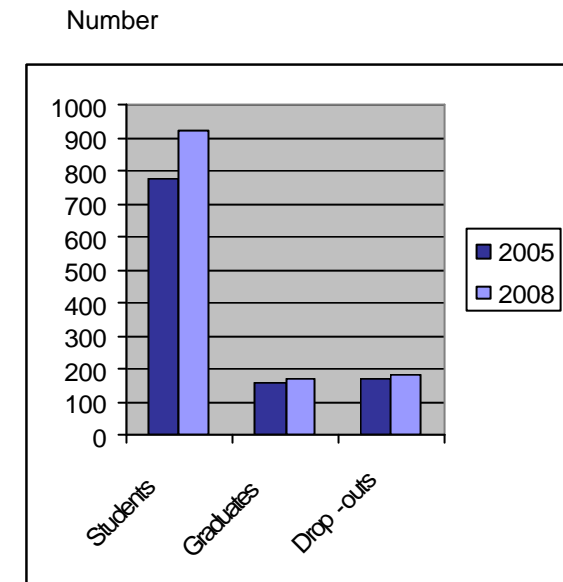
Box 4

From Home to Place of Education

Many questions arise for the students who are embarking on education.

How to find lodgings?

How to make a budget?

How to cope with being homesick?

How to improve my understanding of the teaching?

What is it like to leave home?

How do I study?

How do I use the books and the technology?

Who can tell me more about my field?

What can I ask of my school, my teachers and my tutors?
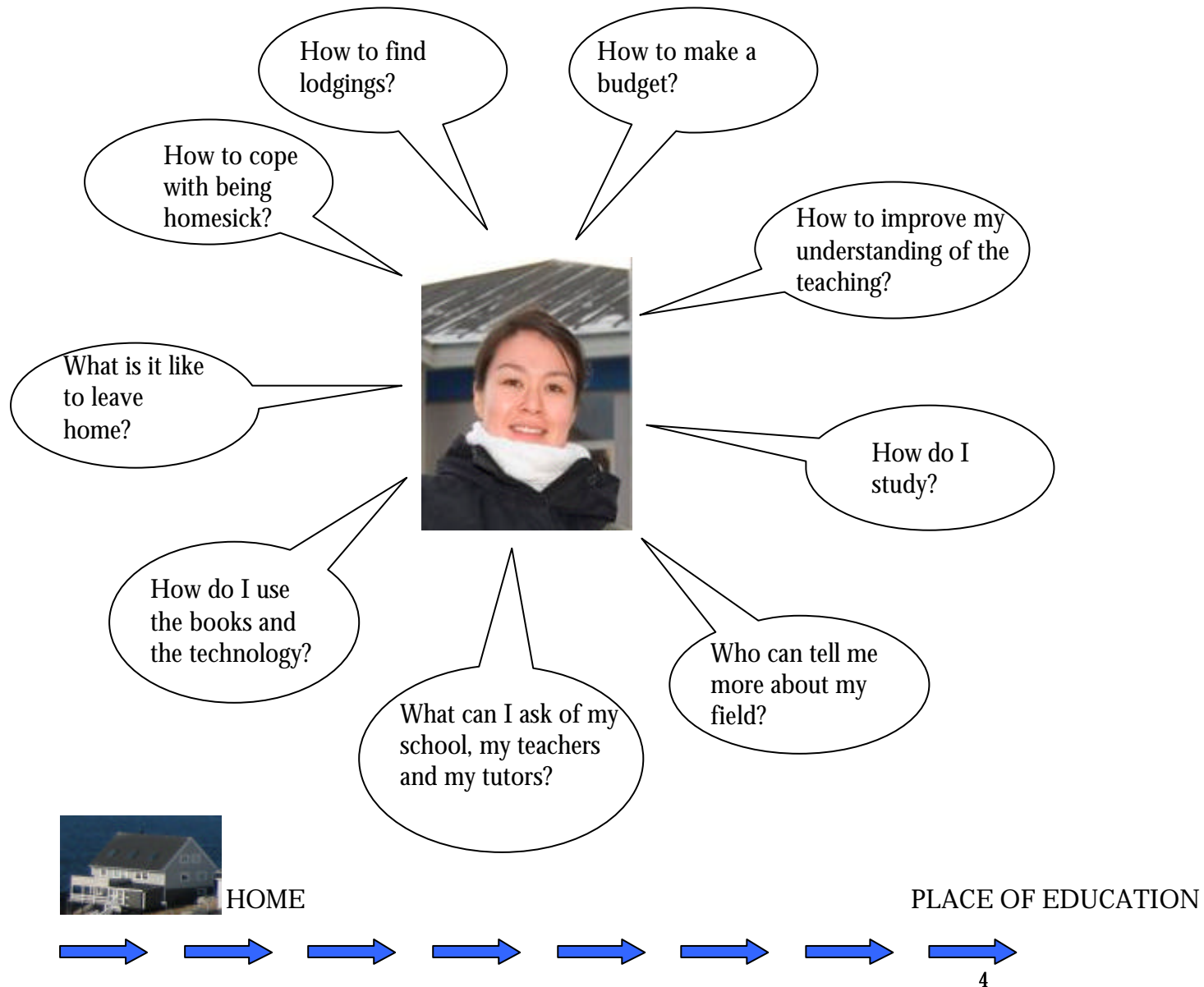
HOME

PLACE OF EDUCATION

Figure 1

Why do Students Drop out?

Many of the student's questions show that he or she is insecure about the educational situation. In the following paragraphs we look at the many problems that the student may experience when embarking on education.
Ideas, suggestions or ways to solve the problems are indicated as 'proposals'.

What is it like to leave home?
The students emphasize that it is difficult to leave home, and move away from the family – which often is the case when they are going to start an education. The educational tutors tell that they use much time talking to the students about how to handle the process of leaving home and what it takes to be on one's own.

The transition from home to education (away from home) is often a vulnerable period for the student, and it often leads to drop-out. Since the educations take place in certain cities, many of the young people have to leave home when they start their educational career. This applies to all educational directions.

Proposal: The education of the tutors should focus more on how to help students dealing with the problems of 'living away from home'.

"I talk a lot with the young students about homesickness, loneliness, and lack of social competences and lack of social network. – We need more educated tutors." (tutor)

"It is difficult to figure out who to talk to about one's problems." (student)

How to cope with being homesick?
Many students experience homesickness when they leave home.
Being homesick makes it difficult for them to concentrate on their studies and do a good job in school. The tutors regard homesickness as a huge problem for the students.

Proposal : The tutors should be able to talk to the students about homesickness and help them master the situation/loss. If the tutors are Greenlanders who themselves have completed an education, they will act as positive role models for the students.

"I call my mom and cry, because I miss my family. But then she tells me to stay – and then I talk to my friends …" (student)

"I am already tired of school, because I am homesick." (student)

How to find lodgings?

There is a need for students' housing facilities close to the educational institutions. If you do not have a (suitable) place to live, it is difficult to study!

Proposal: There must be sufficient housing.

"The fundamental prerequisites for an education (the home) must exist." (tutor)

How to make a budget?

Being economic is difficult for a newcomer. Both students and tutors talk about the economic issue as a huge problem. Occasionally students have no money for food at the end of the month.

Proposal: Tutoring should include budgeting.

"Some students can not afford breakfast." (tutor)

How to improve my understanding of the teaching?

The tuition and the books are in Danish – which is not the mother tongue of the students.

Proposal: Teachers who master both languages – Greenlandic and Danish - will be able to understand what the students can not understand and then be able to communicate with them.

"I am already tired of school because the education is in Danish – and I am not good at Danish." (student)

"Many students prefer to talk and understand Greenlandic." (tutor)

How do I study?

To study requires many skills – professional and personal. Of course you have to be interested in your field and make an effort, but according to the educational institutions the students experience relative few problems of that kind. The real problem lies somewhere else, because the students typically have no role models in their parents or parental generation, and have few or no experience with group work.

Proposal: Students must be students. Some competences (for instance group work) will have to be acquired through the teaching and the educational situations while other competences may be learned through the tutors.

Who can tell me more about my field?

Analysis shows that the teachers spend their time on tasks that they are not supposed to undertake and which they do not master. This happens when the students present them with enormous personal and/or psychological problems with economy, housing, homesickness etc.

When teachers are used - and letting themselves be used - for conversations about social problems, inappropriate mixture of different spheres take place.

There is a (severe) shortage of teachers in the educational system.

Proposal: Teachers must be teachers – allowing for a clear separation between roles and functions. Teachers must present clear and unequivocal professional demands of their students.

The teachers' education needs a high priority; more teachers need to be educated so that the huge shortage in the area is reduced.

"It is very important to be able to work with others when you start an education." (tutor)

What can I ask of my school, my teachers and my tutors?

Analysis shows that the students do not pay sufficient attention to rights and obligations *as students*. The rights encompass access to books, computers, machines etc. plus the possibility to practice democracy. The obligations encompass respect for the education and the professional demands in receiving education: study, prepare, handing in papers, participate professionally and critically in the education and so on.

International research shows that some families expect more of their children than others and thus encourage their children to study, pay attention to school etc. This leads to more homework and better education. Likewise we see that some teachers expect more of their students than others; and again it is reflected in the children; they pay more attention, they have better experiences around the educational sector and they have a more detailed impression of what one can do with education.

Proposal: Both tutors and teachers should take part in the students' process of becoming a student. This will result in (bigger) demands to themselves and to the students.

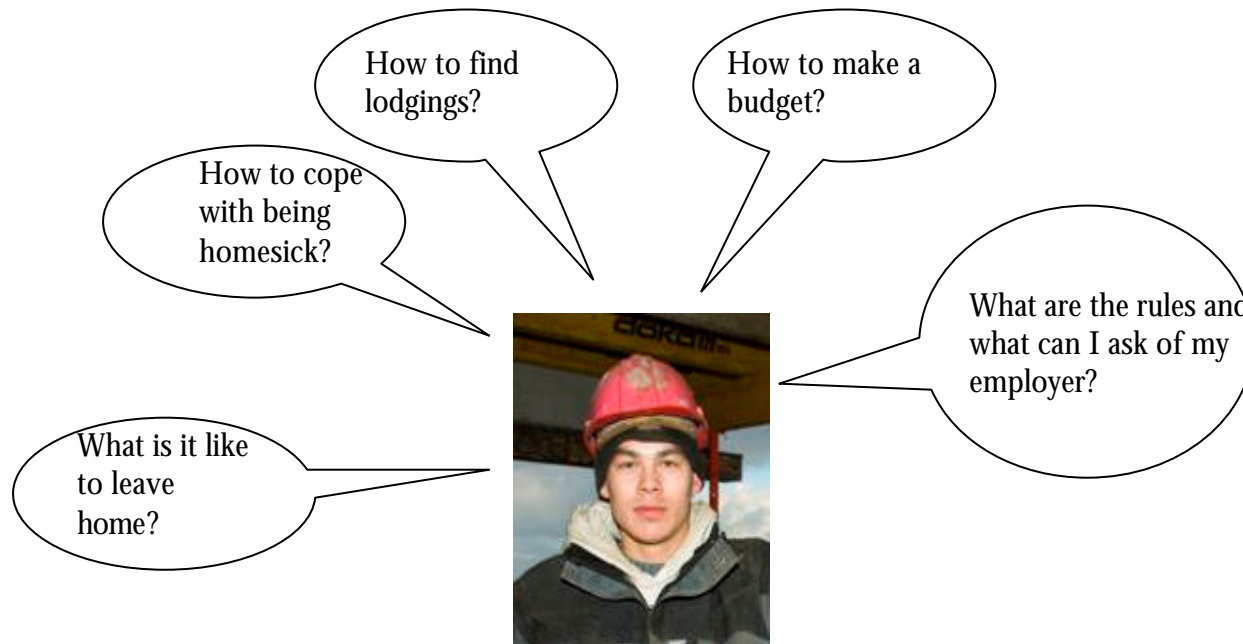**How do I use the books and the technology?**

The technological development is fast changing. And many take advantage of it because the geographical distances are huge. We see exams taking place using webcam, tutoring taking place via the net, and education itself is net-based. It is an important step that this is possible; it is even more important to know, understand and use the many technological possibilities.

Proposal: The difference between what technology makes possible and an education in how to get to know and how to use the new technology must be reduced. The educational institutions must provide the students with the

possibility of getting to know how to master the technology.

From school to apprenticeship:

Many questions arise for the students who are starting apprenticeship.

How to find lodgings?

How to make a budget?

How to cope with being homesick?

What are the rules and what can I ask of my employer?

What is it like to leave home?

SCHOOL   APPRENTICESHIP

Figure 2

9

As an apprentice you may experience the very same problems (see Figure 2) and have identical questions as the student who is embarking on an education (see Figure 1). This involves problems with leaving home, problems with being homesick, of finding a suitable place to live, and economic problems. It is the change from one sphere to another that is risky and problematic. The change itself means that they (again) must establish a new network and a new daily routine. On the previous pages you can read the answers to the questions about moving away from home, homesickness, housing, and economy.

What are the rules and what can I ask of my employer?
The students are often uncertain of the different rules and norms when they become an apprentice. Different factors may mean that they have difficulty in deciphering the new situation: some are not properly introduced by the employer; they experience neglect, lack of respect, and a minority finds that they are being cheated when it comes to their salary.

Occasionally the student may find that the spoken language is just/only Danish.

Proposal: The tutors in the educational institutions may make it easier for the students to move from one place to another – especially if this is done in cooperation with the employers. The tutors must know the conditions and demands of the apprenticeship in order to prevent the student from dropping out of the educational system.

"A mentor-arrangement of some kind is needed – for cultural reasons – in order to secure that the social norms on the job are acquired ." (employer)

"Now I know how to photocopy and journalize material - but everything else is lacking." (apprentice)

From school to work:

Many questions arise for the students who are starting a working career.

How to find lodgings?

How to make a budget?

How to cope with being homesick?

What are the rules and what can I ask of my employer?

What is it like to leave home?
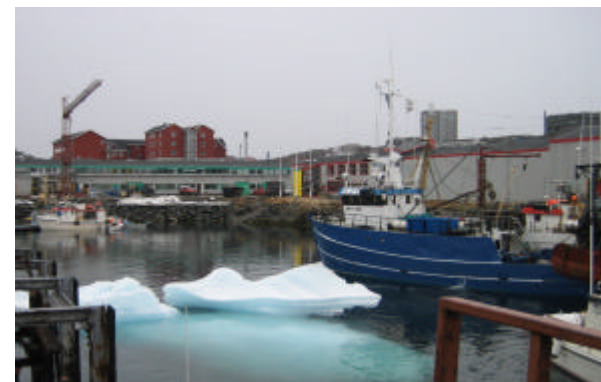
SCHOOL

WORK

Figure 3

11

From graduation to work is a process (see Figure 3) where you may experience the very same problems and have identical questions as the student who is embarking on an education (see Figure 1). This involves problems with leaving home, problems with being homesick, of finding a suitable place to live, and economic problems. It is the change from one sphere to another that is risky and problematic. The change itself means that they (again) must establish a new network and a new daily routine. On the previous pages you can read the answers to the questions about moving away from home, homesickness, housing, and economy.

What are the rules and what can I ask of my employer?
The students are often uncertain of the different rules and norms after graduation when they start a job. Different factors may mean that they have difficulty in deciphering the new situation: some are not properly introduced by the employer; they experience neglect, lack of respect, and a minority finds that they are being cheated when it comes to their salary. Occasionally the student may find that the spoken language is just/only Danish.

Proposal: The tutors in the educational institutions may make the change easier in cooperation with employers and labor unions. This means that tutors should have knowledge abut the labor market and the demands of the labor market in order to reduce and prevent drop-out when the students start to work.

"Young people risk being defeated on the labor market if the change from school to labor market is not handled properly." (the viewpoint is shared by the employers' union and the labor market union)

CONCLUSION

To go against 'social inheritance'
When 1/3 of a population has an education it means that 2/3 do not. In other words: many students come from families with no tradition for education. These students go against their 'social inheritance'.
Experience shows that is difficult to break such an important pattern – thus leaving them with a great risk of not finishing their education.

To Work with the Cultural Dimension
Research carried out under the Educational Reform during the period 2005-2008 show that the students experience many problems when they are in the educational system. They point to housing problems, economic problems, linguistic problems, problems in learning/studying and problems related to tutoring.
Both teachers and tutors confirm the students' perspectives.

To Reduce Educational Drop-out
Above are listed a few proposals that aim on the one hand at a reduction of drop-out in the educational sector and on the other hand at an increase in completion of education. The students are vulnerable when they go to another part of the country to be educated, when they change education or change institution in relation to their education. In other words: change-processes are risky, and consequently teachers and tutors must improve their student guidance or student counseling with regard to the professional aspects in education. Most important is however counseling and tutoring with regard to the personal aspects of student life: how to handle many practical, every-day life situations as well as big emotional questions that are part of life.
The size of the students in the educational sector is increasing. It is time to focus on the content of the educations.
From an educational-political-point-of-view none of the above mentioned problems are unsolvable. Focus on the cultural dimension is required and necessary – and it has to

observe the students' conditions.