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“Greenland Education Sector; Study to assess the current overall educational and vocational guidance effort”

Final Report

August 2019

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"This report has been prepared by Dr. Søren Kristensen with the assistance of the European Commission. The content of this report is the sole responsibility of AESA and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission."

EUROPEAN UNION

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**Final Report
August 2019**

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0. Executive summary

This evaluative study deals with developments in the guidance efforts in Greenland after the enactment of the law on educational and vocational guidance from 2013. It was carried out in the period February – May 2019.

The 2013 Act was formulated on the basis of a thorough preparatory work that involved several dedicated studies and evaluations, notably a major evaluation from 2011. In addition, the guidance provisions preceding those laid down in the law were established in an executive order from 1982, so there has been a very long period leading up to the law where experiences could be harvested and processed. The drafting of the legal text was thus done on a solid basis of evidence. An analysis of the legal text reveals this to be well structured and logically coherent: it defines key concepts, lists the challenges, identifies target groups and actors, sets competence levels of guidance practitioners, describes interventions and assigns responsibilities. With the exception of one (the separation of guidance from the delivery of education), it addresses all the major proposals and recommendations made in the 2011 evaluation.

The overall impact of the law since the enactment, however, is hard to identify. Developments in the areas which the Act on guidance addresses – notably enrolment and drop-out and retention in an educational context – demonstrate, at best, only very modest improvements that cannot be called statistically significant. While it is true that these issues are also influenced by other factors in Greenlandic society that arguably carry more weight, it raises the question whether there are aspects of the Act or the way in which it has been implemented that have prevented guidance efforts from making a greater contribution towards achieving more marked results. This could e.g. be elements missing, provisions not properly implemented, inferior quality in the delivery of guidance, and/or problems in coordinating the work of actors, leading to overlaps and lacunae in coverage.

The evaluation reveals that the devil lies in the detail. In many places, the Act refrains from providing further specifications on implementation, indicating instead that the Government of Greenland “may lay down more detailed rules”. For most of these, this has not happened, and this has left actors and stakeholders in a limbo where they resort to their own interpretations, which may not necessarily coincide. Only in a few cases – like e.g. with the National Guidance Council of Greenland, which was set up due to provisions in the law – has there been a follow-up in the shape of an executive order that fills in the blank spaces left by the law. It is also remarkable that the guidance efforts of educational establishments, even though these are explicitly given the responsibility for transition and retention guidance, are not specified at all. Instead, the law refers to the “rules that apply for the relevant programmes”. However, the legal documents (executive orders) for these rules antedate the 2013 Act and make only scant reference to guidance.

The lack of clarity and authoritative guidelines are in particular affecting two issues of guidance provision mentioned in the Act, namely concerning the overall coordination of the guidance effort and the requirement for outreach guidance and in relation to young people in the age bracket 16-18 (the so called “youth target group”). In the case of the former, especially the remit and exact role and status of the Centre for National Guidance need to be determined, and its status *via-a-vis* the Government of Greenland clearly established if it is to assume the role that it is intended to play. For the latter, only the requirement and the target group are contained in the legal text, whereas issues like frequency and methods for performing the legal requirement of outreach guidance remain up to the individual actors to decide on. Even though data are

incomplete, evidence from qualitative sources indicate that this creates uneven coverage and lacunae, where potential beneficiaries are not captured by the efforts.

Furthermore, in two cases, the provisions made in the Act have as yet been imperfectly implemented. This concerns first and foremost the virtual guidance portal, which should allow both citizens and guidance counsellors to access relevant information using a “one-stop-shop” with only one entry point. There are, at present, several potential portal candidates, but none of these live up to what one may reasonably expect from such a portal. The other issue concerns the ambition to set up a national database with statistics that can help monitor quantitative developments in guidance. A system (IT Reg) has been developed but is as yet not fully implemented. The major flaw, however, is that guidance practitioners and administrative staff who are feeding data into the system do so in very different ways, thereby rendering the contents unreliable and largely useless for purposes of assessing the scope and effect of the guidance effort.

In terms of quality, there are many good examples of practice, but an overall quality framework for guidance – commonly accepted principles of quality and quality assurance strategies – was not found. This is problematic at a time where – according to informants – quality is under pressure due to increased workloads in the relevant organisational contexts. Moreover, quality in delivery is also negatively affected by a high turnover among guidance staff and the lack of guidance strategies at organisational level.

The study concludes that the law is a useful instrument for the organisation and implementation of the guidance effort in Greenland, but that the necessary follow-up in terms of executive orders, instructions and work procedure descriptions must be brought in order before it can achieve the intended effects. This goes in particular for issues related to the overall coordination of the guidance effort, the frequency and methods used by the Majoriaq centres for outreach guidance, and the guidance in educational establishments. It furthermore recommends that resources are made available to produce the virtual guidance portal, and that the IT Reg system is optimised and made simpler and more intuitive for users so that it can function not just as an administrative instrument in individual cases, but also to create a valid and reliable base of evidence to monitor relevant developments.

The evaluation does not recommend any major organisational reshuffling. One proposal made by the 2011 evaluation, that was not taken on board in the law, was to separate guidance from the delivery of education and training, as institutional interests may jeopardise the impartiality of guidance. The evaluation did not find any conclusive evidence to indicate that such a separation could be beneficial, especially considering the bureaucratic turmoil that this might produce. However, many informants pointed out that guidance tasks are under pressure from other tasks of the organisations that deliver guidance, resulting in inferior quality. Consequently, it might be a better course of action to ring-fence the work of guidance counsellors to prevent that it is squeezed by other tasks in the organisations which deliver guidance.

1. Introduction

Guidance is generally perceived as an important instrument in educational and employment policies. It helps citizens attain a better life quality by assisting them negotiate meaningful trajectories in a complex world, and it supports societies in providing wealth and welfare through well-functioning labour markets with a workforce possessing the knowledge, skills and competences necessary to power industry and trade.

The potential impact of guidance is particularly relevant in the context of Greenland, which faces enormous challenges in a period where the accelerating globalisation of the economy, coupled with a drive towards a higher degree of autonomy, requires increased resources both of a human and financial character. However, for years the educational system has been characterized by alarming rates of early leaving and drop-out, coupled with serious skills shortages on the labour market which threaten to stunt economic growth.

To ascertain how the Greenlandic guidance system was responding to these challenges, a nationwide evaluation was carried out in 2011. The evaluation assessed the organization of the guidance effort, the role and involvement of stakeholder institutions, the competences of guidance staff, and examined the legal framework governing the guidance effort. On the basis of the findings, it formulated a number of recommendations on how this could be improved. In response to this, a new legal act on educational and vocational guidance was passed by the Greenlandic parliament in November 2013, to a large extent based on the findings of the evaluation¹. In the 2013 Act, a special emphasis is laid on the necessity to help young people make the right career choices and to prevent early leaving and drop-out in the Greenlandic educational system (§1).

However, since the legislation was enacted and till the present time (2019), no systematic knowledge has been generated about the implementation and the impact of the measures introduced. Important questions thus remain unanswered: What has been the effect of the law? To what extent has the legislation offered appropriate solutions to the challenges Greenlandic society faces? Have the measures introduced actually been implemented according to the intentions of the law? And what structural, institutional and/or practical challenges still persist to hinder the effective functioning of the guidance system?

Therefore, in 2018 the Government of Greenland (*Naalakkersuisut*), jointly with the European Commission under the Partnership Agreement from 2014, took the initiative to carry out a new evaluation study to throw light on these issues. Following a Call for Tender, the contract was awarded to a consortium headed by the consultancy enterprise AESA (Agriconsulting Europe S.A) in December 2018. Work on the evaluation started in February 2019 and was carried out by a team consisting of Dr. Søren Kristensen (researcher) and Mr. Bjørn Chemnitz (interpreter).

1.1 Tasks and priorities according to the Terms of Reference

The exact tasks, priorities and deliverables are given in document with terms of reference (ToR), which accompanied the tender procedure.

The overall *purpose* of the evaluation is to scrutinize the current state of affairs of guidance provision in Greenland, assessing the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the overall efforts.

¹ Inatsisartutlov no. 4 of November 29, 2013 concerning educational and vocational guidance.

In doing so, it should take a specific point of departure in the 2013 legislation of guidance (which was elaborated on the basis of the recommendations of the 2011 evaluation) and investigate the extent this has been successful, and what challenges remain to be tackled in order to improve guidance services in Greenland (p. 2 of the ToR).

The findings of the evaluation should lead to the formulation of concrete recommendations on how guidance provision may be improved, in particular with regard to the overall organization and coordination of services (p. 2 of the ToR).

The ToR outline 5 *specific objectives* that the evaluation must address (direct quote from p. 3 of the ToR):

- Examine the existing legislation and organization of the guidance effort. Are there any overlaps? To what extent is the system overseable and working in a transparent way?
- Examine the quantity/scope of the guidance effort. How many end-users/participants are engaged in different forms of guidance activities?
- Examine the quality of the guidance effort, including the perspective of the end-users/participants in guidance activities
- Identify challenges, past and present, which may hinder the implementation of the legal act of guidance
- Provide recommendations for improvements.

The ToR does not prescribe any particular *methodology* for carrying out the evaluation and leaves it up to the evaluator to make proposals for a such in the tender and the inception report. However, in terms of information sources it underlines the necessity of including end users of guidance services/beneficiaries and stipulates that the evaluation must find ways to reflect the views and opinions of these (p. 1 of the ToR), as they were not included in the 2011 evaluation. Another demand is the need for the team of evaluators to visit the principal towns of all 5 Greenlandic municipalities (Nuuk, Ilulissat, Aasiaat, Sisimiut and Qaqortoq) and conduct interviews with actors and stakeholders there.

The final deliverable of the evaluation study is defined as a report, written in English and submitted for approval to the Government of Greenland and the European Commission in June 2019.

1.2 Definitions and limitations

“Guidance” is an umbrella term that may cover multifarious activities, not all of which are equally relevant for this evaluative study.

The two terms “guidance” and “counselling” are often used together, but for the purposes of this report, they are perceived as two separate processes. *Guidance* is the process of helping an individual to make choices in connection with education, training and employment. This happens through dialogue which helps the guidance-seeker’s self-reflection unfold, the provision of relevant information, and in some cases practical assistance (e.g. in relation to application procedures etc.). This is often subsumed under the heading “careers guidance”.

Counselling is about helping an individual resolve a specific problem or issue, where help and assistance is needed. Counselling is thus not primarily about making choices but finding a way of coping.

In reality, the boundary between the two concepts is often blurred, and guidance practitioners will often engage in counselling in areas which do not require specialist competences, and the other way around. Hence the term “guidance counsellor”, which is often used as a common denominator for guidance practitioners, a term which has also been used in this sense in this text². However, the distinction is important in relation to the 2013 Act and a subsequent revision from November 2018.

In the original version of the 2013 Act (§ 18), the tasks of guidance are defined in 7 points, viz.

1. Guidance on education and training in Greenland;
2. Guidance on education and training outside of Greenland;
3. Guidance on employment and career possibilities;
4. Counselling on economic issues, including study grants, and the completion of application forms;
5. Counselling on accommodation;
6. Guidance on how to seek assistance in connection with personal and psychological problems; and
7. Guidance on application procedures in relation with enrolment in education and training, and application for study grants.

This list corresponds to the contents of the basic guidance counsellor training programme offered by the National Centre for Guidance³, and could be a fairly accurate job description for any mainstream guidance practitioner. The term “counselling” appears twice, each time in connection with specific, practical issues (economy and accommodation) of no great complexity. However, in a 2018 revision of the law⁴, an 8th item is added to the list, namely “Psychological and social counselling, including therapeutic treatment, to people in education and training”. This is a task that requires specialist competences and is not something that mainstream guidance counsellors should dabble with. It therefore sits somewhat uncomfortably with the other items on the list (e.g. no. 6!) but was added to give the National Centre for Guidance a legal basis for managing the specialised student counselling service (*Studenterrådgivningen*).

This evaluation is primarily concerned with guidance in the 2013-definition, which excludes counselling in connection with personal and psychological problems. The counselling services carried out by *Studenterrådgivningen* was generally met with praise from all actors and stakeholders and is generally not a problematic issue in the context of guidance in Greenland – apart from lamentations that the actual provisions made may not be enough to cover the real demand. It has, however, not been targeted in this evaluative study.

1.3 Project implementation

The evaluative study was conducted in 4 phases:

² See e.g. <http://www.elgpn.eu/glossary>.

³ See <https://aqgut.gl/vejledergrunduddannelsen-vgu/>.

⁴ Inatsisartutlov no. 12 of November 27, 2018 concerning a change in the 2013 legislation on educational and vocational guidance.

1. An inception phase (where the methodology was developed and sources of information identified);
2. A fact-finding phase in Greenland;
3. A consolidation and writing phase (where lacunae in the information harvested were chased up and the text of the report written up),
4. A validation phase.

The inception phase started in late February, and the fact-finding phase took place from March 6 to April 13, 2019. The consolidation and writing phase lasted from April 22 to May 15. The validation phase consisted of two validation meetings, carried out with the government of Greenland (June 2019) and the European Commission (August 2019).

1.4 The report

This text represents the draft final report, which has been submitted to the Government of Greenland and the European Commission for approval.

The contents of the report are structured in 8 sections of unequal length:

- *An executive summary;*
- *An introduction* (rationale for the evaluation, tasks and priorities, project implementation, and readers’ guide);
- *A methodology section* (description of methodology adopted, informants and concrete methods, and problems encountered during the evaluation process);
- *A background section* (description of the Greenlandic guidance system and its actors and stakeholders);
- *An overall impact evaluation* of the 2013 Act and the measures contained therein. This section serves a dual purpose, in so far as it also gives an overview of the current situation and the challenges that guidance is up against in Greenland;
- *A detailed analysis and evaluation of current guidance provision.* This is based on the legal framework and current practice, primarily using the information gathered from actors and stakeholders during the ding phase.
- *Conclusions*
- *Recommendations*

In the annexes to the report, the sources of written information are listed (bibliography) along with copies of the interview guides used for major types of informants.

2. Methodology

The evaluation has been carried out in two phases, which have each been given a separate section in the report:

The first phase was an impact evaluation (or, as it is sometimes called, a “theory-driven evaluation”⁵), which was undertaken on the basis of the *intervention theory* that is also reflected in the 2013 Act (§1): namely that guidance is an important tool in the efforts to help users making timely and relevant career choices and to combat drop-out and early leaving. It asks the question whether the enactment of the law has had any statistically significant impact on the situation concerning the above issues (always taking into account, however, that guidance is not the only variable influencing these). The main source of data was statistics provided by the official statistics bureau of the Government of Greenland (Statistics Greenland).

The second phase builds on the first and is an analysis of the current guidance efforts in Greenland. The starting point was the text of the 2013 Act and the provisions it makes for guidance, which was then compared to the situation as it was encountered during the fact-finding phase. It asks the question whether there is anything in the legal framework and the way this has been implemented and interpreted that may explain the effects (or the lack thereof) that were highlighted in the impact evaluation phase. The main sources of data here were information coming from qualitative sources (document analysis, observation, survey, qualitative interviews). The overall approach was mainly an inductive one, where the framework of understanding was developed and ongoingly refined during the fieldwork phase in what is known as the “hermeneutic circle”.

Even though the evaluation thus used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the emphasis was (for reasons given below) clearly on the former, with qualitative interviews as the main vehicle of data collection. To ensure some kind of consistency and comparability, interview guides had been developed beforehand for all major target groups. These were used for all interview sessions, but interviews were semi-structured, with space for individual variations. As insights accumulated during the empirical phase, this inevitably brought with it the inclusion of new and more sophisticated questions without disturbing the overall pattern of the session.

Interviews with end users/beneficiaries were conducted as group interviews and using a phenomenological approach, where informants were encouraged to give their “take” on the meaning of an experience without interruption from the interviewer except to keep up the flow. Validation happened in the shape of a triangulation of statements from different informants. For individual interviews with guidance staff, management representatives etc.), short (1-2 p.) summaries of all interviews were elaborated and afterwards sent to the interviewees for validation.

Despite its enormous geographical expanse, Greenland is actually a rather small community of some 55.000 souls, making *representativity* of informants less of an issue here than it would have been elsewhere in national contexts. However, there are no representative organisations for parents and pupils, and the organization of university students was temporarily inactive during the fact-finding mission. Parents interviewed were thus somewhat arbitrarily selected.

⁵ Chen (1990) taken from Dahler-Larsen and Krogstrup pp. 96-113.

Learners in upper secondary general education and initial vocational education and training (IVET) as well as informants outside of the educational system were selected on site (e.g. among people present in Majoriaq centres on the day these were visited) to avoid the risk of any bias in the selection.

As a matter of principle, all interviews were carried out under a pledge of anonymity in the final report, except in cases where the identity of the informant would inevitably be revealed from the nature of the statements made.

The inclusion of a Greenlandic interpreter in the team made it possible to offer all informants who so wished the opportunity to have questions translated and speak in Greenlandic during the interview. It was generally perceived as a great asset, especially by end users/beneficiaries of guidance, to have interpretation into and from Greenlandic.

2.1 Concrete methods used and informants involved

The evaluation was carried out using a mixture of methods, but with an emphasis on qualitative methods.

- *Qualitative interviews*: During the roundtrip to the principal towns of all 5 of Greenland municipalities, all major actors and stakeholders of the guidance system were interviewed along with representative groups of users of guidance services (Majoriaq Centres, institutes of higher general education, vocational schools, institutes of further and higher education, institutes of primary and lower secondary education, folk high schools, the National Centre for Guidance, the confederation of employers' associations, youth projects, relevant ministries). In total, 36 individual interviews and 17 group interviews were carried out, lasting app. from 45-60 mins. each. All group interviews were with end users/beneficiaries of guidance services and were conducted with groups of 3-5 persons.;
- *Document analysis*: Throughout the lifetime of the project, relevant documentation was identified and analysed, both from paper and web-based sources (a list of all the documentation consulted is included as an annex to the report);
- *Observation*: The team participated as observers in a seminar for Majoriaq guidance staff in the south of Greenland;
- *Quantitative material (statistics)*: Relevant statistics was identified and appropriate datasets retrieved during meetings with Statistics Greenland and the Ministry of Labour in Nuuk;
- *Survey*: A limited (written) survey was carried out among guidance counsellors across Majoriaq Centres and educational institutions in Greenland in order to underpin findings from qualitative interviews and to test the continued relevance of conclusions from a similar, larger-scale survey carried out among guidance staff in Greenland in connection with the 2011-evaluation.

In addition to the above sources, information was also extracted during meetings with various experts e.g. from the University of Greenland, the Greenlandic Houses in Denmark, an external lecturer at the course for guidance counsellors in Greenland as well as researchers involved in evaluations of Majoriaq and in a study on young people not in employment, education or training (NEETS) in Greenland.

2.2 Problems encountered

The roundtrip to the 5 Greenlandic towns during the fact-finding phase was executed more or less according to plan with a delay of only 2,5 days, which is a very positive outcome given weather conditions normally prevailing in Greenland at the time of the mission (March/April). All scheduled interviews were conducted as foreseen, except for 3 individual interviews which were cancelled due to illness and no-show. This did, however, not adversely affect the quality of the information gathered, as it was possible to conduct extra interviews with similar informants to compensate for this. One of the cancelled interviews was later carried out as an email consultation.

The major difficulty encountered concerned the availability of pertinent (and valid) statistical material. In the Terms of Reference (ToR), it was stipulated that the project include information on the quantity/scope of the guidance effort (numbers of end-users/participants engaged in guidance activities), and how many of these were re-entries. The statistics gathered by Statistics Greenland are extracted from data from the educational grants scheme (figures for enrolment, retention, completion), and can therefore only indirectly be related to guidance activities.

Educational establishments are not required to register their guidance activities, which means that an important part of the total guidance effort goes undocumented, except for the indirect evidence that can be gleaned from data on enrolment, drop-out and completion. As regards guidance services for citizens outside of the education and training system (carried out by the so called Majoriaq-centres), statistics exist for at least aspects of the guidance service (registered in the so called *IT Reg* administrative system), but the data is not reliable, as individual centres were found to operate with different understandings of how registration should be done and what should be registered. This state of affairs also affects another requirement of the ToR, namely that of extracting the number of people engaged in guidance activities who are afterwards enrolled in education and training or active on the labour market. As registration of provision of guidance services to individuals is highly erratic, the numbers given for this in the report are therefore based on incomplete/unreliable statistics and can at best serve as an indication only.

3. Background

This section gives a brief overview of the guidance system in Greenland in order to provide a framework of understanding for the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluative study. It is based on the provision of the 2013 legislation with later revisions⁶ as well as information and observations of concrete practices collected during the fact-finding mission.

The 2013 Act identifies three overall tasks for the guidance efforts in Greenland:

Transition guidance is the guidance that helps beneficiaries to progress between educational establishments (e.g. from primary and lower secondary school to upper secondary education and training and from there to higher education and employment);

Retention guidance is the guidance that helps prevent drop-out and early leaving within educational establishments; and

Outreach guidance is guidance that proactively reaches out to potential beneficiaries, typically those who are outside of the system or who are not motivated to involve guidance counselling in their life trajectory (e.g. NEETs).

These three concepts are, of course, descriptive analytical abstracts, but they are used as the basis for the organizational principles underlying the structure of the Greenlandic guidance system.

3.1 Transition and retention guidance

According to statistics, only app. 40% of the Greenlandic population possess qualifications above primary and lower secondary education level. Also, drop-out rates from Greenlandic educational establishments are generally unacceptably high⁷. Guidance is in the law perceived as an instrument which can help reduce or prevent drop-out and early leaving by facilitating choices and eliminating barriers to completion.

According to the legislation (§10), the responsibility for transition and retention guidance clearly lies with the educational establishments. However, § 19 item 2 states that local Majoriaq-centres (see below) must give assistance to the educational establishments in “preparing and implementing” transition guidance. The nature and scope of this assistance, however, is not further detailed in the law. As for retention guidance, this is, in principle, the exclusive domain of the educational establishments with the exception of initial vocational education and guidance, where Majoriaq-centres may be involved in guidance concerning personal and social issues for apprentices in their placements. The involvement is determined by a principle of geographical proximity⁸, so that Majoriaq will be responsible for apprentices on locations where Majoriaq is present, but where there is no vocational school offering the relevant programme⁹.

⁶ Inatsisartutlov no. 12 of November 27, 2018 concerning a change in the 2013 legislation on educational and vocational guidance.

⁷ See detailed statistics further on.

⁸ Instruction issued by the GoG on August 28, 2017.

⁹ Which is the case for most of Greenland. Most IVET-programmes are only offered by one vocational school in one location (e.g. building and construction programmes in Sisimiut, programmes in the field of gastronomy in Narsaq. etc.). Learners wishing to enroll will therefore have to relocate to here but can undertake their mandatory placement periods all over the country. However, Majoriaq-centres are represented in 17 locations in Greenland.

Educational establishments have their own guidance counsellors to address issues related to retention and transition. This goes for –

- Primary and lower secondary schools (*folkeskoler*)
- Upper secondary general education (*gymnasier*)
- Vocational schools (*brancheskoler*)
- Institutes of higher education (notably *Ilisimatusarfik* – the University of Greenland)
- Folk High Schools (*højskoler*)
- Continuation schools (so called *efterskoler* – boarding schools offering the 10th and the 11th grade¹⁰ of lower secondary general education)

Apart from stating where the overall responsibility lies, however, the 2013 legislation does not in any detail prescribe exactly what the guidance effort implies for these actors, other than a broad statement that “Guidance must be delivered according to the rules that apply for the relevant education” (§10). However, when cross-referring to relevant legislation¹¹, there is little to be found about rules for guidance. For mainstream education and training, the relevant legislation makes the following statements about guidance:

Act on primary and lower secondary education: (§13, item 3):

“Pupils in the leaving classes must be given guidance on educational and vocational choices”

Act on vocational education and training (§20, item 2):

“Learners must be offered guidance with regards to educational and vocational choices. Naalakkersuisut may lay down more detailed rules concerning this”.

Act on upper secondary general education (§39):

“The school offers individual support, counselling and guidance concerning choice of educational programmes, optional subjects, completion of the education and educational and vocational trajectories”

Act on the University of Greenland (§8):

“Ilisimatusarfik offers students guidance on relevant matters in connection with their study programme, on the possibility for study periods outside of Greenland, and subsequent employment possibilities”

For all of the educational establishments covered by the above legislation, no further substantiation of the guidance effort exists (e.g. in the shape of executive orders). In the case of primary and lower secondary education, however, the law furthermore stipulates that schools must elaborate a so called “action plan” (*handleplan*) for each pupil before he or she leaves school with information pertinent for later educational and vocational choices, and it makes provisions for a specific subject – personal development – which should provide pupils with information and tools to prepare them for transitions to adult and working life. These action plans constitute an important element in the guidance efforts directed at school leavers,

¹⁰ Which in other school systems would count as the 9th and the 10th grade, as the (obligatory) pre-school year in Greenland is counted as grade 1.

¹¹ Inatsisartutlov no. 15 of December 3, 2012 on primary and lower secondary education, Inatsisartutlov no. 10 of May 19, 2011 on vocational training, Inatsisartutlov no. 13 of November 2011 on upper secondary general education, and Inatsisartutlov no. 19 of November 19, 2007 on the University of Greenland.

primarily as a tool for identifying those that do not continue in upper secondary education and training after leaving lower secondary school.

In the absence of detailed rules, it consequently is up to the individual educational establishment to decide on how they are going to organise the guidance effort in their context, including what type of background guidance staff must have, what kind of elements and methods it comprises, how and to what extent they are going to register guidance work, the amount of resources they are going to allocate to this aspect of their activity, and not least how they are going to liaise and cooperate with Majoriaq on transition guidance, as stipulated in §19 item 2 of the law on educational and vocational guidance.

During the fact-finding missions, interviews were made with all types of educational establishments in Greenland apart from the continuation schools (*efterskoler*).¹² A routine question in the interviews with management representatives concerned the existence of any written guidance strategies for the establishment to clarify how they stood on the issues mentioned above. Only one of the establishments had an explicit, written guidance strategy or policy, outlining tasks and resources – even though a few had elaborated a retention strategy to combat drop-out, which involved guidance staff. For practically all the others, a broad and general job description for guidance staff was the only written material on how guidance was perceived and implemented in their context.

3.2 Outreach guidance

Whereas transition and retention guidance primarily are concerned with people in education and training, outreach guidance concerns those outside the educational system. This is a very diverse and dispersed group, and one which can be hard to reach. Therefore, special measures must be adopted to ensure that these can benefit from guidance services. Of particular interest here is the so called “youth target group” (*ungemålgruppen*), which is defined as young people who have left primary and lower secondary education and are not engaged in education nor in employment (NEETS). These young people are a source of much concern, since they comprise more than one third of all young people between 16 and 25¹³. The Act on educational and vocational guidance from 2013 specifically mentions outreach guidance with regard to young people who are not engaged in education or employment after primary and lower secondary school, or who have dropped out of an educational establishment. There is a special emphasis on young people in the age bracket 16-18¹⁴.

The major actor in outreach guidance are the so called Majoriaq centres, which are municipal service centres in charge of guidance for people outside of the educational system and for upskilling of people with low or no formal education and training. Also, since 2015 they fulfil the function of job centres, mediating employment and administrating grants and benefits for unemployed and people undergoing rehabilitation processes. The Majoriaq centres constitute a structure which is unique to Greenland and which has evolved over several decades through the amalgamation of various municipal services. Whereas educational establishments belong under the Ministry of Education, Majoriaq-centres are under the aegis of the Ministry of Labour, and their guidance and upskilling activities are financed through a so called “performance contract”

¹² Of which there are two in Greenland, located in Maniitsoq and Qasigiannuik respectively. They could not be visited as they lay outside of the trajectory of the fact-finding mission.

¹³ More detailed statistics supplied below.

¹⁴ See Uddannelsesplan II 2018, p. 35.

(*resultatkontrakt*) with the Ministry¹⁵. Majoriaq centres are regulated by specific legislation¹⁶, which was enacted in 2015. The name “Majoriaq” is thus of a later date than the 2013 law, but the construction with a municipal actor in the field of guidance goes back decades in time. The guidance activities of Majoriaq are also covered in the 2013 legislation on educational and vocational guidance, which speaks about “municipal guidance centres” (§11).

The Majoriaq centres perform a number of guidance activities, including guidance and practical assistance to people applying for enrolment in education and training programmes and career guidance to job seekers and people in rehabilitation schemes. Moreover, they must “cooperate with schools of primary and lower secondary education on guidance for the leaving classes” (§2 item 5 in the law on Majoriaq-centres) and provide assistance to other educational establishments with transition guidance (see above). The precise nature of this cooperation is not specified in the Act of 2013, but §19 item 5 mentions that the Naalakkersuisut may lay down rules and procedures for this.

Neither is the concept of “outreach guidance” specified in the 2013 Act – how it should be implemented and who is in charge of this activity. Since it concerns people who have left the educational system, however, it will in most cases be the Majoriaq centres which perform this function of the overall guidance effort. Despite the fact that a large volume of work has been carried out in recent years to describe tasks and work procedures of the Majoriaq centres, resulting in 8 large folders with very detailed descriptions, “outreach guidance” has not been included in this as an official job function. Neither is the activity described in the performance contract with the Ministry. Hence it is – once again – up to the individual actor (here: centre or municipal authority) to decide on how this will be carried out, resulting in an opaque and non-regulated field of activity with very diverse approaches.

The 2013 Act does, however, stipulate that the Majoriaq centres must elaborate a personal education and training plan for all young people under 18, who have left primary and lower secondary school and are not engaged in employment, education or training, or who have dropped out of an educational programme. It follows from this that they must identify all those belonging to this target group and carry out interviews in order to do this.

This is done in different ways in different centres, but the most prevalent seems to be the “Qaqortoq-model”, which is named after the Majoriaq centre in the eponymous town, in which this procedure was developed. In the Qaqortoq-model, the local Majoriaq centre obtains from the local primary and lower secondary school(s) contact detail(s) of all pupils in the leaving class – e.g. through the action plans, which the schools must share with the Majoriaq Centres. The centre then proceeds to check up on the status of these in the autumn after they have left school. Through the personal code numbers, the centre can cross-reference with information retrieved from the IT Reg system (see below) on those pupils who have enrolled in educational activities, and they will be able to extract information on employment status from municipal registers. By eliminating these, the centre is left with a list of those who are not in education, training or employment, and they can subsequently contact these and take appropriate action. Majoriaq centres are required to register this in the IT Reg system, but unfortunately this is not done in a uniform way across the country. Many centres will thus not register outreach guidance activities as such, but only the outcome of the activity (e.g. if the beneficiary enrolls in an upskilling course). This means that the statistics which can be retrieved from the IT Reg system show an unrealistically low number of outreach guidance activities for Greenland (55 for 2017

¹⁵ All contracts can be viewed at <https://www.majoriaq.gl/da/Ansats/Resultatkontrakter>.

¹⁶ Inatsisartutlov no. 28 of December 2015 on job-, guidance and upskilling centres.

and 47 for 2018). However, some informants from Majoriaq staff have indicated that outreach guidance has been given a lower priority in recent years due to an increased administrative workload after the recent amalgamation where the centres also took over job centre functions.

The Majoriaq centres are not the only actors in the field of outreach guidance. Various private and public projects target the NEET-group in Greenland and incorporate guidance in their activities. The *NUIKI-project* was set up in 2012 with a donation from the Danish Villum Foundation and with funds from the GoG. It targets young people in remote settlements, who do not have any formal qualifications and where there is no Majoriaq presence. Through a combination of formal and non-formal upskilling, guidance and practical support it aims to bring these to enrol in formal education or training programmes. The project period expired in 2018 having involved nearly 300 young people. However, the activities have now been integrated into the portfolio of the Ministry of Labour, and a budget line for this has been included in the Finance Act for 2019¹⁷. It is envisaged also to use the approach in other contexts than isolated settlements.

On a smaller scale, *Timi Asimi* is a private project which teaches young people in the age group 16-25 life skills and encourages them to make a fresh start in life through physical training and outdoor activity. Personal and educational guidance is incorporated into the concept¹⁸. Timi Asimi started up in 2011 and is financed through contributions from municipalities and enterprise sponsors.

Besides these actors, there are also staff with a guidance function employed at the Greenlandic detention centres (there are no prisons in Greenland). These were not interviewed for the study, however.

3.3. The National Centre for Guidance

In the 2013 Act, it is underlined (§3) that the overall responsibility for guidance provision rests with the Government of Greenland (Naalakkersuisut). This comprises –

- Evaluation and development of the guidance effort
- Coordination of guidance activities
- Information on guidance
- Production and distribution of guidance material
- Training of guidance staff
- Supervision in relation to local guidance centres
- Knowledge-sharing, and
- Support for networking

In the extension of the law from 2018, “psychological and social counselling, including therapeutic treatment, for people in education and training” is added to this listing. Further on (§4, 5 and 8, further functions are added, namely the creation of a virtual guidance portal and a national dialogue forum, and the provision of secretarial assistance to a Greenlandic Guidance Forum of stakeholders in guidance. In §6 it is added: “To carry out the tasks in § 3-5 and § 8, or

¹⁷ www.nuiki.gl. Representatives from NUIKI were interviewed during the fact-finding mission.

¹⁸ www.timiasimi.gl.

parts thereof, the GoG can set up a national centre for guidance”. Such a centre was set up in the framework of the Ministry of Education in 2014¹⁹.

Precisely what the role of the national centre is actually difficult to ascertain, as it has no official remit. However, in the annual Financial Act, the centre is allocated a budget with reference to the above list, which is copy-pasted from the text of the 2013 Act. It can therefore be assumed that its role comprises all of the above listed tasks, but in principle this is a temporary measure which requires renewal every year. Even so, it is not further explained in the law nor in any subsequent documents how key terms are defined (“evaluation and development”, “coordination”, “supervision”, “knowledge-sharing”), and neither are there any indications of any means of enforcement that the centre can dispose of to execute these tasks, especially in a situation where the it is under the aegis of one ministry but with an important part of the guidance scene (Majoriaq centres) belonging to another.

From the onset, the centre’s activities have focused around two core tasks. One is the training of guidance staff, where the centre organises and runs the “Basic Programme for Guidance Practitioners”, which is an 8-module post-secondary qualification providing the necessary knowledge, skills and competences for practitioners in the guidance system. The course is obligatory for all guidance staff in Majoriaq centres but is optional for guidance staff in educational establishments²⁰. It also offers 3 additional modules²¹ and develops and offers short, topical courses on guidance-related matters. The other is the so called “Students’ Counselling Service” (*Studenterrådgivningen*), which has a presence in all 5 of Greenland’s major towns and is manned by qualified psychologists and social workers. The Students’ Counselling Service is there to alleviate the work of guidance practitioners in educational establishments and Majoriaq centres, who can refer clients with serious psychological or social problems requiring professional intervention to these.

Once every two years, the centre stages a national guidance conference, where actors and stakeholder can meet to share knowledge and discuss various pertinent issues. It is unclear whether this conference constitutes the “National Dialogue Forum” mentioned in the law, but it arguably promotes informal coordination, knowledge-sharing and network creation among actors and stakeholders in the field of guidance.

Besides these activities, the centre carries out a number of other tasks that mainly relies on the centre’s own interpretation of the meaning of the terms employed in the law. This includes (on a limited scale) production of guidance material and support to local guidance networks.

The centre also provides secretarial assistance to the National Guidance Council of Greenland.

3.4 The National Guidance Council

The 2013 Act also provides for the establishment of a National Guidance Council. The role of the Council is to advise the Government of Greenland on guidance and the guidance effort, and it is composed of 5 representatives from major stakeholders in guidance: employers’ organisations,

¹⁹ www.aqqut.gl.

²⁰ However, all of the guidance practitioners in the educational establishments where interviews were carried out during the fact-finding mission had taken the course or were in the process of doing so.

²¹ On “transition guidance”, “retention guidance” and “special target groups for guidance” – but interestingly enough nothing on “outreach guidance”.

trade unions, students’ organisations, public servant’s organisations, and educational establishments. In the 2018 revision of the law, a representative of the health inspectorate of Greenland was added to the list. The exact remit and rules of procedure have been laid down in an executive order from the Government of Greenland²².

Every year, the Council publishes a report of its activities. The last one covers 2018 and contains a number of recommendations on primarily the organisation of the guidance efforts in Greenland. These recommendations include –

- The development of a national strategy for guidance in Greenland;
- The employment of full-time guidance staff in all educational establishments;
- The elaboration of an executive order on guidance to supplement and clarify existing legislation;
- The implementation of systematic impact evaluations or assessments of all guidance activities;
- The transfer of guidance activities in Majoriaq centres from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour to the Ministry of Education to ensure that all guidance services are coordinated from the same ministry.

The members of the National Guidance Council are appointed for a 4-year period, and the Council began to function at the end of the calendar year 2014. The first term of the Council thus expired at the end of 2018, and up till the present (May 2019), no new Council has been appointed.

3.5 Other actors and initiatives

Greenland has a small population and limited resources, and it is not possible to offer the full range of education and training programmes across the spectrum, due to the inability to gather a sufficient number of learners to make many programmes pedagogically and financially viable, rendering the investments required out of proportion with the potential number of beneficiaries. This goes especially for VET and higher education. Consequently, many Greenlandic learners are required to go abroad in order to pursue their educational trajectory. For obvious linguistic and financial reasons, and because the educational systems are to a large extent identical and compatible, the overwhelming majority of these go to Denmark. Also, many young people choose to integrate a stay in Denmark in their educational trajectory in either continuation schools (*efterskoler*) or folk high schools (*højskoler*) for reasons of personal development and to improve linguistic proficiency.

To cater for the guidance needs of Greenlandic learners in Denmark, the so-called *Greenlandic houses* – which are Greenlandic cultural centres located in the 4 biggest Danish cities²³ - have employed full-time guidance staff that can assist with information and guidance. These can also be consulted (via telephone and email) by guidance practitioners and learners in Greenland, and they travel to Greenland every year to participate in the annual “Education caravan”, which is a recurrent event where Greenlandic youth can meet with representatives of educational establishments, guidance services and enterprises to obtain career information. These events are held in 4 Greenlandic towns (Nuuk, Sisimiut, Aasiaat and Qaqortoq).

²² Executive Order no. 3 of March 9, 2015 on tasks and rules of procedure for the National Guidance Council of Greenland.

²³ See e.g. <https://www.sumut.dk/>.

QAQISA is an initiative by Corporate Social responsibility Greenland to promote the cooperation between educational establishments (notable lower secondary education) and enterprises. It has developed material in the shape of a handbook, one section of which is dedicated to guidance counsellors.²⁴

²⁴ <http://ny.csr.gl/Qaqisa/tabid/270/language/da-DK/Default.aspx>.

4. The macro-level impact of the 2013 Act on educational and vocational guidance

The Act on educational and vocational guidance from 2013 was drafted, at least partly, in response to recommendations made by an evaluation of guidance provision in Greenland, which was published in 2011 (Tønder Jessing *et al.*). The 2011 evaluation was based on an analysis of available documentation (notably legislative material) and a large questionnaire survey among guidance practitioners in Greenland, backed up by a limited number of qualitative interviews (4 focus group interviews and 2 individual interviews) with practitioners. Besides practitioners, a limited number of representatives of management in educational establishments were consulted, whereas other stakeholders and users/beneficiaries of guidance services were not included at all.

The evaluation came up with a number of recommendations and proposals with a specific focus on the training of guidance practitioners and the functioning of local networks of guidance practitioners. However, in the ToR of the present evaluation, it is explicitly stated that only 4 of these should be taken into consideration, namely those that ask the GoG to consider –

- The revision of the legal basis for guidance, encompassing the purpose of guidance, the tasks, its organisation, its actors and its coordination;
- The reorganisation of the distribution of tasks between the guidance centres, the schools and institutions of education, and the combination or separation of guidance activities from the delivery of courses;
- The establishment of a central system to register the transition of students from schools to work and/or to further education;
- The establishment of guidance parameters for young people between 16 to 18 years of age that are both unemployed and outside the educational system (NEETS).²⁵

The distinction made in the 2011 evaluation between “recommendations” and “proposals” is a crucial one, in so far as “recommendations” are rooted in clear, empirically based conclusions, whereas “proposals” are made on the basis of conflicting evidence and thus represent estimates of what is considered an appropriate course of action by the evaluation team. The point concerning a “combination or separation of guidance activities from the delivery of courses” is thus a proposal, and not a recommendation. The 2013 legal text does, in fact, address the recommendations made by the 2011 evaluation, but not the proposal to consider whether guidance activities should be separated from, or combined with, course delivery. Neither has this been addressed elsewhere in- or outside of a guidance context.

Before going deeper into the legislation to find out how and to what extent these general recommendations have been translated into concrete lines of action in the 2013 legislation, it is worthwhile to adopt a broader perspective and ask the question whether, in the big scheme of things, the 2013 Act has had any overall impact (macro-level impact) on the main issues that are addressed by guidance, i.e. –

- *Transitions*: Has there been a marked increase in percentages of (young) people enrolling in education and training since the law was enacted?

²⁵ P. 2-3 of the ToR.

- *Retention*: Have the rates for drop-out in education and training programmes decreased since the enactment of the law?
- *Early leaving*: Has the number of young people who leave primary and lower secondary education (*folkeskolen*) without enrolling in education or employment been reduced since the enactment of the law?
- *Employment*: Have unemployment rates dropped and bottleneck problems on the labour market been reduced since the law was enacted?

In evaluation terms, we can call this a crude intervention theory that we must prove or disprove in the study. “Crude” because it is, on the one hand, a relatively easy task to ascertain, since we can find statistical material that will give us a precise picture of relevant developments in the intervening period (i.e. 2014-2019). A direct inference from this to any conclusions about the effectiveness of guidance will, on the other hand, run the risk of being spurious, since there are other factors than guidance which influence education and employment – e.g. birth rates, economic developments, societal trends, educational policies, as well as anthropological issues²⁶ etc. However, if guidance is not *the* answer, it is at least part of the answer: guidance constitutes an important part of the equation, and such an overview will therefore serve as a rough indicator, which can impart a sense of direction to the interpretation of the empirical material collected during the fact-finding phase.

Besides assessing overall impact, this section will also complement the preceding section by giving an overview of the conditions under which guidance in Greenland operate.

4.1 Developments in enrolment in education and training

In a country where the majority of the population do not possess qualifications above primary and lower secondary education²⁷, it is a vital concern that more people enrol in education and training programmes to ensure that the necessary human resources to underpin economic development and welfare are available. This does not just concern young people - in a constantly changing labour market, life-long learning is a necessity as an ever-decreasing number of job opportunities are being offered to people with few or no formal qualifications.

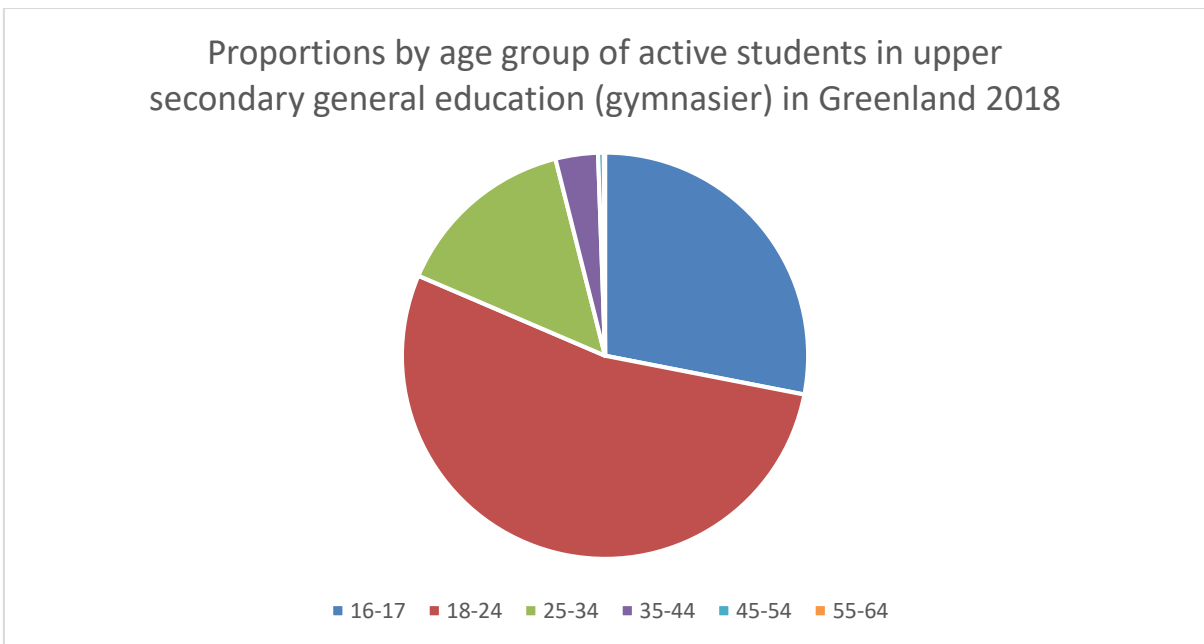
It is the key role of educational and vocational guidance to help people make a choice – and make the right choice – concerning educational and employment trajectories. Without guidance, many individuals may be tempted to put off the “investment” in education and training, either because they are lured by short-sighted prospects of e.g. immediate earnings through unskilled work or because they are confused by the complexity of the choice. Others again may be fazed by what they perceive as difficult admission procedures and tight deadlines. In a Greenlandic context, these choices are in many cases made more difficult by the need to relocate in order to be able to follow the preferred educational programme, leaving family and friends behind and having to manage their own household. Guidance can help alleviate fears, dispel inaccurate notions, and offer information and practical assistance to facilitate these choices.

²⁶ See e.g. Kunuk Lynge. P. (2013).

²⁷ For the age group 16-74, 60,5% of the population in Greenland did not possess qualifications beyond primary and lower secondary school in 2017 (Statistics Greenland).

How guidance can be a crucial factor in this was illustrated the statement of one beneficiary, who told how she came to make the choice of education programme through a guidance session in a Majoriaq centre. She was unemployed at the time and was summoned to the centre to discuss her options. In the session, the guidance counsellor asked her about her dreams and plans, her interests and her preferences, and slowly the talk zoomed in on concrete future scenarios for her life. When she began to realise what she would like to do, the guidance counsellor presented the options available and what they implied, and they discussed how they could be practically integrated into her life as a single mother. On the basis of the information received and on her subsequent reflections, she eventually applied for the social helper training programme, and was accepted.

During the interviews with guidance beneficiaries/end users, it was clear that, in a lifelong learning perspective, the efforts invested into making people enrol in formal education and training seem to be remarkably successful. In fact, a sizeable number of learners interviewed in educational establishments had enrolled rather late in life. This was especially remarkable in upper secondary general education, since the purpose of this is not employment in the first place, but to prepare the student for entry into higher education. Students thus face an additional 2-6 years of studies before they can enter the labour market and start earning serious money. Despite this, they still choose to persevere:



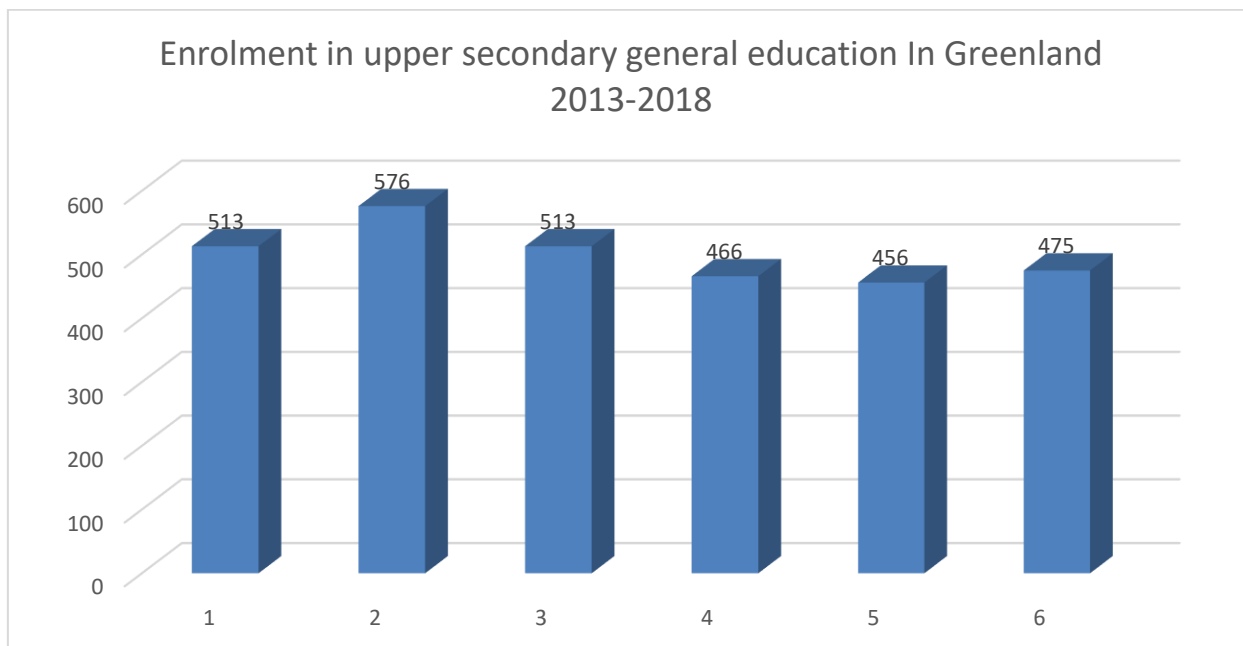
This pattern is replicated in other education and training programmes, and even for lower secondary general education, where a stunning 395 adult learners enrolled in so called FA-courses in 2018²⁸ to obtain, or to improve on, qualifications from lower secondary general education.

However, in terms of total enrolment figures, both in an absolute and a relative sense²⁹, it does not seem that efforts to make more people enrol in education and training have been fruitful.

²⁸ Information retrieved from the IT Reg system.

²⁹ I.e. adjusted for developments in birth rates and total population.

There are no discernible (i.e. statistically significant) upward developments in enrolment figures in the six years from 2013 (the year before the law on educational and vocational guidance was enacted) to 2018. Again, using upper secondary general education as an illustrative example, the figures tell the following story:



According to statistics Greenland, the number of young people in the age bracket from 18-25 has dropped slightly in the years 2013 to 2019, which may (at least partially) account for the drop in enrolment. But based alone on the figures, it would not seem that the provisions made in the 2013 Act has significantly boosted enrolment – if at all. Statistics from other educational programmes tell a similar story.

4.2 Developments in retention in education and training

Drop-out among learners in education and training is recognised as a serious challenge in Greenland – not just for the Greenlandic educational establishments, but also for those learners from Greenland who go to Denmark to pursue their education³⁰. Several studies have been conducted over the years to throw light on this phenomenon³¹, so it is by now fairly well described and the root causes known. All the studies undertaken so far underline that guidance is an important remedy in the efforts to improve retention, and several have formulated recommendations on how this can be improved. However, it also clearly emanates from the studies that drop-out is caused by many factors in a complex interplay, and that guidance cannot stand alone as a tool in the fight against this.

Whereas none of the educational establishments interviewed during the fact-finding phase had developed guidance strategies as such, several had worked out retention strategies where

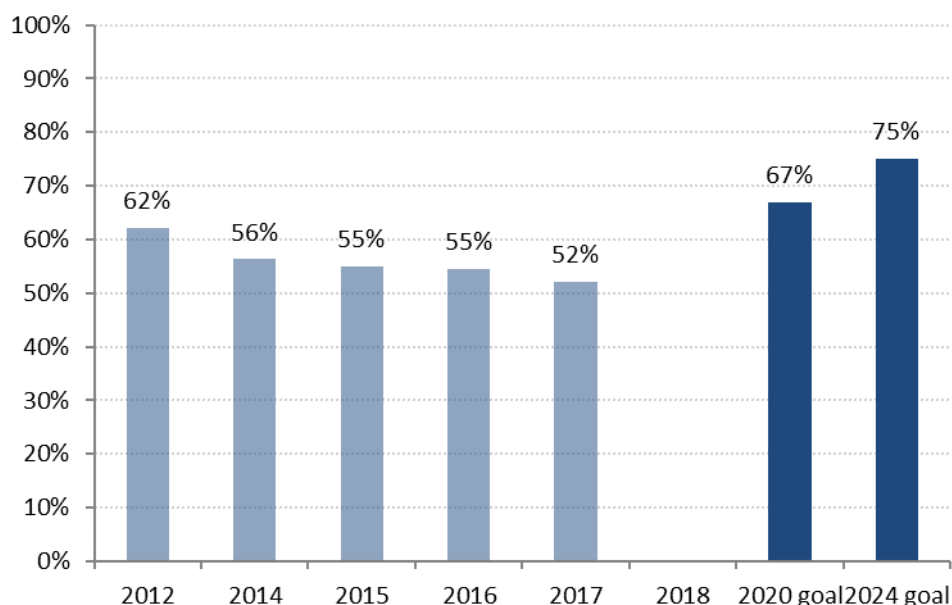
³⁰ See e.g.: <http://www.au.dk/raadgivnings-og-stoettecentret/netvaerk-og-samarbejdsprojekter/pilotprojekt-til-forbedring-af-groenlandske-studerendes-gennemfoersel-af-videregaende-uddannelser-i-danmark/> and https://naalakkersuisut.gl/da/Naalakkersuisut/Nyheder/2017/08/250817_efterskoleelever.

³¹ Kristensen and Sørensen, 2015 (for VET), Kjær (2010 and Skadhauge (2017) for upper secondary general education.

guidance played an important role, and it is generally an issue that sits high on the agenda in educational contexts.

Despite the attention that this phenomenon has received (and continually receives), and despite the efforts made to reduce it, statistics reveal that retention rates (percentages of learners completing their educational programme) remain low. In the educational strategy paper known as Education Plan II (*Uddannelsesplan II*) by the Government of Greenland³², the challenge is recognised, and the ambitions for improvements are high. The only concrete remedies prescribed for achieving these in the plan are “better teaching and guidance”³³. The figure below is taken from Education Plan II and shows the actual completion rates for upper secondary general education from 2012 to 2017 and state the stipulated goals to be reached in 2020 and 2024.

Completion rates upper secondary general education in Greenland 2012-2017³⁴



Educational Plan II refers to annual evaluations³⁵, carried out with the explicit aim of improving percentages of retention in upper secondary general education, which indicate that the education has over the years broadened its recruitment base and attracted a more diverse group of learners. This may explain the drop-in completion percentages, but it should be held up against the drop in overall enrolment rates, as given above.

There are, of course, individual differences between the different educational profiles. In initial vocational education and training (IVET), the corresponding figures indicate a lower starting point in 2012, but at least a more or less stable level of completion up to 2017:

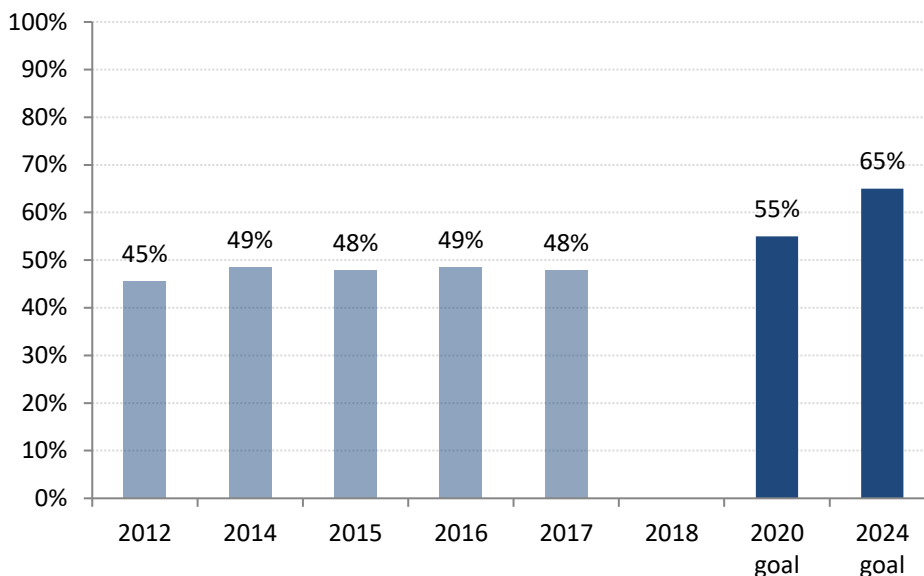
³² <https://naalakkersuisut.gl/da/Naalakkersuisut/Departementer/Uddannelse-Kultur-Kirke-og-Udenrigsanliggende/Publikationer/Uddannelsesstrategi-og-Uddannelsesplan>.

³³ See p. 41.

³⁴ Can be found on p. 41 of the report.

³⁵ <https://insights.epinionglobal.com/da/impact-stories/evaluering-af-gymnasireformen-i-gr%C3%B8nland>.

Completion rates initial vocational education and training in Greenland 2012-2017³⁶



In these statistics, it is not possible to discern any impact of the 2013 legislation on educational and vocational guidance on retention.

4.3 Developments in early leaving and NEETs

Access to quality guidance will, according to the intervention theory adopted in this section, mean that more pupils make the direct transition from lower secondary education to upper secondary education and training (or the labour market). It will, in other words, reduce the number of the so called “early leavers” and “NEETs”.

By “early leavers” we understand young people, who leave primary and lower secondary education and who have not engaged in upper secondary education and training. Early leavers are usually measured in percentages of a given age bracket. In European statistics, the age bracket most commonly used is 18-24³⁷. The term NEETs is used in European contexts to cover young people typically in the age bracket 15-24 who are Not in Employment, Education, or Training.³⁸ “Early leavers” and “NEETs” are thus not quite the same, but they are often both called “the youth target group” (*ungemålgruppen*) in Greenland. Lying close to the European definitions of NEETs, Statistics Greenland operate with an age bracket of 16-25, whereas the Act on guidance from 2013 – in accordance with the recommendation from the 2011 evaluation – focuses on early leavers in the age group from 16-18; i.e. the young people who have recently left lower secondary education, and who are not engaged in education or training. This is also the case in Education Plan II.

There is some confusion concerning the so called “youth target group” (*ungemålgruppen*) in Greenland – not just concerning age bracket and status, but also with regard to the exact

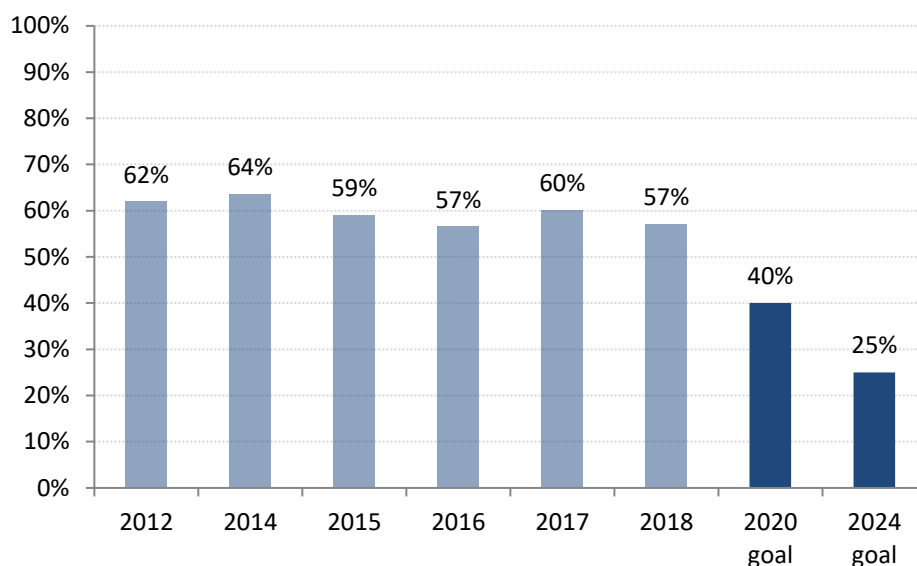
³⁶ Can be found on p. 53 of the report.

³⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Early_leaver_from_education_and_training.

³⁸ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/neet>.

composition and nature of this segment. Who are they, where do they come from, and what are they doing with themselves? To throw more light on this issue, the Ministry of Labour has in early 2019 commissioned an in-depth study, which was still ongoing at the time of the elaboration of this report.³⁹ Early results seem to indicate a very fragmented and diverse group. In Education Plan II, the focus is on the 16-to-18-year-olds, who are not in upper secondary education or training or frequenting a continuation school (*efterskole*). However, they may be in employment, and young people participating in the various upskilling activities offered by the Majoriaq centres are also included in this group. The size of this “youth target group”, measured as a percentage of the total youth cohort in the relevant age bracket, is graphically depicted in the figure below, which represents an update on a figure included in the Education Plan II⁴⁰:

The youth target group according to EP II



EP II offers the mitigating comment to the size of this group that “A large part [...] is undergoing an upskilling in general educational subjects⁴¹ in Majoriaq with a view to preparing them for admission to education”⁴². It may seem a bit strange that these are included in the “youth target group” since they are, to all intents and purposes” pursuing a formal qualification. However, going through the list of people registered as being admitted as FA-students in IT Reg for 2018, it turns out that of the 105 in the relevant age group, no less than 83 either broke off prematurely or cancelled their participation⁴³.

Turning to the NEETs in the 16-25 age group, Statistics Greenland have made the following overview of NEETs (grey column), where they are compared to those in education (dark blue column) and employment (light blue column):

The youth target group in Statistics Greenland’s definition

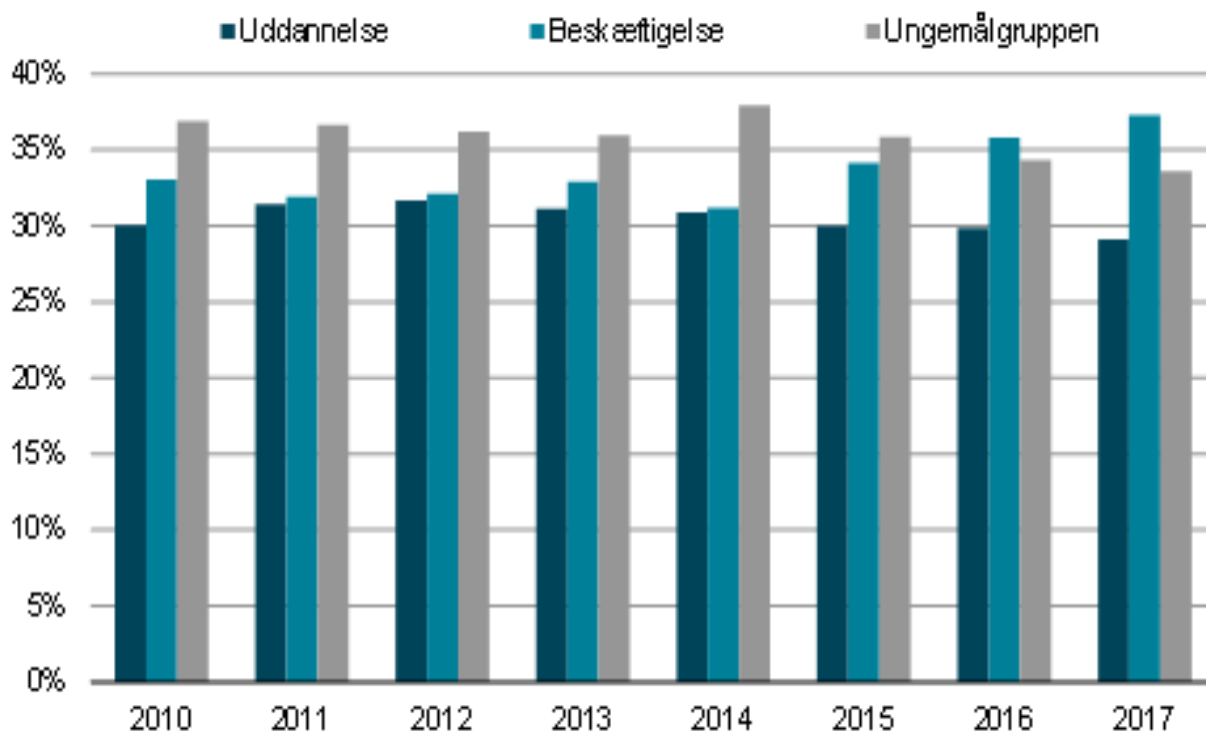
³⁹ The study is carried out by the Danish/Greenlandic consultancy company SuliNuuk.

⁴⁰ This figure was furnished for the report by the Government of Greenland.

⁴¹ The so-called FA (*Folkeskolens Afgangsprøve* – the leaving exam for lower secondary education). FA-courses are offered by Majoriaq to citizens who either left lower secondary education without taking the examinations, or whose marks are too low to admit them to the upper secondary programme of their choice.

⁴² P. 35.

⁴³ Two of these actually had their application rejected (for reasons unknown).



There is a slight downwards trend in the statistics of both definitions of the target group from 2014 (when the law on educational and vocational guidance was enacted) and 2017/18, especially when looking at the broader picture of NEETs. However, given the small size of the cohort, it is dubious whether this represents a statistically significant development. It is thus not possible to see any clear impact of the law and the provisions and measures introduced by this.

4.4 Developments in employment and bottleneck problems on the labour market

The focus in the 2013 Act is clearly on individual young people and on how their choices with relation to education and training can be facilitated and drop-out reduced. However, the Act also states that guidance (vocational guidance) should provide information on employment possibilities and opportunities to guide citizens’ choice of career after education and training, and in the event of career changes and unemployment (§2, item 2). Moreover, in their guidance practice, guidance staff must take into account forecasts of labour market requirements (§14). However, since developments on the labour market are so dependent on other factors (overall economic trends, political interventions, climate changes etc.), the impact of guidance on a national scale is almost impossible to estimate. At any rate, the messages are mixed:

Unemployment rates have been steadily decreasing since the aftermath of the financial crisis, and the latest available figures (from 2017) give a percentage of 6,8, which is around the average for OECD countries, but higher than in other Nordic countries⁴⁴. As for bottleneck problems, a survey, carried out in the autumn of 2018 among 152 enterprises, which were members of Greenland’s Business Organisation, concluded that Greenlandic enterprises were facing huge problems with recruitment of both skilled and unskilled labour in all sectors and in most job

⁴⁴ <http://www.stat.gl/publ/da/AR/201901/pdf/Ledighed%20og%20arbejdsstyrke%202017.pdf>.

categories⁴⁵. Also, the annual report of the Economic Council of Greenland points to serious skills shortages on the Greenlandic labour market (pp. 34-40).

4.4 Impact assessment

When viewed in isolation, it is not possible to claim that the enactment of the 2013 law has produced any visible impact: on vital parameters like drop-out/retention, enrolment, educational progress and labour market skills gaps, the statistics display, at best, very modest developments in the years since 2014. Of course, this is a speculative conclusion, as we do not know what the situation would have been like if this intervention had not happened at this particular junction in time. Also, even if the intervention did not leave much of an imprint at macro-level, it may still have positively affected the life quality of many individuals. A more important argument, however, is that guidance is a contextual activity, which cannot stand by itself – there are many other factors, extrinsic to guidance, which influence the societal challenges that guidance seeks to address, and which are arguably more influential in the big picture of things. During the interviews, several such factors were repeatedly highlighted by informants.

The most prominent of these, and one which was mentioned by all groups of informants – including end users/beneficiaries themselves – is the massive problems of a psychological and social nature that affect the Greenlandic society. For (young) people in education and training, these are focused around personal problems (traumas, crises, anxiety, depressions etc.), social issues (housing, economy, juridical matters, family etc.) and education-related (mobbing, fear of examinations, well-being etc.) – with personal problems accounting for app. 75% of all cases. The problems are of a nature that is well over and beyond what a mainstream guidance practitioner can handle, and therefore a special student counselling service (*Studenterrådgivningen*) has been established to provide professional assistance by qualified psychologists and social workers to educational establishments struggling to cope with this. In 2018, 637 students were referred to the student counselling service by guidance practitioners, and some 2625 individual consultations were scheduled. In addition to this, 9 group sessions were carried out, and counselling via telephone or internet accounted for a further 175 consultations – and yet there are lengthy waiting lists⁴⁶. The special student counselling service is managed by the National Centre for Guidance, and when fully manned, employs 13 members of staff (for comparison, the rest of the centre employs a further 5 members of staff, including management). In the survey of guidance counsellors carried out in connection with the 2011 evaluation, psychological and social problems topped the list of most frequent issues that they had to deal with, and a follow-up survey carried out in connection with this evaluative study among a limited group of guidance counsellors indicates that this is still the case.

A second factor mentioned is the enormous geographical distances in Greenland, combined with a small and very thinly spread population, often living in small, isolated settlements outside of the 5 major towns. This problem is double-edged – for one thing, it means that learners will often have to leave home at an early age to pursue their educational trajectory, which for many can be a traumatic experience and a contributing factor to drop-out. However, it also means that many do not have direct access to qualified guidance practitioners, as they live in settlements with no educational establishments beyond primary school and lower secondary

⁴⁵ HS Analyse 2018, quoted in “Aurora” no. 1, 2019 (magazine of Greenland’s Business organization/*Grønlands Erhverv*).

⁴⁶ Information provided in the Annual Report 2018 for the National Centre for Guidance, p. 22.

school (8th form), and no Majoriaq centres⁴⁷. For some of these, guidance can be provided through the internet and skype, but connections are shaky, and breakages of the sea-cables a common occurrence.

A third factor brought forward concerns the linguistic problems that are experienced by many learners with Greenlandic as their first language, as the main language of instruction in the educational system beyond primary and lower secondary school is Danish. Due to a low level of proficiency, they often struggle to follow classes, and hence are more prone to drop-out or reluctant to engage in upper secondary education and training in the first place.

A fourth factor which was observed during the fact-finding mission, and also mentioned by informants, was the rate of high turn-over of guidance staff in Majoriaq centres and educational establishments. Especially in Majoriaq centres, changes in both management and guidance staff seem to be quite frequent, and this can affect both quality and consistency/continuity in guidance delivery. In the Majoriaq centres of the 5 towns visited, three had recently changed management, and also guidance staff had changed in three centres.

A fifth factor, which made a frequent appearance in the interviews with especially Majoriaq staff, is the vulnerability of guidance activities to pressure from other, more hard-nosed work tasks. Talking about outreach guidance, one Majoriaq staff member thus stated:

“Outreach guidance is extremely time consuming. Both the guidance counsellors and I believe that this alone requires one full-time staff...It was easier in the old days, when guidance counsellors just had one job...But then we were amalgamated with the job centres. This covers many tasks which all steal time. Then came rehabilitation, which is also demanding. And then came premature retirement and public assistance. Of course, we did get more staff, but everybody has to go on holiday now and then, we can all fall ill, and everybody may be absent due to continuing vocational training”.

This sentiment was, in a minor way, also echoed by a guidance counsellor at an educational establishment, who (like the majority of guidance counsellors in education and training was in a half-time position, the other half being teaching). According to this person, it was easy to call on the guidance counsellor if e.g. a replacement teacher was needed for some hours, since guidance tasks were not perceived as having the same urgency as other tasks.

As for the labour market, the factors which impinge on the areas which guidance address are well known and do not require any further elaboration here (economic trends, technological developments, political interventions etc.).

⁴⁷ Majoriaq will, at least for major settlements, travel to these and offer guidance sessions, but often this is limited to once or twice per year. Also, a project (NUIKI) has endeavoured to provide upskilling and guidance to young people in remote settlements but has only covered a small number of these.

5. The 2013 Act and guidance provision in Greenland

If the macro-level impact of the provisions made in the 2013 Act and subsequent interventions⁴⁸ is hard to trace, it may not only be due to the influence of extrinsic factors mentioned above. Also, intrinsic factors related to the law itself and the way in which the provisions foreseen here have been implemented and organised are of consequence, especially in a short and medium-term perspective, as these can be addressed and, if needed, changed and rectified. This is contrary to many of the extrinsic factors above (social and psychological problems, linguistic challenges, labour market conditions etc.), which can only be addressed in a long-term perspective, and only to a limited degree in the context of guidance legislation. In this section, these intrinsic aspects of guidance provision will be analysed with a view to formulating recommendations for the improvement of both effectiveness and efficiency of guidance in Greenland.

The 2013 Act on educational and vocational guidance was drafted on the basis of first and foremost a long period of time where experiences could be harvested and processed (the executive order it replaced was from 1982) and on a number of dedicated studies and evaluations – notably Tønder Jessing et al. from 2011 (one of the recommendations of which was a revision of the legal framework for guidance). The legal text draws heavily on the material from the evaluations and has taken on board most of the recommendations put forward by these. It has also been inspired by similar legislation from elsewhere, notably Denmark. An initial analysis of the legal text thus indicates a complete work, which makes a 360-degree tour of guidance and defines e.g. rationale, target groups, actors and stakeholders, responsibilities, coordination and control, notions of quality, interventions and financing. However, a more in-depth analysis may reveal that there are elements in the law itself or in the guidance efforts building on it that prevent it from making an impression on the situation.

In relation to the 2013 Act, we may thus contemplate 4 situations, which – alone or in combination – can affect the effectiveness and/or the efficiency of the guidance effort:

- The law (and subsequent legislation related to guidance) has omitted one or more crucial elements, which means that the system does not function and a cohesive and coherent whole;
- Important areas of provision foreseen in the law have not been fully implemented;
- The actual delivery of the guidance services is deficient in quality, thereby enfeebling the impact;
- Individual services and interventions are not properly coordinated, or not described in sufficient detail, leading to lacunae in provision and a waste of much-needed resources.

In the following, current provision will be analysed for each of the 4 situations in order to identify and assess problem areas.

⁴⁸ E.g.: the 2015 Act establishing the Majoriaq centres and defining their tasks.

5.1 Missing elements

Prior to the 2013 Act, educational and vocational guidance provision in Greenland was regulated by an executive order from 1982, and there has consequently been a long intervening period in which to harvest experience. Moreover, the 2013 legal text was written on the basis of several targeted knowledge-gathering initiatives which included both internal and external evaluative studies, carried out in 2000 (by the Government of Greenland), 2007 (Juul Røttig and Viskum Larsen) and 2011 (Tønder Jessing et al.)⁴⁹. It has thus been preceded by a long and thorough preparation process, which leaves the impression that every stone on the path has been turned. Follow-up has been done with the 2015 Act establishing the Majoriaq centres, and the revision of the 2013 law from 2018⁵⁰.

A scrutiny of the legal text testifies to a diligent groundwork: it defines key concepts, lists the challenges, identifies key target groups and actors, sets competence levels of guidance practitioners, describes interventions and assigns responsibilities. Compared to legislation on educational and vocational guidance from other countries, e.g. from Denmark⁵¹ (which it closely resembles, even though there are significant differences in organisation of the guidance effort) no major issues related to the guidance effort are missing. However, the devil is often in the detail. A more in-depth reading of the law reveals some curious discrepancies with regard to actors, and there is also some lack of clarity between the tasks and responsibilities of individual actors (guidance services).

5.1.1 Specifications of the guidance effort of educational establishments

The former relates to the fact that whereas the law stipulates minimum competence levels and prescribe reporting requirement on guidance activities for staff at Majoriaq centres, no such demands are placed upon the educational establishments. The lack of requirement for minimum competence levels for guidance staff has seemingly no practical effects, however, for in all the educational establishments visited as part of the fact-finding phase, the guidance practitioners had undergone the Basic Guidance Programme offered by the National Centre for Guidance. Actually, it turned out that everybody believed that this was a requirement also for them, but a strictly logical reading of the legal text (§12 item 2) reveals that this demand only covers guidance staff at Majoriaq centres. What this means is that a school director, in principle, is legally entitled to refuse to send guidance staff on the time-consuming competence-development programme, if he or she deems it expedient.

As for the latter, the law merely stipulates that “the Government of Greenland may...impose a demand on educational establishments to report information on their guidance effort” (§13, item 3). To this day, however, no such demand has been made, and this means that we cannot gather systematic information on this from a central source. During the fact-finding phase, educational establishments were asked whether they did systematically gather such information, but only one institution did so. This means that we only have anecdotal information from individual guidance counsellors on the type of activities that they carry out under the heading of guidance, the method and material they use in their work, and the nature of the most

⁴⁹ All this material can be found at <https://sunngu.gl/da/For-veiledere/Uddannelsesafdelingen/Udvikling-og-evaluering>.

⁵⁰ The 2018 revision was mainly undertaken to give the National Centre for Guidance a legal basis for managing the special student counselling service (*studenterrådgivningen*).

⁵¹ See <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/r0710.aspx?id=193835>.

frequent questions or problems that students come to the guidance office with. As none of the establishments interviewed had a guidance policy in place, it also means that each guidance counsellor must build up his or her own fund of knowledge, and that there is no basis of evidence to direct the efforts.

5.1.2 Clearly defined interfaces between guidance services

The lack of clarity in responsibilities and work tasks concerns interfaces between the Majoriaq centres and the educational establishments. The 2013 Act clearly states that “educational establishments carry the responsibility for providing transition and retention guidance to learners⁵² (§10), yet a bit further on in the law §19 it is stated that “...the local guidance centre⁵³ must assist the educational establishments with the preparation and implementation of transition guidance”. According to the 2013 law, this only concerns young people under the age of 18, but exactly how this demand for assistance is to be interpreted, and how the under-18 requirement is administered, is not further fleshed out in the 2013 Act. In the 2015-law establishing the Majoriaq centres, however, stipulates that Majoriaq centres must “carry out guidance and administration of applicants to the educational sector” (§2, item 4) and “collaborate with primary and lower secondary schools on guidance of the final forms” (§2, item 5). Again, it is not specified how this should happen, and in the interviews with Majoriaq centres and educational establishments there was some confusion about who was doing what. One Majoriaq centre thus visited the leaving classes of the local upper secondary general education school (*gymnasium*) once a year to give a guidance session on possibilities for continuing in higher education, a task which would clearly not be their responsibility according to the law (“If we don’t do this now, we’ll have them coming to our centre one by one once they have graduated anyway. Now we have the possibility to take them all in one session, saving ourselves a lot of time” – was the explanation of the director of the local Majoriaq centre).

Despite the fact that retention guidance is the responsibility of the educational establishments, Majoriaq centres play an important role with regards to apprentices, where they are responsible for information and guidance (and certain practical arrangements like accommodation) of these when they are away on placements from the town where their vocational school is located. The Majoriaq centre will not be responsible for guidance in relation to vocational matters, but only for guidance related to personal and social matters. The exact responsibilities have been spelled out in an instruction from the Government of Greenland⁵⁴. Interestingly enough, the detailed description of procedures in relation to this aspect of the Majoriaq centres’ work occupy 4 of the 8 folders that have been elaborated in the manual on work procedures of Majoriaq⁵⁵, but it is not mentioned neither in the 2013 nor in the 2015 legislation.

5.1.3 Specifications of the guidance effort

Despite providing a definition of “outreach guidance”, identifying a target group, and assigning the responsibility for carrying it out, the 2013 law provides no guidelines on how often this should be carried out (ongoingly, once a year, twice a year?), and what methods should be used. As a result, each Majoriaq centre seems to have determined on its own way of addressing this issue, which inevitably leads to differences in quality and coverage. Neither is this issue covered

⁵² The term is a translation of “uddannelsessøgende” that cover all those enrolled in an educational establishment.

⁵³ I.e.: Majoriaq.

⁵⁴ Naalakkersuisut Instruks af 28. august 2017.

⁵⁵ Job -vejlednings- og Opkvalificeringscentre: Arbejdsgangsbeskrivelser. These folders are only available in paper versions.

in the work procedure manuals, nor in the performance contracts between the Government of Greenland and the municipalities concerning the running of the Majoriaq centres.

It will always be a matter of discernment how detailed a law should be. In a system with many actors and complex trajectories, a legal text can easily become so lengthy and complex that it obfuscates the clarity that it is supposed to establish. For this reason, it is possible to address more specialised issues using other legal or quasi-legal instruments for specific aspects: executive orders, instructions, performance contracts or tools like the work procedure manuals of Majoriaq. In many places in the text of the law, this possibility is indicated with the formulation “The Government of Greenland *may* issue further rules and instructions on this” – or similar. However, for crucial aspects of the guidance process, this has not happened, and it is consequently missing from the legal context, if not the law itself.

5.2.4 Sanctions

Also largely missing from the legal context are the possibilities for sanctions, if an actor or service does not live up to the demands stipulated in the Act. At this stage, this is merely a theoretical question, since the demands are not specified in enough detail to allow for any measurement of the degree of fulfilment. Resorting again to outreach guidance as an example, the responsibility for this crucial element of the guidance effort is assigned to the Majoriaq centres, but as it is not specified how and how often this must be done, it is impossible to ascertain whether and to what extent a centre complies with the requirement. §25 of the 2013 Act a “national (and §9 of the 2015 Act on Majoriaq centres) stipulates that the Government of Greenland may reduce the funds allocated to the running of the activities of the centre if they do not live up to the demands specified for the guidance effort in the so called performance contracts that are concluded between the municipalities and the Government of Greenland. However, these contracts mention very little about guidance, and (as already mentioned above) nothing about the arguably most crucial aspect of this (i.e. outreach guidance)⁵⁶.

5.2 Incomplete implementation

Another explanation for the lack of impact may be that some of the provisions of the 2013 Act (and related subsequent legislation) have not been implemented, or only partially implemented. Going through the legislation and making a list of “deliverables”, there are two issues that crop up: one is the development of a “virtual guidance portal” (§4 in the 2013 Act) and the other the establishment of a “national database” on the guidance effort and on the status on citizens’ status in relation to education and employment in order to improve the administration of guidance provision and identify targets for the efforts (§13 in the 2013 Act).

5.2.1 The virtual guidance portal

In the words of the 2013 legislation, this guidance portal must be “an internet-based information- and guidance tool for guidance practitioners in Majoriaq centres and educational establishments, for those who require guidance, and for others who seek information on education and employment”. Moreover, it must “contain comparable information on education and training inside and outside of Greenland and the employment possibilities that these may

⁵⁶ The performance contracts for Majoriaq centres in all Greenland’s municipalities may be downloaded from <https://www.majoriaq.gl/da/Ansæt/Resultatkontrakter>.

lead to as well as updated labour market information” (§4). In item 3, it is stated that “the Government of Greenland may lay down more specific rules for the guidance portal”, but no such specifications can be found.

The idea behind this portal is clearly that of the “one-stop-shop”, where users only need to know one website in order to get all the information they require. It thus contributes to an aspect of the rationale for guidance, mentioned in §1 of the 2013 Act, namely that “guidance must contribute to empowering individuals to search for and apply information, including IT-based information and guidance tools on education, educational establishments and future employment possibilities”. Such websites exist in many other countries, e.g. in Denmark, where this information can be found on a website set up by the Ministry of Education⁵⁷. There is an important difference, however – Greenland’s guidance portal should not only service users of guidance services, but also guidance practitioners.

It is clear that such a portal holds an enormous potential in Greenland, where the geographical distances prevent many citizens from direct, personal contact with guidance counsellors – especially when coupled, like the Danish counterpart – to the possibility for on-line guidance with guidance counsellors, who can help users with the questions to which they are not able to find the answers unassisted. It is true that internet connections are too shaky in Greenland to make this a viable proposal for all at the time being, but progress in technology extends coverage continuously, and will probably provide all inhabited locations with high-speed, reliable connections within a foreseeable future.

However, such a website is an ambitious undertaking. Not only does it span a very broad area (education, training, employment), it also addresses a very diverse target group and covers a potentially enormous geographical expanse (Greenland and abroad). Of course, it is inherent in the word “portal” that it is not supposed to contain all the information required – much of this can be supplied by referring to links to other websites that contain the necessary information. For education, training and employment in Denmark, it will thus suffice to supply the link to the Danish equivalent, and users can then press this and locate the relevant information. However, much work must go into making an attractive and user-friendly interface and structure, and the information contained must be constantly updated. Links must be checked to ensure that they are still functioning and that the information they supply is correct, and new sources of information added when they appear.

In the interviews with end users/beneficiaries of guidance, one of the questions was whether they had ever used internet-based sources of information to obtain information on guidance-related issues. Also, guidance practitioners were asked about the websites they consulted in their practice. From these informants, a number of websites were identified that had a portal-like function in relation with educational and vocational guidance, addressing users and guidance counsellors:

www.sunngu.gl: This was the website most frequently mentioned, even though less than half of the informants knew of it. It is a website run by the Ministry of Education of the Government of Greenland on education and training possibilities in Greenland, which also contains information on accommodation and study grants, and which links to website with information on similar issues in Denmark. It addresses users of guidance but does also have a section for guidance counsellors, which refers users to the website of the National Centre for Guidance.

⁵⁷ “The education and Training Guide” (*Uddannelsesguiden*): www.ug.dk.

www.sullisivik.gl: This is the citizens’ portal for Greenland, which addresses all aspects of public life in Greenland, including education and training. Through Sullisivik, users can find information, but it is also possible to e.g. send applications for enrolment to educational establishments. For more in-depth information and application forms, however, it often refers to Sunngu. It has no specific section for guidance counsellors.

www.majoriaq.gl: This is the website of the Majoriaq centres, and it addresses users of Majoriaq as well as Majoriaq staff (including guidance staff). It has a section on guidance, which contains general information on education, but which only links to vocational schools and the Greenlandic Houses in Denmark. It contains information about study grants, but not about student accommodation. For application forms and further information, it links to Sunngu. It addresses both users and guidance practitioners.

www.iserasuaat.gl: This is a portal covering teaching and learning in Greenland. It first and foremost addresses teachers and at present it covers primary and lower secondary school, upper secondary general education and Majoriaq – but also has the declared ambition of covering pre-school and vocational education and training. It contains a section of guidance which directly addresses users, but this only contains information on the guidance services of Majoriaq. It does not explicitly address guidance counsellors (except in connection with IT Reg (see below) but contains material that can be used by these.

www.aqqut.gl⁵⁸: This is the website of the National Centre for Guidance in Greenland. It addresses guidance counsellors only, and besides news about the centre’s activities it has a “Knowledge-base”, which contains useful information and material for guidance counsellors. Besides these portals, which are all developed under the aegis of the Government of Greenland, there is also:

<http://www.ga.gl/elev/Forside/tabid/79/language/da-DK/Default.aspx>: This is specific website on education and training in Greenland, developed by the confederation of employers’ associations in Greenland (Business Greenland), which is accessed through the general website of the association (www.ga.ge.gl). It addresses primarily young people, and contains information on possibilities in Greenland, practical information and general advice, also on education abroad.

There is thus no lack of portals, but it is a challenge to pinpoint one that matches the demands as they are formulated in the legislation. The one that would seem to fit the bill most is Sunngu, since this is referred to by some of the other websites, contains the most extensive information, and addresses both users of guidance and guidance counsellors. It does not, however, contain any labour market-related information, and the section for guidance counsellors is not developed. According to information received from the Government of Greenland, there are plans to transfer the contexts of Sunngu to Sullisivik – which, however, is not a dedicated website. However, in the Government of Greenland’s plans for future action in this field the existing websites seem set to continue⁵⁹.

Testing the contents of the possible portal-candidates for relevance, it is relatively easy – with the possible exceptions of Aqqut and Sullisivik – to find instances of information that is outdated or missing, or links that no longer work, and they do not seem to be updated regularly. As for the two others, in Sullisivik, the guidance-related content is still not properly developed and it

⁵⁸ Previously www.vejledning.gl.

⁵⁹ Uddannelsesplan II 2018 – see pp. 87 and 90.

does not address guidance counsellors, and the Aqut-website only has selected information exclusively for guidance counsellors. In addition, it was clear from the interviews with users of guidance that a key requirement to such a portal – namely that it is known and used by the public – was not met. Only a minority knew of them and had used them. This also indicates that another of the purposes of guidance, namely the requirement that it should contribute to a situation where individuals themselves actively use IT-based guidance sources to locate relevant information on education and employment (§1, item 4), is still not fulfilled.

Only few of the users/beneficiaries of guidance had used electronic sources (websites) to find information in connection with their choices in relation to education and employment, however. On the basis of the above, it must be concluded that the ambition of the 2013 law on educational and vocational guidance about creating a “virtual guidance portal” for users of guidance and guidance practitioners still has a long way to go before it is a reality.

5.2.2 National data on the guidance effort

According to §13 of the 2013 Act, municipal authorities are required to register information on the guidance effort (*vejledningsindsatsen*) and the status in terms of education and employment “at the level of individuals”, and report this to the Government of Greenland. This should happen in order to “facilitate administration and target initiatives in relation to goals for education and employment”. These are two distinct purposes.

Greenland, like the other Nordic countries but unlike many other countries in Europe, have personal code numbers – a unique number for each individual, which means that it is always possible to retrieve information on a given person in a database and to cross-reference and correlate between different registers. The advantages in a guidance context are obvious, as it enables a guidance counsellor at a moment’s notice to call up information on an individual’s educational history and career trajectory, saving valuable time in the guidance process. In a larger context, aggregated data on specific segments, identified via personal code numbers, can yield valuable information on their behavioural patterns, needs and requirements, which can help target specific guidance interventions for these.

The term “the guidance effort” is not defined in the law or in subsequent documentation, however, and it is thus a moot point what this actually implies in terms of the registration requirements to the municipalities. Talking about the so called “youth target group” (see above), one Majoriaq director claimed during the interview that this consisted of 5 sub-groups of roughly equal size, and which each required a different type of intervention:

- Those that just need a little push (some information, practical assistance with an application etc.) to become engaged in education or employment;
- Those who require guidance to clarify their choices;
- Those who require guidance to clarify choices and a limited upskilling effort;
- Those who require guidance to clarify choices, combined with more extensive upskilling efforts;
- Those who require social and psychological counselling, combined with extensive upskilling, as well as guidance to clarify their choices.

This model of guidance-segments (which may, arguably, be applied not just to the “youth target group”, but to all users of guidance) raises the question about what it is that should actually be registered. Leaving aside the legal implications in a GDPR-perspective, it is all interesting and

relevant in the light of the above reflections. For one thing, it will tell us something about what kind of interventions are in demand, and where we should focus the resources. Also, it will enable us to say something about the effect and the quality of guidance interventions, as we may trace a guidance beneficiary’s later trajectory and see whether anything came out of the efforts; if the person is now employed or enrolled in an educational establishment.

The sources of guidance-related information that we can draw on at present are the following:

- From the *administration of the study grants* (data on enrolment, drop-out and completion of educational trajectories);
- From the *employment statistics*;
- From the *IT Reg system*, where Majoriaq centres and educational establishments can set up qualification portfolios and register action plans of individuals.

Of the 3 it is only the last (IT Reg) that registers guidance activities. However, it only does so on a limited set of parameters, and for some of these only indirectly. We can thus e.g. see that for 2018, a total of 453 persons had a personal action plan elaborated with a view to enrolling in education or training, vocational upskilling or finding employment; and we must assume that some other forms of guidance activity has preceded the actual writing of the plan. However, we cannot specify what this is, and therefore it is hard to extract any evidence concerning the impact of different forms of interventions. The elaboration of the action plan is, of course, in itself a guidance intervention and will often be done by a guidance counsellor⁶⁰, but it is also a bureaucratic requirement, and the registration is done according to the latter logic.

The only overview we have of what guidance counsellors in Greenland actually do, what types of enquiries they get from users, and what they perceive as their main challenges, is thus the survey that was carried out in connection with the 2011 evaluation.

The only parameter specifically focused on guidance is on “outreach guidance”, where Majoriaq staff are required to register their activities in the IT Reg system. However, as previously mentioned the statistics are not reliable, as the Majoriaq-centres are clearly not in agreement about what it is they register here, and how they do it. The number of entries for 2017 and 2018 concerns 55 and 46 persons respectively, and the majority of these are well above 18 years, which is the target group the 2013 law operates with. This is not at all consistent with the information from one director of a Majoriaq centre who estimates the number of young people under 18 in the municipality, who are not in education or employment and who have been contacted by the centre, at “between 75-100”. The explanation offered for this discrepancy is that many of these have been referred to various kinds of education and upskilling activities (e.g. FA-courses, folk high school programmes etc.) are registered here and not under “outreach guidance”. It would seem a justifiable assumption that this is the case also for other Majoriaq centres, which means that the data is to all intents and purposes limited in a guidance context, serving at best as indications rather than providing hard-nosed quantitative evidence.

As a general point, it goes for much of the information in IT Reg that the validity is questionable as there are different opinions and practices among users as to how things should be registered. Also, in some Majoriaq centres it is not the guidance counsellors but administrative staff that is in charge of registering data in IT Reg, thus adding an extra layer of interpretation to the

⁶⁰ Guidelines for elaborating personal action plans can be found on the Iserasuaat website, and they specifically indicate that they are written for guidance counsellors (see <http://www.iserasuaat.gl/da/Majoriaq/Vejledning/Handleplan/Vejledning%20til%20handleplan>).

execution of the task. In fact, some guidance counsellors who were interviewed admitted to keeping their own private spreadsheets with information, as they were not able to use the information from IT Reg. The system as such is characterised by having grown organically, where more functions and options have been added along the way. This makes it confusing at times, and this is one of the explanations why many users have adopted their own, erratic ways of registering the information. This is, incidentally, not a new observation, but one which has been made in connection with IT Reg also in the past⁶¹. It does, however, have the potential to function as a national data platform both for administrative and statistical purposes.

Finally, it should be noted that educational establishments so far have been exempted from the requirement to report on the guidance effort, as the law (§13, item 2) states that the Government of Greenland may place a similar demand on them. However, this has not yet happened. This means that quantifiable information on the guidance effort in relation to retention guidance (and to some extent also transition guidance) is not available.

5.3 Quality in guidance

“Quality” can be a tricky concept to work with in a guidance context, for what is “good guidance” and how do we measure it?

In the last resort, the ultimate arbiter on quality in guidance is indubitably impact. If guidance can be proved to make a positive difference with regard to parameters like enrolment, completion and employment, then it must necessarily be good of quality. As we have seen, however, the issues that guidance is envisaged to make an impact on are also influenced by other factors, and it is a dodgy proposition to isolate and judge the contribution of guidance to any developments (or lack of developments) here.

At the level of delivery, user satisfaction is sometimes taken as a token of quality. Unlike the 2011 evaluation, this evaluative study has included the user perspective, and during interviews with users of guidance, these were asked about their experiences with guidance and their judgments of the service they had received. The reliability of such statements is questionable, however, as we are dealing with individuals’ perceptions. Users may, at the end of a guidance session, feel highly dissatisfied with the outcome, because it could not solve all of their problems on the spot or give them the answers that they would have liked to hear, but it may still have been guidance of good quality. To determine whether this was the case would have necessitated in in-depth enquiry into individual cases, which was (also for legal reasons) not feasible in this study.

5.3.1 The quality framework

An evaluation will, almost inevitably, tend to focus on negative aspects of the object under evaluation, as this is where action is required. However, many instances of good quality were encountered during the fact-finding mission. Among the positive elements in the Greenlandic guidance system that were highlighted by users and stakeholders or were observed during the fact-finding mission were –

⁶¹ See e.g. PEMA (2012) pp. 29-30.

- *The Basic Guidance Counsellor Training Programme*, which received almost unanimous praise from guidance counsellors as providing them with the knowledge and tools to tackle the challenges they encountered. Even though not legally required to do so, also all guidance counsellors from educational establishments that were interviewed had taken the course or were about to do so;
- The specialised student counselling service (*studenterrådgivningen*), which was perceived as a great help by guidance counsellors, as they could refer students with serious personal problems to the specialists here. The only problems were long waiting lists and a lack of qualified psychologist with proficiency in Greenlandic;
- The success of addressing *guidance in a lifelong perspective* and involve also adult beneficiaries in formal education and training.

However, the impression left by the interviews and discussions with guidance counsellors and other actors and stakeholders is that notions of quality in guidance in Greenland are generally composed of individuals’ collections of “examples of good practice” rather than a holistic, shared approach.

This criticism could be levelled also at other European countries, but there are some instances where sets of quality principles (or even standards) for guidance and developing accompanying quality assurance strategies have been elaborated. One such example is from the Republic of Ireland⁶², which embraces the following principles for the assessment of quality in guidance:

- Accessibility
- Appropriateness
- Confidentiality
- Equality of opportunity
- Impartiality
- Individual ownership and responsibility (client decision-owning)
- Integration (quality must reflect both personal, educational and vocational aspects of the system)
- Quality standards of service (service delivery, updated information, competences of practitioners, facilities and resources)
- Practitioner cooperation
- Transparency (guidance process is transparent to clients)
- Complaints handling

A similar exercise has not been carried out for Greenland, but the 2013 Act does contain provisions that correspond to several of the Irish principles, notably in §14-17 on the ethical perspectives in the delivery of guidance. Even though it can be discussed whether the Irish example encompasses all aspects of quality in guidance, it provides a useful analytical framework, and it has guided the analysis of the empirical data extracted from interviews and documents. The aim of this has not been to make a 360 degree’s appraisal of quality in the Greenlandic guidance system, but merely to identify problematic issues. Some of these have already been highlighted above:

Accessibility: As procedures and frequency of the outreach guidance prescribed in the law for the “youth target group” have not been described in detail (especially on how they are identified and approached), there are big differences in the way this is carried out in the individual

⁶² See Kristensen et al., 2008 (p. 28).

municipalities and Majoriaq centres. As the information on this activity registered in IT Reg is not reliable for the purposes of this study, we cannot exclude the possibility that there are persons in the target group who remain undetected or who are not receiving the guidance they are entitled to according to the law.

Competences of guidance practitioners: Standards for competences for guidance counsellors in the Majoriaq centres have been laid down in the law in §12, item 2, which states that these must have a qualification from a recognised guidance counsellor guidance programme. This is the Basic Guidance Counsellor Programme delivered by the National Centre for Guidance (*vejledergrunduddannelsen*). In the interviews with practitioners, all expressed satisfaction with this, and stated that it had equipped them well for the guidance tasks they carried out. However, it is not a mandatory requirement for guidance practitioners in educational establishments.

Updated information: Many guidance practitioners complained about the difficulties they experienced in retrieving updated information on especially entry requirements and application procedures for education and training programmes. This was not only due to missing or outdated information in the portal websites – also the websites of individual educational establishments were prone to this.

Resources: Staff in all Majoriaq centres that were interviewed in the fact-finding phase complained about the overwhelming administrative work pressure, that was smothering guidance work, and in particular outreach guidance. Guidance is – as is also pointed out in §15 of the law – a process which can be hard to quantify and plan in advance, whereas many administrative tasks require immediate action. Also, since guidance activities do not figure very prominently in the performance contracts of the centres, they risk being downplayed. This was also the case in some educational establishments, however, as the guidance counsellor is often a teacher at the same time.

Impartiality: Since guidance in Greenland is embedded in institutions that also have other interests, guidance counsellors may become tempted to place institutional interests over those of the users (see below).

A point made by guidance practitioners in Majoriaq centres, educational establishments and other guidance initiatives concerned the issue of *practitioner cooperation*. Framework for such a cooperation exist in the shape of local guidance practitioner networks, which have been established in all major towns, and which were already up and running at the time of the 2011 evaluation. This is also reflected in the 2013 Act, where §3 imposes on the Government of Greenland, among other duties, to support networking in the field of guidance. In most of the towns, however, these local networks were at least partially dysfunctional, in so far as they excluded some practitioners, were held at irregular and infrequent intervals, only dealt with limited aspects of the guidance effort, or were influenced by personal animosities between members.

A general understanding of the nature of quality in guidance is, for some activities, hampered by the fact that key concepts are not defined and explained in sufficient detail the law or elsewhere, so that actors and stakeholders are left to make their own interpretations of these. An example of this is “outreach guidance”; another is the term “supervision”, which appears in §3, item 6 (which states that the Government of Greenland is responsible for providing supervision in local guidance centres). The term has several meanings, but precisely what it means in this context – and how it is carried out – is not further explained.

During the fact-finding phase, no examples of *quality assurance systems* of guidance efforts were found

5.4 Coordination

“Coordination” refers to the ways in which various actors in the guidance system interact to ensure that appropriate guidance is available to relevant target groups at the time when they need it, and that resources – including human resources – are used wisely and to the maximum effect. This issue is given specific attention in the ToR, which state that “... it would be appropriate to review the structures organising and institutionalising the guidance effort, and clarify the role, scope, tasks, responsibilities and limitations for each player in the field of guidance” (p.2).

5.4.1 National level roles and responsibilities

The overall responsibility for compliance with the law rests, of course, with the Government of Greenland. In § 3 of the 2013 law, the further responsibilities of the Government of Greenland with regard to the guidance efforts in Greenland are subsumed in 8 points. They concern:

- Evaluation and development
- Coordination
- Information about guidance
- Elaboration and distribution of guidance material
- Training and continuing vocational training of guidance counsellors
- Supervision with regard to local guidance centres
- Sharing of knowledge and experience
- Support for networking

The exact significance of some of these points remains at least partially obscure. It is thus not clear what “information about guidance” means, as this issue is also covered by the points “elaboration and distribution of guidance material” and “sharing of knowledge and expertise”. Also, the term “supervision” is not defined: the term itself has connotations in the direction of both “monitoring”, implying control, and “coaching”, implying support for competence development, which are two not immediately compatible meanings. Also, it seems strange that this supervision only is for Majoriaq centres, and apparently not covering the guidance efforts of educational establishments. It was not possible during the fact-finding phase to locate any sources that could supply the exact meaning of these points.

Further responsibilities of the Government of Greenland are outlined in §4 (the creation of a virtual guidance portal) and §5 (the establishment of a “national dialogue forum” to support networking). In §8, it is also mentioned that the GoG must provide secretarial support to the National Guidance Council, which is also created by the 2013 law (§7). Whereas the tasks, the remit and the composition of the Council have been outlined in the law and further substantiated in a separate executive order⁶³, the National Dialogue Forum is described in terms of remit and composition (“a forum where local guidance centres, educational establishments, organisations and associations etc. can put forward and discuss viewpoints and estimates on all

⁶³ Government of Greenland Executive Order of March 9, 2015 regarding tasks and rules of procedure for the National Guidance Council of Greenland.

issues of relevance to educational and vocational guidance” (§5), but there is no executive order or other documentation to follow this intention up with further instructions.

§6 continues: “To carry out some or all of the tasks mentioned in §§3-5 and §8, the GoG may establish a national centre for guidance”. The National Centre for Guidance was duly established in 2014. From the onset, it solved 2 tasks. One of these was that it offered the Basic Training Programme for Guidance Counsellors, which was one of the points on the list above. The other was the management of the special student counselling service, which is not mentioned in the 2013 law, but which was added in the revision in 2018. The centre was, however, never issued with a remit which determines its exact status, role and which of the tasks in the above list that are delegated to it. The only place where the centre’s tasks are mentioned is in the Annual Budget for Greenland, where the centre has a separate budget line. The 8 points are copy-pasted into the accompanying text, but no further explanations are given as to how they are to be understood and carried out, how the budget should be distributed on individual tasks, and what means of enforcement it has at its disposal to ensure their execution.

The centre is financed from the overall budget of the Ministry of Education, but it is not clear how its relation to this is – whether it is an integral part of the Ministry with the power to act on behalf of this, or whether it is an institution under the Ministry (as an “independent public institution” like e.g. a vocational school with some degree of independence). The attachment to the Ministry of Education is not unproblematic, however, as an important part of the overall guidance effort in Greenland is delivered through the Majoriaq centres, which belong to the Ministry of Labour. This prompted the National Council for Guidance in its 2018 report to include a recommendation to the Government of Greenland to “ensure the coherence in the guidance effort, under this also that guidance tasks of the Majoriaq centres are the responsibility of the same ministry as all other guidance services. It is not expedient for the development of guidance that the responsibility for this is not placed under the same ministry”⁶⁴.

These issues are of specific importance with regard to all the points on the list, but in particular to the point on “coordination”. Coordination is in the law clearly separated from control (*tilsyn*, §26), but it is not defined precisely what it is and what it implies. It may be done in many ways, but it will potentially entail an interference with the way in which individual actors carry out their tasks. Therefore, it usually comes with some form of power of enforcement, or at least some sort of formal status that establishes a legitimate position which can be recognised by all parties. In the absence of this, the centre must build its own position and define its own role, relying on actors and stakeholders to acknowledge its position. As an example of this, the centre has started to facilitate local guidance counsellors’ networks, but it cannot intervene e.g. in the event of actors not participating. It has also, albeit in a limited scope, started carrying out supervision, in the sense of coaching guidance counsellors to cope with a specific problem. An instance of this occurred in one town, where the psychologist from the special student counselling service helped guidance counsellors cope with the repercussions of a sudden suicide wave among young people that had hit the town.

In an information letter to actors and stakeholders, dated October 29, 2018⁶⁵, the centre declares its ambition to be “a central cooperation partner” for educational establishments, but highlights its lack of leverage vis-à-vis the Majoriaq centres. It also points to challenges in the existing organisation of the guidance efforts in both Majoriaq centres and educational

⁶⁴ Annual report of the National Guidance Council 2018, p. 4.

⁶⁵ Information note from the National Centre for Guidance to all project groups in the educational reform-process (*Infobrev fra Center for National Vejledning til alle projektgrupper i Uddannelsesreform-arbejdet*).

establishments and vents its frustration at having only a staff of 3 guidance professionals to carry out the tasks and responsibilities that are assigned to the centre in the Annual Budget⁶⁶.

National centres for guidance or similar organisations exist in most European countries (but curiously enough not in Denmark, even though one of the first such structures – The National Council for Educational and Vocational Guidance – was created here in 1981). The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) in 2008 published a manual for the establishment of such national centres, outlining potential role, tasks and composition, as well as the challenges faced by these⁶⁷.

In terms of control, the 2013 Act only makes provisions for the guidance activities of the Majoriaq centres. §25 states that the Government of Greenland will conclude a performance contract with the municipalities concerning the guidance activities, which should define the targets for the local guidance effort and the conditions for this. Moreover, it must specify the desired outcome targets (*resultatmål*). An analysis of the performance contracts shows that this specification of outcomes is only done at a very general level, which makes it impossible to quantify the effort. An example: out of 6 outcome targets for a municipality⁶⁸, only one is concerned with guidance, and meekly states that “All young people under 30 must be guided towards education and training” – which is a general intention, and not a quantifiable target. Even though the text of the contract opens up for the possibility for sanctions (cuts in the Government of Greenland-grant), the vagueness of the demands makes this stipulation meaningless.

As for the guidance effort of educational establishments, this is both in practical and legal terms impossible to control, as it is left entirely up to the institutions themselves to choose how they organise and implement their guidance activities, as long as they provide some kind of guidance. In most educational establishments, there is no strategy for guidance other than a brief task list for guidance counsellors, and no systematic information is gathered on guidance activities. In one of the educational establishments visited, a more detailed guidance strategy was in the process of being drawn up, including also obligations for a systematic gathering of information on the guidance effort and related issues.

5.4.2 Local level roles and responsibilities

The roles of the guidance actors on the ground, i.e. at local level, are well defined in the 2013 law, in so far as it is the educational establishments that have the responsibility for transition and retention guidance, whereas Majoriaq basically covers the guidance needs of all those outside of the educational system, and with a special responsibility for those who do not of their own volition seek information and advice (outreach guidance). However, there are overlaps and “grey zones”, where responsibilities are blurred and individual interpretations possible with a risk of lacunae in coverage.

In the course of the fact-finding mission, 3 particular coordination problems between the role and tasks of Majoriaq centres and educational establishments came up. Two of these have already been highlighted earlier in this study. One concerns transition guidance, which is formally the responsibility of the educational establishments, but where the Majoriaq centres are given an unspecified role (§19, item 2), having to “assist” these in the execution of the task.

⁶⁶ This excludes the administrative staff (3 persons) and the staff in the special student counselling service.

⁶⁷ Kristensen et al., 2008.

⁶⁸ This example concerns the Municipality of Avannaata.

In the 2013 Act, this clearly extends to all educational establishments, whereas the 2015 law establishing the Majoriaq centres only refers to primary and lower secondary education (§2, item 5). The lack of detail on how this cooperation is organised and what it entails creates a limbo, where confusion reigns. The other concerns the local networks of guidance actors, where responsibilities and rules of procedure have not been laid down, and where it consequently is up to individual services and actors to decide on participation and contributions. Whereas municipal authorities have the general responsibility for guidance to citizens in the municipality, they have no authority over educational establishments except for primary and lower secondary schools. In one municipality, the network therefore only included guidance counsellors from Majoriaq and the primary and lower secondary schools.

The third concerns the task of the Majoriaq centres, embedded in §2, item 4, of looking after “guidance and administration of applicants to education and training programmes”. It makes sense that the Majoriaq centres give guidance (and practical assistance) to applicants that are not attached to any educational establishment but come from the labour market or unemployment. However, in most places this is interpreted to mean that Majoriaq has the responsibility to look after all applicants, also those that go straight from one school to another (e.g. from lower secondary to upper secondary level). “Administration” means that the Majoriaq centres are given the responsibility to ensure that the application forms are correctly filled in, and that all the necessary documentation is attached. Through the citizen portal (*Sullisivik*) it is possible to submit the application electronically, but by far the majority of all applicants prefer to go to Majoriaq and fill in the form with the assistance of staff from there, and as the deadline for submission for most programmes is the 1st of March, this creates an enormous work pressure in the period up to this date. After the 1st of March, Majoriaq has a fortnight’s time to check the applications, before they are sent to the relevant educational establishments. These will then go through the applications and decide on enrolment or not. This arrangement, besides entailing a certain duplication of efforts, is a source of frustration on both sides. Majoriaq centres go through a hectic period, where other tasks – including guidance – are cancelled or postponed, whereas the educational establishments claim that the Majoriaq centres often are remiss in their quality check of the applications and let through forms with important information missing and applicants who are obviously not fulfilling the formal requirements. This situation would seem to cry out for a different way of organisation, especially because the observation is not new, but was also made in the 2011 evaluation.

During the fact-finding mission, Majoriaq centres were asked how they coped with the extra workload:

In one Majoriaq centre, the staff created 10 “work-stations” with internet connections a couple of weeks before the application deadline. These work-stations could be used by applicants for educational programmes to submit their applications electronically through *Sullisivik*. Staff was available to help with the submission of the proposals, but rather than spending time on a one-to-one basis, they merely functioned as consultants in the event of problems and doubt. In this way, the workload was reduced to a more acceptable level.

5.4.3 Limitations

A final point concerns the organisation of guidance in Greenland and whether there are institutional barriers that impede the delivery of quality guidance.

The Greenlandic guidance system has an advantage in the way it is organised: since guidance is delivered in connection with educational activities and job-centre functions and public administrative tasks, guidance is where the users are. Guidance counsellors at educational establishments thus meet pupils, students and learners every day, and since they often function as teachers and instructors at the same time, they have an intimate, personal knowledge of the target group. Similarly, for the Majoriaq centres, where people besides guidance come to find employment, for rehabilitation measures and to receive upskilling.

However, this advantage may also turn into a disadvantage. For one thing, the fact that guidance services are embedded in organisations with other (and perhaps more pressing, or with higher priority) tasks and functions means that guidance activities, if not properly ring-fenced, may become squeezed. None of the organisations or institutions involved in the evaluations had thus developed proper guidance strategies comprising tasks, methods and resources, even though there were instances of “task lists” of a not too detailed nature.

It may also mean that one important quality criterion, namely that of impartiality, is imperilled, as guidance counsellors may be tempted to place institutional interest over and above those of the users. One example that was mentioned in an interview was that of educational establishments, which – because of the way in which education and training is financed with the so called “taximeter-principle”⁶⁹ – have a great interest in retention guidance, since increased completion rates have consequences for the funding they receive. Once learners have decided to drop out, however, they become a liability, and there is no incentive to try and help these to make meaningful choices with regard to their further trajectory. This may mean that they are cut loose and allowed to drift, and that valuable time is lost before they are in contact with the guidance system again.

This risk of infringements on guidance counsellors’ impartiality has led some countries – e.g. Denmark – to organise educational guidance in specific guidance centres that are independent of the educational institutions and physically located elsewhere. This may, however, come at the cost of another quality principle, namely that of accessibility. The study did not find any evidence that impartiality is under threat.

⁶⁹ The “taximeter principle” means that a significant part of the funding of an educational establishment is tied to the number of learners and levels of completion, rather than being disbursed as fixed grants.

6. Conclusions

Despite the fact that the guidance effort since enactment of the 2013 law apparently has not had any significant impact on phenomena like enrolment and retention, this is not necessarily a consequence of a poor workmanship in the drafting of the law. On the contrary – an analysis of the legal text reveals this to be well structured and logically coherent: it defines key concepts, lists the challenges, identifies target groups and actors, sets competence levels of guidance practitioners, describes interventions and assigns responsibilities. With the exception of one (the separation of guidance from the delivery of education), it addresses all the major proposals and recommendations made in the 2011 evaluation.

The devil, however, lies in the detail: in several places in the legal text, important specifications of roles and interventions are either missing or referred to possible future action (“the Government of Greenland may...”). As the study indicates, this has not taken place, and important and necessary follow-up work on the provisions in the law is still left dangling. This lack of follow-up has clearly stunted its potential impact on the overall effectiveness of the guidance effort. Some examples of this are the overall coordination of the guidance effort, where the role and status of the National Centre for Guidance is left unresolved; the tasks and duties of the guidance effort in the educational establishments, where the law refers to rules which, in fact, are only marginally concerned with guidance; and the methods and the frequency of the outreach guidance carried out by the Majoriaq centres. This lack of precision and more detailed guidelines has left actors in a limbo, where the execution of the tasks is based on interpretations, resulting in uneven quality and lacunae in coverage.

Moreover, some interventions foreseen in the law have, as yet, only been imperfectly implemented. This concerns the visions of a national database on guidance related issues, where a system (IT Reg) has been developed, but still needs finetuning to achieve full functionality. Users entering data into the system do so according to individual perceptions of what should go where, and as a result, it is not feasible to extract reliable information that can be used to guide and develop the overall guidance effort. A virtual portal for guidance counsellors and users of guidance, foreseen as a “one-stop-shop” for guidance-related information, is also still not a reality. This task is all the more urgent since the vast geographical expanse of Greenland and the dispersed settlement patterns cry out for internet-based solutions, as connections are being extended and becoming more reliable.

There are many examples of good practices of high quality in the Greenlandic guidance effort, but quality is also under pressure, since guidance is being squeezed by the workload involved with other tasks in the principal locations where guidance is being dispensed – educational establishments and Majoriaq centres. The 2013 Act is strong on the ethical aspects of guidance, but as it fails to provide more concrete specifications of good quality guidance, the guidance workload becomes hard to quantify, and therefore vulnerable vis-à-vis more hard-nosed work tasks. For the Majoriaq centres, detailed descriptions of work procedures exist (which is an example of good practice), but unfortunately these do not comprise a key aspect of the guidance work of the centres, namely outreach guidance for the youth target group. Another factor influencing quality in a negative way is the high turnover in guidance staff and the absence of explicit organisational-level guidance policies, which means that each guidance counsellor builds up his or her own base of knowledge and practices, which often disappears when the guidance counsellors leaves the organisation. Consequently, many efforts are wasted reinventing the wheel. No examples of quality assurance strategies were identified.

The 2011 evaluation proposes to consider a separation of guidance from the delivery of education and training to secure the impartiality of guidance, even though this is not backed up by any strong evidence that this impartiality is under threat. Neither has this study found any evidence that points in this direction. However, the integration of guidance with other tasks may cause guidance services to be squeezed because these may take pre-eminence. Therefore, guidance needs to be better ring-fenced to ensure adequate delivery.

7. Recommendations

Guidance may not be the most potent factor in determining citizens’ trajectories in an educational and labour market context, but it is an important tool in the toolbox we have to influence the choices they make, and consequently we need to ensure that it is constantly sharpened and ready. The following recommendations do not address deeper issues in relation to enrolment, retention and labour market careers (psychological problems, social and geographical barriers, economic and societal developments etc.), but focus on the guidance efforts in isolation and how the potential impact of these can be improved in a realistic perspective.

The 10 recommendations given below all have as their target to improve existing provisions so that the intentions of the 2013 Act can be fully realised. The evaluation does not advocate any major organisational reform or reshuffling of tasks, but nevertheless there are implications both of an organisational and financial character of its recommendations. “Outreach guidance”, for instance, is crucially important in Greenland with so many young people not continuing in education and training after the completion of lower secondary education, but it appears to be neglected as Majoriaq centres are struggling with other tasks, since the lack of detailed guidelines means that this aspect of the work is an easy target when resources are stretched. If outreach guidance is to be efficient and effective, it means either more resources or that other tasks must be skipped to make room. Similarly, more precise definitions of “coordination” and “supervision” and the kind of interventions that these require may open up for reallocations of resources and authority. To negotiate such aspects, one of the recommendations is to elaborate a national guidance strategy.

Looking ahead, a major educational reform is currently under consideration in which it has been proposed to lengthen the period of obligatory schooling for young people to 12 years⁷⁰. The reform is first likely to take effect in 2022 and most details are not yet in place, but it will undoubtedly have implications for guidance, which may require legal action. However, the 10 recommendations below are all of a nature that require action now, and which should not be postponed in order to await a coming reform.

1. Follow up on outstanding issues in the law on guidance

The 2013 law is essentially a well-thought out and useful piece of legislation, but it has never been allowed to unfold its full potential, as many issues are not defined in sufficient detail. Some of this is due to oversights, but in quite a few cases the provisions of the law open up to further action, which, however, is still outstanding, and which need to be addressed in order to allow the intentions of the law to be carried out. This action needs to necessarily happen in the shape of a revision of the law itself, but can also be done through other instruments like executive orders, instructions, performance contracts, authoritative work procedure descriptions etc. This is a general recommendation that subsumes some of the points made below as individual recommendations.

2. Clarify remit and status of the National Centre for Guidance

The National Centre for Guidance was set up through a legal provision to carry out “all or some” of the national-level responsibilities and duties in relation to guidance incumbent on the Government of Greenland. However, the centre has no official remit, and the only place where the responsibilities are outlined is in the annual budget of the Government of Greenland, into

⁷⁰ Uddannelsesplan II 2018, p. 8.

which the listing in the law has been copy-pasted. This is not a proper remit, however, as it must be renewed annually. Also, the nature and implications of some of these tasks need to be clearly defined (e.g. “coordination” and “supervision”). The centre is financed by the Ministry of Education, but it is not clear whether the centre is an integral part of the ministry or an “independent public institution” with some autonomy. The relationship to the Ministry of Labour should be clarified, as an important part of the guidance effort is carried out by agencies (Majoriaq centres) under this ministry. It should be considered whether the centre should be an independent organisation with a board of governors with representative from both ministries as well as stakeholders.

3. Draft authoritative guidelines for outreach guidance vis-à-vis the youth target group

Greenland has a huge problem with young people not engaging in education, and it is a crucial task of guidance to activate these in this respect, even though they do not seek out guidance counsellors on their own initiative. Hence the provisions in the 2013 law for outreach guidance, but these provisions have never been described in detail, and consequently it is up to the individual Majoriaq centre and municipality to decide how – and how often – they are doing it. To ensure quality and avoid lacunae in coverage, rules and guidelines for this must be laid down from the national level, using e.g. the “Qaqortoq”-model developed by the Majoriaq centre there. Very detailed “work procedure descriptions” exist for the work of Majoriaq, but this aspect is curiously enough not included in these. As the Majoriaq centres are under pressure from other work tasks, however, more detailed guidelines will not solve the problem unless either more resources are added, or the overall workload reduced to create the space needed for this.

4. Revise existing executive orders for educational establishments (especially at upper secondary level), making more detailed provisions for guidance

Educational establishments somehow “fly under the radar” in the 2013 law. Even though they are assigned the responsibility for transition and retention guidance, there are no details on how this should be done, other than “in accordance with existing rules”. However, such rules do not exist, as the executive orders for e.g. upper secondary general education and vocational education and training antedate the law and contain only extremely rudimentary provisions for guidance. Also, they are not, like the Majoriaq centres, under the obligation to use only trained guidance counsellors, or to supply information about the nature and extent of their guidance activities. It should be considered to create some form of incentive for educational establishments to extend their guidance also to learners after drop-out in order to ensure that these are not left to themselves but engaged in a meaningful way in educational activities.

5. Ring-fence guidance tasks in educational establishments and Majoriaq centres to ensure that it is not being squeezed by other tasks

By only defining guidance in very broad and general terms that defy quantification, there is a risk that the execution of guidance tasks is being downplayed by providers that have many other tasks to solve – which is the case for both educational establishments and Majoriaq centres. In the case of the latter, their financing is to a large degree dependent on performance contracts with the Government of Greenland, where guidance is not very prominent; a thing which logically would make the centres focus their attention on the issues where the demands in the contract are more hard-nosed. Therefore, guidance tasks need to be paid more attention in these contracts. In educational establishments, guidance counsellors usually also have teaching obligations, and even though the amount of working time allotted to guidance is often specified

in their work contracts, borderlines are fluid when activities are not clearly defined. Employing guidance counsellors on full-time contracts would solve this, but can lead to reduced flexibility, especially in smaller institutions.

6. Finalise the work on the IT Reg system

The IT Reg system as such is in an advanced stage of development but needs to be finetuned and in some cases simplified to make it more logical and intuitive for users. Also, it needs to strike the right balance between being an administrative tool at the level of individuals for guidance counsellors and case-workers and a data-generating device at aggregate level for the development of the guidance efforts. Especially the latter function is not operational at this stage, as erratic methods of entry from different users make the data unreliable. However, to assess the scope and effectiveness of the guidance system is a necessity in the development of guidance policies and practices.

7. Create the “one-stop-shop” virtual guidance portal

There are at present several websites that provide guidance related information to practitioners and citizens, but none of these are in contents and scope quite able to fit the bill. Guidance practitioners and guidance users therefore have to shop around to find the information and the material they require, which creates confusion and wastage of time. In addition, functionality is in places problematic, and information missing or not updated. This situation is caused by the fact that guidance is compartmentalised with several actors and stakeholders each trying to set up their own version rather than pooling resources, and it should be considered whether this task could be lifted by one actor, e.g. the National Centre for Guidance. A well-functioning portal with updated information is especially important for users in remote settlements with no physical access to guidance counsellors. Even though internet connections at present are limited in terms of coverage and availability, especially for more remote settlements, there can be little doubt that this will improve in the future, opening up exiting new vistas of virtual guidance. For the sake of user-friendliness, it may be envisaged to create two portals – one for users of guidance services and another for guidance counsellors.

8. Clarify interfaces between guidance services

Even though responsibilities are defined in the law, there are instances where it is unclear who does what, and this can lead to misunderstandings resulting in either no coverage or a waste of resources. This is e.g. the case with transition and retention guidance, where the responsibility lies with the educational establishments, but where Majoriaq is required to “assist”. This needs not be in the form of hard and inflexible rules, which do not take into account special conditions. Rather, they should be general guidelines giving the overall framework (responsibilities, resources), which can then be negotiated at municipal level, where the local guidance networks create a suitable platform for such agreements to be made. The present arrangements for applications to educational programmes should be changed, so the Majoriaq centres offer advice to applicants, but the further responsibility for processing applications should be carried out by the educational establishments.

9. Formulate principles for quality in guidance and encourage quality assurance strategies

A set of quality principles for guidance should be elaborated and discussed in order to create a common consciousness among actors and stakeholders on what good guidance is, and how it should be achieved. This task is already to a certain extent reflected in the law and elsewhere (e.g. in the curriculum of the Basic Guidance Counsellor Training Programme), but these

endeavours should be taken further and made more visible in the shape of a set of principles, which in short and succinct form present an overview of good guidance. This task should be carried out in the framework of the National Guidance Council. Guidance services should be required to reflect these in quality assurance strategies, elaborated at organisational level.

10. Draft a national strategy for guidance

There are many issues in guidance that require development, but resources are limited. At set intervals – e.g. every second year – a national guidance strategy should be drafted which identifies and prioritises the tasks to be lifted and sets timeframes for their completion. This is an important task especially in an interim period, where it is difficult to navigate for actors, as the decision-making process is in a state of interregnum. A proposal for a national strategy should be elaborated by the major stakeholder in the National Guidance Council and adopted (with possible changes and amendments) by the Government of Greenland.

8. Documentation consulted

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9. Annexes

9.1 Interview guidelines for guidance staff at educational establishments and Majoriaq centres

Interviews last from 30-45 mins and are held in Danish or Greenlandic according to the preference of the informant. The interviews are carried out individually, and the held under a pledge of anonymity. Informants should be asked all questions.

Background:

- How long have you worked as a guidance counsellor?
- Have you worked as a guidance counsellor in more than one place?
- Have you taken the Basic Guidance Counsellor Training Programme (or do you have a similar qualification)?
- Which educational background do you have besides this?

Your daily work:

- What type of guidance do you do (educational/vocational, transition/retention/outreach)?
- What is the age group of the users?
- Which guidance tasks take most of your time (seen in an annual perspective)?
- Which tasks do you see as the most challenging?
- Is there any systematic evaluation/supervision of your work?
- Do you participate in any local networks for guidance practitioners?
- Are you in regular (systematic) contact with guidance counsellors from other institutions or centres?

Guidance in Greenland

- Does guidance in Greenland, according to you, generally function well?
- Are there tasks or areas where the guidance efforts could/should be improved?
- Do all target groups have equal access to guidance?
- Do you feel that you have the knowledge and the tools to carry out your functions as a guidance counsellor?
- Is guidance in Greenland coordinated across actors so that it presents itself as a coherent system to users?
- (for guidance counselors in vocational schools and Majoriaq centres) How well does apprentices' guidance work, in particular with regard to the coordination of guidance efforts between vocational schools and Majoriaq centres?

9.2 Interview guidelines for learners in upper secondary education and training

Interviews last from 30-45 mins and are held in Danish or Greenlandic according to the preference of the informant. The interviews are organized as group interviews including from 3-6 informants, and interviews last from 45-60 mins. Every informant is given 3-5 mins initially to describe their background and experience with the guidance system, and in the remaining time is there is a group discussion on pertinent themes that have come up during the individual inputs. The questions are used to get the informants talking and need not all be covered. Informants are selected on the day among volunteers.

Before you started your present education/training programme:

- Did you come straight from lower secondary education, or have you done other things before you started?
- What prompted you to start your educational programme?
- Did you leave lower secondary school with a personal action plan – and what did it say?
- Did you need guidance when you made your choice of education/training?
- At what points in your trajectory did you use guidance, and where did you find it?
- Did you seek information on the internet in your decision-making process – and which websites did you consult? And was the information useful to you?

At the educational establishment:

- Which kind of guidance – if any – have you received in your school (group/individual, reactive/proactive etc.)?
- Did you ever go to see a guidance counsellor at your own initiative?
- If yes – what was it about, and did you get the information and assistance you needed?
- Have you ever contemplating dropping out of school?
- If yes – why? And what kind of assistance did you get from your guidance counsellor?
- Have you used the special student counselling service (*studenterrådgivningen*)?
- If yes – did you get the assistance you required?
- Do you know what you are going to do after you have finished school – and do you know how you get there?
- Have you discussed your career plans with a guidance counsellor?

Cross-cutting:

- Do you feel that you have had access to guidance when you needed it?
- Have you been satisfied with the quality of the guidance you received?
- Does the guidance system appear as a coherent system to you, and do you have the impression that guidance counsellors talk to each other and exchange information across organizations?

9.3 Interview guidelines for (young) people not in employment, education or training

Interviews last from 30-45 mins and are held in Danish or Greenlandic according to the preference of the informant. The interviews are organized as group interviews including from 3-6 informants, and interviews last from 45-60 mins. Every informant is given 3-5 mins initially to describe their background and experience with the guidance system, and in the remaining time is there is a group discussion on pertinent themes that have come up during the individual inputs. The questions are used to get the informants talking and need not all be covered. Informants are selected on the day among volunteers primarily from ongoing FA-courses.

Background:

- When did you leave lower secondary education (*folkeskolen*)?
- Did you have a personal action plan elaborated before you left (or was one made later in *Piereersafiit/Majoriaq*)?
- What were your plans when you left?
- What have you done since you left lower secondary education?
- If you have previously been enrolled in education and training programmes without completing them – why did you drop out?
- What are the reasons why you are not in employment, education or training now?
- What are your future plans?

Guidance:

- At which points in your life trajectory so far have you been in contact with guidance counsellors?
- Did you seek out guidance, or were you contacted by e.g. *Majoriaq* (outreach guidance)?
- What kind of guidance did you receive?
- Was the guidance you received of any use to you?
- Have you ever looked for information about career choices on the internet – and if yes, which websites did you consult? And was the information useful to you?

If the informant has experience from different parts of the educational system and labour market:

- Does it appear to you as though guidance counsellors from different parts of the system cooperate and exchange information?
- Have you come across anything in the guidance system that should be improved?