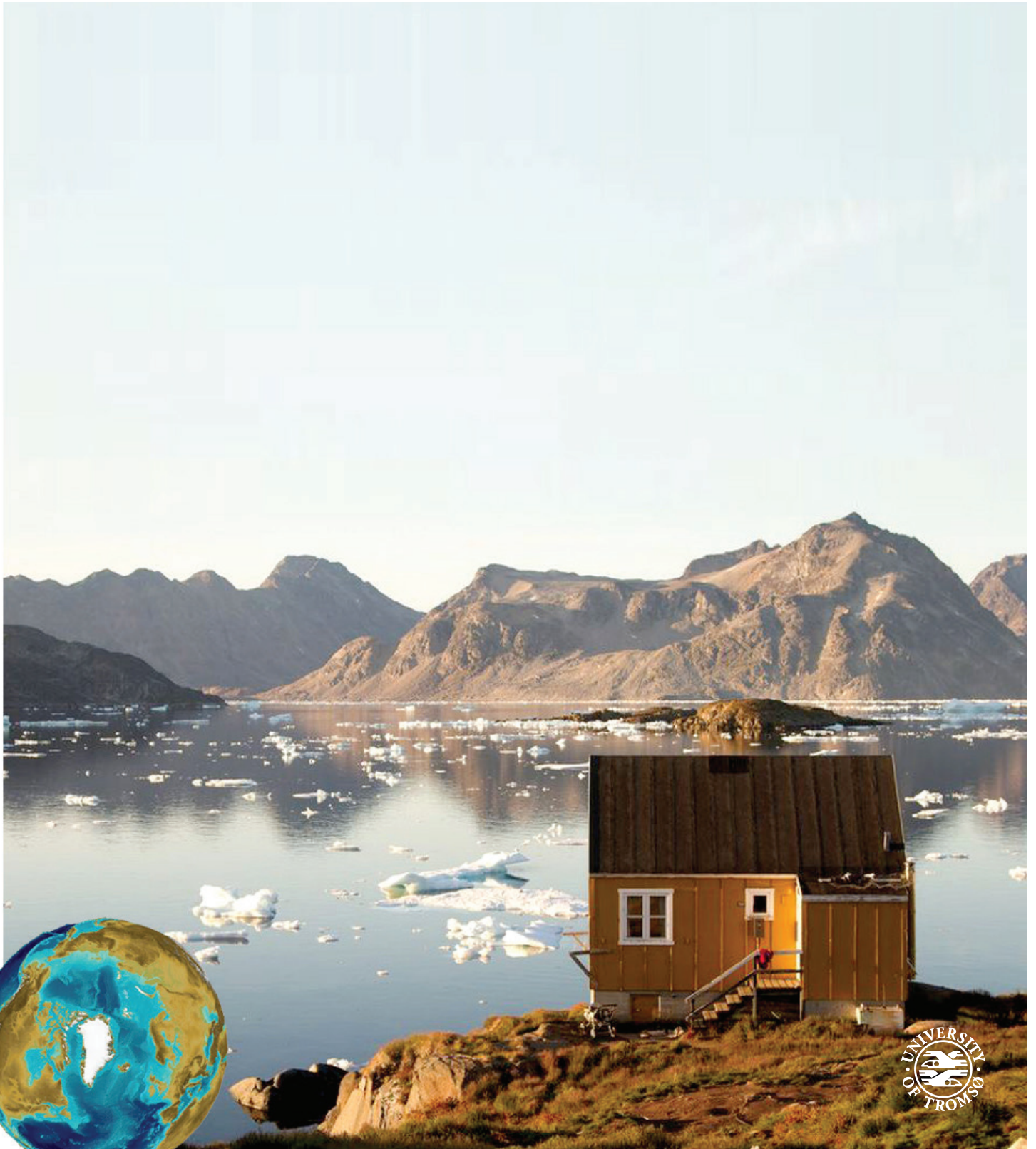


MIND THE GAP

Greenland: Is there a gap between educational goals of the government and the aspirations of young people in Narsaq?

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Thesis submitted for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Indigenous Studies
May 2014



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The Arctic University of Norway

Spring 2014

Acknowledgements

The producing this thesis was made possible with the help of some incredible people. Without them I could never have completed this work. I would like give heartfelt thanks to the people in Narsaq and to Edda and Kaj Lyberth in Qarqortoq. Accordingly I would like to thank my supervisor Bjørn Bjerkli who stuck with me and gave me inspiration throughout this thesis.

My never-ending love goes to my daughters, Eva Bergþóra Guðbergsdóttir, Hildigunnur Halldóra Hallgrímsdóttur Thorsteinsson and Salka Sól Styrnisdóttir for their enormous support and love throughout these two years in Tromsø.

My gratefulness goes to my friends, Debela Amante, Liuda Nikanorova and, Ane Hedvig Heidrunsdotter Løvold, without whose laughter, food and craziness I would not have survived, and with whom I will continue to plan trips, plans, thoughts and laughter for times to come. To Snorri Halldórsson and Sigrún Þorsteinsdóttur along with their son Styrmir and their sofa, who kept me going with laughter and stories and strange trips north of the Arctic circle and to Nanna Hauksdóttir who enriched my stay in Tromsø.

Finally I would like to thank Arctic University of Norway and SESAM for funding this study.

Abstract

Mind the gap is a thesis based on fieldwork conducted in Narsaq, Greenland in July 2013 and compares the rationale behind the government's high priority to increase educational standards of the population with the reluctance of young people in Narsaq to answer that call. Young people in Narsaq, like the population of rest of Greenland are going through a period of great changes, both environmentally and politically. This thesis examines how these changes will affect the young people in Narsaq and their educational prospects and aspirations.

The findings of this study are in line with a mixture of Alan Barnard's general hypothesis on *foraging mode of thought* and Merete Watt Boolsen's *social inheritance theory*. Some of the findings can be explained by applying Barnard's hypothesis on foraging mode of thought as there is still a strong sense of the traditional life style of Inuit hunter and gatherers among Greenlanders even if they now live in towns. And Merete Wall Boolsen's theory of social inheritance helps explain how hard it is to go against your culture when it comes to education, as the parents of many young people in Narsaq lack higher education and there are few positive role models in the area who do.

Keywords

Narsaq, Greenland, Education

Contents

Mind the Gap.....	II
Acknowledgements.....	IV
Abstract	VI
Keywords	VI
Chapter 1 Introduction to Thesis	1
1.2 Topic Presentation and Research Question	2
1.3 Methodology	4
1.4 Field Work in Narsaq	6
1.5 Ethics	10
1.6 Previous Research	11
1.7 Thesis Outline	13
Chapter 2 Greenland, Narsaq - history, language and economics	15
2.1 Background History	15
2.1.1 Languages and Schools	17
2.1.2 Quest for Independence.....	20
2.2 Economics and Mineral Resources	21
2.2.1 Kvanefjeld and the Potential Effects on the Community in Narsaq.....	23
2.3 Economic Opportunities for Young People in Narsaq.....	24
2.4 Housing Problems and the Folke School in Narsaq.....	27
2.5 Greenland, Narsaq and the Welfare System.....	29
2.6 Conclusion to chapter.....	30
Chapter 3 Educational Goals and Secondary Education.....	31
3.1 Education as a priority.....	31
3.2 Greenlandic educational system.....	32
3.3 Educational reforms and policies and how it relates to Narsaq.....	33
3.3.1 Greenland Education Programme.....	35
3.4 Students in Greenland	38

3.4.1 Commenced Educations	39
3.5 Ilisimatusarfik - The University of Greenland	40
3.6 Concluding remarks to chapter.....	44
Chapter 4 Educational Opportunities and Choices – Narsaq.....	45
4.1 Secondary Education from Narsaq.....	45
4.1.1 Vocational Schools.....	47
4.1.2 The Commercial School in Qarqortoq (Handelskolen).....	48
4.2 Education and Economics	49
4.3 Students left behind – Dropouts	51
4.4 Information and Communications Technology (ICT).....	54
4.4 Conclusion to chapter	57
Chapter 5 Minding the Gap	59
Bibliography	62
Online sources:	66
List of Figures:.....	67
List of Tables:	67

Chapter 1 Introduction to Thesis

“For a nation that wants to be independent, it is necessary to bring about diversified economy. In doing that education is of utmost importance for the Inuit peoples of Greenland. Climate change is bringing new opportunities to Greenland and new opportunities for economic growth calls for higher educational level among the Intuits in Greenland. This has to happen simultaneously in order for Greenlanders to be able to cope with new way of living in the Arctic. To be an independent nation, we must first gain economic independence” (Hammond, Vidtalid, 2013)

Aleqa Hammond,
Prime Minister of Greenland
4th November 2013¹

„Greenland, the world’s biggest island could become the first independent country of indigenous people in modern times if the current search for oil, gas and minerals bears fruit“ (Europe)²

¹ Aleqa Hammond on RUV, Icelandic State Television Interview by news reporter Bogi Agustsson. 4th November 2013. Translated from Danish to English by me

² UNRIC United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe
<http://www.unric.org/en/latest-news/27747-greenland-resources-key-to-international-recognition->



Figure 1 Map of Greenland

1.2 Topic Presentation and Research Question

This research focuses on the educational plan the government of Greenland has implemented and how it plays out in Narsaq, a small town in southern Greenland. This thesis is an exploration of educational status and opportunities in relation to young people in Narsaq.

Greenlandic “Inuit education is and will remain urgent for the preservation of Greenlanders identity and in seeking greater recognition within the international forum” (Sissons, 2005, p. 8). The government of Greenland is calling for higher educational level among its people as reinforced by Aleqa Hammond’s (Hammond, Vidtalid, 2013) comments in the introduction to this thesis and the government is taking measures to increase education opportunities for its people. Times are changing in Greenland and new economic opportunities and independence are in sight. The reason this study focuses on Narsaq, South Greenland, is because there are valuable mines in the vicinity of Narsaq that will in all likelihood be opened in the near future, with the potential to alter the economic prospects of the inhabitants. Additionally, young people in Narsaq, as their generation in the rest of Greenland, are experiencing the same shift in the political and environmental landscape of the country. This thesis will

examine the issues facing young people in Greenland at this transitional turning point in their history overall, but with a focus on the youth population of Narsaq where the clouds of change appear to already have started to alter perceptions, and their attitudes toward higher education.

The research question is: **Greenland: Is there a gap between the educational goals of the government and the aspirations of young people in Narsaq?** This study will explore the rationale behind the government’s high priority to increase educational standards and the reluctance of young Inuit people in Narsaq to answer that call.

Coming from Iceland, a neighboring nation that has struggled with some of the same things Greenlanders are going through now, a country that was also colonized by Denmark like Greenland. Icelanders fought for the independence of their country and gained their independence from Denmark 1944. I have been an educator for many years in rural areas of Iceland and , education of young people, holds a strong interest for me, therefore education and young people in Narsaq is the focus of this thesis.

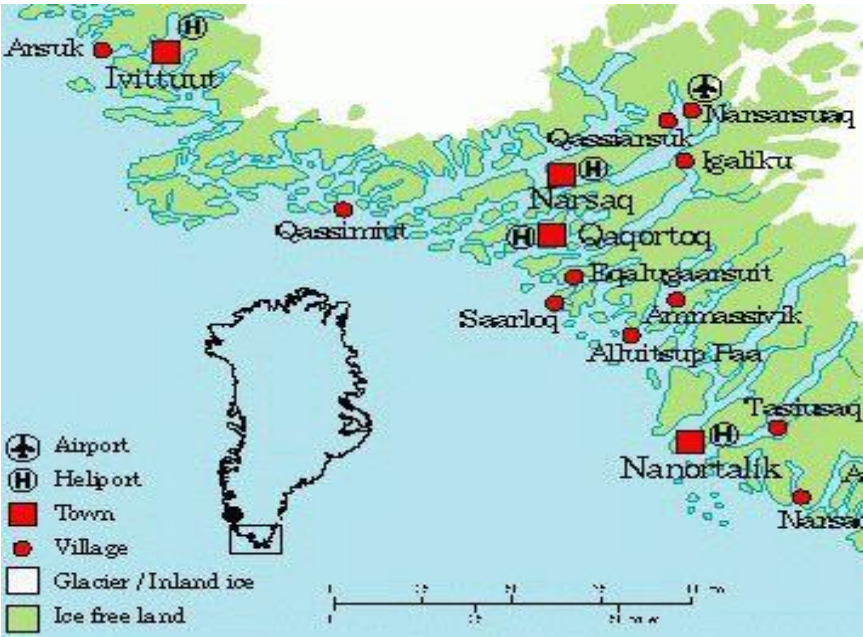


Figure 2 Map of south Greenland; Narsaq, Qaqortoq and Narsarsuaq (airport)

1.3 Methodology

Defining the meaning of the word *indigenous*, Jeffrey Sissons argues in his book *First Peoples*; “Indigenism is the taking back.... the loss of children, the loss of land. the loss of authenticity, the loss of sovereignty”. It is not, “reclaiming past lives, but of the present conditions for future lives within post-settler states” (Sissons, 2005, p. 140). Greenlanders are not reclaiming the past when it comes to the education of young people; they are looking forward into the future.

Along the same lines is the message from Karl Kristian Olsen³, the head of Department of Education and Research at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Church and Gender Equality in Greenland. “We are looking to the future, not dwelling on the past” says Karl Kristian Olsen, the “educational system today is founded on the Greenlanders values and ways of relation and Greenlanders are making reforms that are based on culture and education research from the circumpolar North and ongoing research in Greenland.”⁴ (Olsen K. K., 2014).

Alan Barnard, who for the past 40 years has researched the hunter-gatherer and herding communities in southern Africa, says when discussing modern foragers who procure their living on hunting, short-term jobs and gathering: “Mode of thought is more resilient than mode of production generally, and the two are interdependent” (Barnard, 2002, p. 5). Barnard is here talking about that the ‘foraging mode of thought’ is more enduring than the foraging way of life and the two are interdependent. ‘Foraging mode of thought’ is resilient and continues to live on with peoples, even though their lifestyle has changed. Furthermore, part time foragers also retain aspects of ‘foraging mode of thought’ says Barnard. He sets this out as a general hypothesis to be tested. “The foraging mode of thought is both an ‘insiders and outsiders’ view in the sense that it designates both how these people perceive their own way

³ Karl Kristian Olsen , Head of Department of Education and Research at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Church and Gender Equality in Greenland in Tromsø 04.04 2014

⁴ Referring to Arctic Human Development Report and the follow up report, Arctic Social Indicators ACHD

of living and how we characterize them too,” (Barnard, 2002, p. 6) and he stresses the “need to develop an approach which takes account of the continuity of foraging culture, even after new modes of subsistence are taken up” (Barnard, 2002, p. 6). Barnard’s ‘foraging mode of thought’ is thus a hypothesis on how the foraging mode of thinking can prevail, even generations after peoples stop hunting and gathering and move to modern communities.

Merete Wait Boolsen Associate Professor and Doctor in Sociology at the Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, Denmark who has been for the past years evaluating education in Greenland talks about *social inheritance theory* in her writings. ‘Social inheritance’ could be used to describe extended families where not a single person has pursued higher education. There are no role models in that circle of influence for the student and that in and of itself becomes an obstacle for his/her higher education (Boolsen, 2009, p. 77)

According to the theories of Multiculturalism by Charles Taylor, a Canadian philosopher; “our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, how non-recognition or misrepresentation can inflict harm and be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being” (Taylor, p. 25). Because of the influence of Danish colonization, education in Greenland is multicultural; both languages are used in the school system. In higher education, Danish and English are used more than Greenlandic, in part because of lack of educational materials in Greenlandic. Ronald Niezen, a researcher and a professor, in the areas of political and legal anthropology, indigenous peoples and human rights argues in his book, *The Rediscovered Self Indigenous Identity and Cultural Justice* (Niezen, 2009) on what he calls *Therapeutic History*,

“a process of collective self-definition that involves the appropriation or sponsorship of narratives about the past, as a way to define the moral essence of a people, where the narrator usually sees him/herself as belonging and as a way to recover from a lingering collective experience of rejection, dispossession, assimilation, and economic and political marginalization at the hands of the dominant society” (Niezen, 2009, p. 150).

Greenlanders are on their way to independence and in education, according to Karl Kristian Olsen, they look to other indigenous peoples shared, experiences, advice, and consultation for applicability of their experiences to the Greenland culture. The Inuits of Greenland insist “that

their thinking is facilitated and deepened by pedagogy or problem solving that addresses the whole first. They share this preference with other Inuit peoples, and most Native American Indian groups” (Olsen K. K., 2014).

This thesis examines the root causes for the lack of enthusiasm of young people to participate in formal education. One suggested cause, is that students suffer from lack of self-esteem and self-definition, because of the turmoil connected to the changes in their cultural identity – and the shift from a nation of hunter/gatherers and foragers to a modern society. Low self-esteem often leads to the discontinuation of education and this is a real problem for young indigenous people. Whether or not this is a part of the high rate of dropout from education is one of the things I explore in this thesis.

Niezen’s theory offers an explanation of sorts to understand to help Inuit people gain self-esteem and generally feel better about themselves. There could be more emphasis on Greenlandic history and culture. In the school year 2012-2013 a new course or an elective was introduced in most High schools, Kulturfag or Cultural studies, this is a 6 weekly classes an informant told me; “this is too little, my students need to know more about not only Greenlandic cultures but other indigenous cultures as well, besides western cultures.

Goldbach argues that “among the advocates of Home Rule, education was seen from the beginning, as an important tool to strengthen the vernacular and to secure cultural and national identity” (Goldbach, 2010, p. 259). Education has always been a priority for the Greenlandic government and the government is aiming at a state, with well-educated population. However, these goals will not be met unless the people share the government’s priorities.

1.4 Field Work in Narsaq

I used the limited research funding to stay for 3 weeks in Narsaq and because Narsaq is a small town I got a good image of the situation and was able to get empirical data, both in formal and informal interviews and by observation. I flew to Narsarsuaq, an airport village where 140 people live and work around the airport. From Narsarsuaq I took the ferry to Narsaq, where I stayed for three weeks. A ferry in Greenland is a small boat that takes 15 passengers, no cars. There is no easy transportation on the island. Towns and settlements in Greenland are not connected by roads; however there are roads within populated areas. People and goods are transported either by boats or by air. When I was sailing in between

huge icebergs and looking at the magnificent landscape, I thought about the people that have lived here for thousands of years with incredible resilience in this harsh environment and of my forefathers that came here and settled in south Greenland, lived here for four hundred years and then disappeared. “An Inuit culture overlaid by Danish colonial and post-colonial institutions on a large island still mostly buried under Ice Age glaziers makes Greenland socially and geographically unique” (Hamilton & Rasmussen, 2010, p. 42).

My position as a researcher is that I am an Icelandic woman and therefore perceived as friendly. Iceland is the next neighbor to Greenland and was also colonized by Denmark. Iceland gained its independence in 1944. Icelanders and Greenlanders have a lot in common. I did not need a translator; my communication was mostly in English and some in Danish. By not using a translator in the interview process, I felt closer to my informants. However in this thesis I translate all the Danish comments from my informants into English. In the journal, I noted body language, attire and attitude. I quickly became a familiar face in the town because there were not many tourists in Narsaq in the summer of 2013. The local’s interest in Iceland as a favorite holiday destination also helped. For example I was often enjoying a coffee in front of the Pillersuisoq or the supermarket and people of all ages would come and sit by me and chat about the weather, fishing, boats and life in general and driving on the roads of Iceland.

Many Greenlanders I met told me that they love to take a vacation in Iceland, rent a car and just drive around the country on the open roads and they wanted to tell me about their experience there. I often took my morning coffee in the cantina at Municipality center, at their invitation. This gave me an access to government officials, and others that came to the center for different reasons and businesses.



Figure 3 - Narsaq, Greenland

Close to the community center was a community hall, a wooden building, painted red. The community hall is a gathering place where everyone can hang out on weekdays. In the community hall, one can get sandwiches, play cards or pool, or just hang out and chat. There I found unemployed people, lonely people, happy people, young and old, in fact all sorts of people. Some days I just hung out in the community hall, observing and chatting to gain as much knowledge about the people in Narsaq as possible. To get more background knowledge about Narsaq and its inhabitants I visited the Police Station, the hospital and the Narsaq museum and had informal conversation with the personnel there.

My strategy in communicating was to be seen, walking around or sitting and drinking coffee in front of the supermarket. I made myself, always available for conversations. Sometimes I was invited to a Kaffimik⁵, and there I met some of my informants. People were coming and going all day and everyone had coffee, tea and cakes. It is very nice and relaxed way of celebrating family and friends. I spent a week in Qaqortoq, observing and interviewing young people and persons connected with education.

The research for this paper is primarily based on interviews with various stakeholders and informants and informal conversations, so it will mainly give a view of the attitudes and voices from people that live in Narsaq, some from Qaqoroq and from the Ministry of Education, rather than a representation of all Greenlanders.

⁵ Kaffimik is a Greenlandic traditional celebration used for special events such as birthdays and other family celebrations. If a family has a Kaffimik, neighbors and friends are invited to drop in any time during the day and enjoy cakes and coffee or tea with the family.

I used mix methods combining interviews both formal and informal, observation, statistics and data from various reports. The reasons for this approach are that I wanted to get as much information as I could in the timeframe I had. I observed people in Narsaq and then I use data to verify my analysis. In total I conducted ten formal interviews with people involved with education and young adults. Six were in Narsaq; two were in Qaqortoq and two in Nuuk. I had numerous informal conversations and open-ended interviews with my informants who were young adults (18-24), in Narsaq and some in Qaqortoq. I interviewed Karl Kristian Olsen, the head of Department of Education and Research at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Church and Gender Equality in Greenland and I have been in email and Skype contacts with some of my informants since leaving Greenland. The statistics I have been gathering are official statistics about education, both from Greenland in figures 2013⁶ (Greenland, 2013) and from the *Study to Evaluate the Performance of Higher Education in Greenland*⁷ (Commission, 2013) - to analyze attendance, dropout and commencement in the Greenlandic school system. These official reports gave me an overview over numbers of students, what kind of education students wanted to pursue and dropout rate.

My background is in television production, from working as a foreign correspondent for the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service in the United States and decades of experience producing documentaries, news, news related shows, plays and entertainment variety shows. Adding that to my more recent experience working as a teacher, my professional training was tremendously helpful when it came to conducting interviews with the people of Narsaq. Kvale and Brinkmann write about ‘semi-structured life world interview’ in their book *Interviews. Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) this kind of interview is defined as “an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 3). Interviews in ethnographical studies can “serve as an auxiliary method in conjunction with other methods” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 117).

Data was collected by observations and by conducting informal group interviews with young adults and data from the government of Greenland and from various Arctic reports. This thesis is on young people so I sought them out specifically. I also talked to parents, teachers, former students, police workers and people working in the health industry. Most of my

⁶ Greenland in figures 2013, published by Statistics Greenland in mars 2014

⁷ A report from the EU commission for the Greenlandic government on education in Greenland

informal and formal interviewees approached me where I was situated in front of the super market in Narsaq, while I was attending Kaffimik or on my walks around the town.

1.5 Ethics

Professional associations, as well as indigenous organizations and funding agencies, have developed codes of conduct for research in the North. ACUNS, Ethical Principles for the conduct for research ethics in the North (**Principles, 2003**) and IASSA's ethic principles (International Arctic Social Sciences Association, 1998). Such codes are;

“Instrumental in enforcing the respect of indigenous intellectual property rights. The researcher will make sure that the participants of the research are consulted before the inception of the research. A quality research depends both on communities understanding the needs and concerns of researchers and on researchers understanding the needs and concerns of communities” (Guiding Principles for the Conduct of Research , 1998).

I followed these principles for conduct as well as all the principles of conduct of the University in Tromsø⁸.

One of the responsibilities of a scholar doing indigenous research is to give back to the community or the people that were involved in her/his research. “Giving back does not only mean dissemination of findings; it means creating a relationship throughout the entirety of the research” (Kovach, 2009, p. 149). I have been in Skype and email connection with some of my informants while writing this thesis. The plan is to send this thesis to Karl Kristian Olsen, Head of Department of Education and Research at the ministry of Education, Culture, Church and Gender Equality and go to Greenland and present my findings in Narsaq.

My consent forms were translated into Greenlandic and printed out for the interviewees for them to sign. All of the informants that contributed to this research signed a consent form. I have chosen to have all of my informants appear anonymously. I sought to promote a “relational approach to research where the content to do research is sought at individual, community, and group levels and where consent is collective” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 295).

⁸ <http://uit.no/Content/171825/Retningslinjer%20vedtekne%2014.2.2008%20-%20engelsk.pdf>

In a small society such as Greenland, with a population of 56.000 people, information given to me could harm my informants. A third party may dislike certain pieces of information. It is not difficult in small societies to figure out who is the interviewee in a research like this. This I know from my experience in Iceland, also a small community, where everyone knows everyone, so to speak. It is therefore my responsibility to evaluate the situation and the information my informants give me and in this thesis I have chosen to make my informants appear anonymously. Anita Maurstad, discusses ethics and politics of research in regards to fisher knowledge in Norway in her article *Fishing in Murky waters – ethics and politics of research on fisher knowledge* (Maurstad, 2002, p. 165), and she comes to the conclusion that even though she was granted permission to use that knowledge in her data, it would be in the fishermen's best interest not to publish the data⁹. Like Maurstad, I came to the decision to make informants appear anonymous even though many of my informants had granted me permission for using their name.

I kept journal during my stay in Greenland. In the journal, I noted all the conversation that I was a part of, painted and took pictures I documented body language for example and situations the conversations took place in.

All my interviews and informal conversation were taped on a tape-recorder, not connected to the Internet¹⁰. The interviews and the conversations were mostly in English though some were in Danish. These will be destroyed 3 months after my thesis is submitted.

1.6 Previous Research

With growing interest in the Arctic, the Arctic Council, Nordic Council of Ministers, and the Alaska Native Knowledge Network to name just a few organizations, have funded research and published reports on the circumpolar region and the people that live there. These reports are researched and written by multicultural and multidisciplinary scholars and are of great source of information for this paper. Although there is a growing focus on Greenland, little has been written about young people in Narsaq in regards to education.

⁹ From *Fishing in Murky Waters – ethics and politics of research on fisher knowledge in Marine Policy* 26(2202) 159-1662

¹⁰ For a security reason, my recorder was no connected to the internet , therefore inaccessible to others than me.

The Arctic Human Development Report 2004 (ADHR, 2004) and its follow-up report *Arctic Social Indicators 2010* (2010) are published by Nordic Council of Ministers and written by a group of scholars that specialize in the Arctic¹¹. The editors for the Arctic Human Development report 2004 are Niels Einarsson, Joan Nymand Larsen, Annika Nilsson and Oran R. Young and the follow up report is edited by Joan Nymand Larsen and Peter Schweitzer. The education chapter of AHDR argues that the “most critical concerns in education in the circumpolar nations are for control, relevance and access to education and that these concerns are directly impacted by acknowledgement of distributed knowledge and the need to adapt education services to fit local needs and conditions” (ADHR, 2004)

SLiCA¹² (Kruse, et al., 2008), is an international joint effort of research and indigenous peoples to measure and understand living conditions in the Arctic, funded by the Nordic Council of ministers. The aims of SLiCA are “to measure living conditions in a way relevant to Arctic residents, document and compare the present state of living conditions among the indigenous peoples of the Arctic and improve the understanding of living conditions to the benefit of Arctic residents” (Kruse, et al., 2008). This report evaluates the living conditions in the Arctic. The finding in this report helps this thesis especially because in SLiCA a multi-disciplinary group of social scientists and indigenous people worked together to redefine and measure living conditions in a region¹³.

Greenland Education Programme, (Naalakkersuisut.gl) is a study to evaluate the performance of Higher Education in Greenland by an EU Commission. This report is newly published and therefore has new useful information and statistics that are important to this paper.

Education for All in the Arctic? This is a survey of available information and research edited by Wenche Rønning and Agnete Wiborg (Rønning & Wiborg, 2008). A comparative study of the Arctic area on education and the labor market and increased globalization of educational systems raises questions of influence on the way education is viewed and valued. This study is comparative and therefore helpful in locating studies and information for background knowledge for this thesis.

¹¹ Both these reports are on www.svs.is the website for Stefansson Arctic Institute

¹² SLiCA – A survey of living conditions in the Arctic Population based cross-sectional survey
http://download.springer.com/static/pdf/519/chp%253A10.1007%252F978-1-4020-8686-1_5.pdf?auth66=1396867800_41ed32f29c84f9c824740854e002fa31&ext=.pdf

¹³ SLiCA www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca

Greenland: Education and society between tradition and innovation (Goldbach, 2010, pp. 259-271), an article by Ib Goldbach about history, demographics and the educational landscape of Greenland. In this article, Goldbach discusses the changes the Greenlandic education system has gone through the last one hundred years. He argues that the “main developments, have always dealt with the schism that exists between European (Danish) culture and the Inuit culture. More and more the two cultures reach a balance, “but with an emphasis on the indigenous culture and traditions” (Goldbach, 2010, p. 259).

Per Langgaard writes an article about *Modernization and Traditional Interpersonal Relations in Small Greenlandic Community: A Case Study from Southern Greenland* (Langgaard, 1986). This article is a valuable background study about life in a village in south Greenland and how it differs from the life in Nuuk. Langgaard worked for three years as a teacher in a small community in south Greenland and there he made this case study.

1.7 Thesis Outline

The organization of the Thesis is that it is divided into six main chapters with accommodating sub chapters.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the research question and the reasons behind the question, previous literature and researches, methodology, ethics and how I conducted my fieldwork in Narsaq.

Chapter 2 discusses historic background to nation building and economics in Greenland and Narsaq. This is an Inuit nation that not so long ago were nomads and foragers This discussion provides context to this thesis and shows the alternative routes besides education young people in Narsaq choose to take, to earn a sustainable living.

Chapter 3 gives a specific overview of secondary and higher education and educational policy in Greenland and the situation in Narsaq. The Chapter will discuss the educational program and the goals of the Greenlandic government to increase the educational level of the population. In recent years there have been higher numbers both of students entering higher level education and students dropping out of education.

Chapter 4 examines the educational routes the young people in Narsaq have and do they feel that these are the right educational opportunities for them. What kind of education is applicable in Narsaq and the relation between education and employment in Narsaq?

Chapter 5. The concluding discussion is in this chapter. Why do young adults in Narsaq not find or answer the call to higher education and prefer to drop out of school. Is there a gap between the educational goals of the government in Nuuk and the reality in Narsaq? This chapter will also explore other routes of sustainable living that young people have in Narsaq and why has the government failed to meet its ambition of general mass education.

Chapter 2 Greenland, Narsaq - history, language and economics

This chapter will give some background to Narsaq and the people living there. It will also review some important information about Greenland and the Inuits; where they came from, their resilience and their colonial history. That will also include an overview of new economic opportunities and how they might affect life in Narsaq. Finally, this chapter will discuss the educational policy of the Greenlandic government and the context between educational policy and education in Narsaq.

2.1 Background History

To give this discussion some background, it is helpful to establish a few facts about Greenland. Greenland is the biggest island in the world, 2.166.086 km², and is situated on the northern American continent between the Arctic Ocean and the North Atlantic Ocean, northeast of Canada. Eighty five per cent of the island is covered by an icecap, which means that only fifteen per cent of the costal line is habitable. The population of 56.300 people (Statistics, 2012) - lives in scattered towns and villages around the coast of the island. Because of the geographic size of the country and the distances between towns, villages and settlements, to provide quality education for all, is both logistically challenging and financially costly for the government. - Over 90 percent of the population is of Inuit descent. Transportation is mostly by boats or helicopters. Internet connection is fine in some areas but slow in the rural areas and in some parts of the country, non-existing.

The first peoples of Greenland, who arrived on the shores some 4000 years ago, were primarily hunters of Muskox and other land animals. The ancestors of the Greenlanders today, the Thule peoples came to Greenland some one thousand years ago or about the same time the Viking settlers came from Iceland. The Thule people came from the Bering Sea region of Alaska and were the first people to settle all around Greenland both on the East- and the West coast. They were skilled hunters and brought with them kajaks¹⁴, umiaqs¹⁵ and the

¹⁴ Kajak is a small boat, constructed from stitched seal or other animal skins stretched over a wood or whalebone-skeleton frame – whalecraft.net

¹⁵An umiak is a large open sea canoe, ranging from 17 to 30 feet – whalecraft.net

toggle-head harpoons¹⁶, enabling hunters to hunt more effectively and survive in the harsh environment of the island (Caulfield, 2000, pp. 167-168). The Icelandic Sagas, in particular *Grænlandinga Saga*¹⁷ and Inuit traditions tell of trade and other contact between the Viking settlers and the Intuits. The Vikings disappeared in the fifteenth century and there are still speculations as to what might have been the cause (Caulfield, 2000).

Greenland has been part of the Kingdom of Denmark since 1721 when Hans Egede established a colony in south Greenland, near where the capital city Nuuk is now. The Danish government began establishing permanent settlements for Inuits in Greenland, around churches and trading posts around 1800. By 1850 most Inuits lived in permanent villages and thought of themselves as Greenlanders. In the 1880's the Greenlanders debated in print whether their identity derived from their ties to traditional hunting culture or from their language, history and love of the country (Stern P. R., 2010, pp. 86-87). Despite being colonized the Inuit peoples of Greenland held on to their unique cultural identity.

After the Second World War, the Danish administration in Greenland started to modernize the Inuit communities. The plan was to update the economy by transforming subsistence hunting to industrialized fishing. The Danish government encouraged Greenlanders to move from villages to larger towns. The Danes provided schools, hospitals, general stores and 'improved' housing for everyone willing to move to a bigger settlement. At the same time the Danish government started to withdraw services from smaller villages and settlements to encourage the move. The population in smaller Greenlandic villages today is aging and predominantly male. This is a trend all over the Arctic; women tend to go south for education and generally do not turn back. (Stern P. R., 2010, p. 59).

Moving from villages to towns has proved difficult for many Greenlanders. Instead of living in houses large enough for the extended family, the houses in the towns were apartment buildings with single-family units, and were not big enough for extended families. There was no space in the new housing for hunting gear and dogs. By moving into apartments in towns, the Inuits lost an important part of their perceived freedom, especially in terms of their sense of space and closeness to nature. Families were torn apart and began a very difficult adjustment period. As is too often the story in the Arctic, these houses were built without

¹⁶ Toggle-head harpoons were made of bone or ivory, usually with a stone or metal point, and pivoted around a line through a hole in the center of the head. A flaring rear barb helped to ensure catching in the blubber or flesh to initiate the toggle action. For darting, the head was held streamlined to the shaft by means of the separable shaft fitting into a receptacle hole in the rear of the head.

¹⁷ http://sagadb.org/files/pdf/graelendinga_saga.pdf

consultation with the Inuit population who were to live there and therefore were lacking when it came to addressing many of their most basic cultural needs. The apartments were designed and built as a solution to the economic and administrative needs of the Danish government, failing to take into account the very people who would be most affected by these actions. The Greenlanders for centuries have been used to having their own space to roam around in and be able to go out to hunting with their dogs whenever there was a good condition for hunting. This is still manifested in their culture. Many are still having a difficult time adjusting to the change, and find it hard to live in apartments, to stay in the same place for a long time, and to work at the same place during the same hours every day. This message was often repeated by informants, who wanted to be free to go hunting or fishing if the weather was good and work for wages when they needed. Here we have the 'foraging way' of thinking that Barnard writes about (Barnard, 2002). Even though the Inuits have moved to a town the mindset is still the same. That is the mindset of resilience, on being on the move and going where there is food to be had.

Greenland remained a colony of Denmark until 1953, when an amendment of the Danish Constitution, renewed Greenland's status and the country became a constituency in the Danish Kingdom. Greenland was granted limited sovereignty from Denmark with the Home Rule in 1979. Thirty years later, on June 2nd 2009, Greenland gained Self-Rule from Denmark. Today Greenland is a self-governing autonomous state within the Danish realm. Self-Rule means that the Government of Greenland now controls all areas of government except the Constitution; nationality; the Supreme Court; foreign defense and security policy as well as exchange rate and monetary policy' In the publicly elected parliament there are thirty one members. In the year 2011 Greenlanders got a block grant of 3,555 Danish kronas from Denmark. The block grant covers about one third of GDP or Gross Domestic Product of the country.

2.1.1 Languages and Schools

English is the foreign language most young adults in the Arctic choose to speak. It is the language of the Internet and by using English a person can get in touch with indigenous and other people from around the world and look for information and entertainment. The weather forecast on the Internet has become a very important source for Greenlandic fishermen and

hunters. In every settlement there is at least one person who monitors the weather forecast via the Internet for hunters. Many of my informants had smart phones and I noticed that they were texting in English and using the English SMS language¹⁸. I asked them why they were using English as a text language on their mobile phones and they asked me back “doesn’t everybody?” English is the popular culture language in the north. I can see it in my own text messages from Iceland, Norway, Denmark and other countries. I have worked with young people in Iceland for many years and English is the language they speak when they want to seem “cool” to their friends.

A Nordic research survey titled SLiCA (Kruse, et al., 2008) shows that the Greenlandic language is very important to the identity of Greenlanders. Other factors include work, perception of nature, Greenlandic indigenous food, hunting and fishing among others (Kruse, et al., 2008)

Greenland’s population is scattered in small towns and villages around the coast. The capital city is Nuuk with around 15.000 inhabitants. An educational system under these conditions is very expensive for the Greenlandic government. There are few students per teacher and few courses for the students, to choose from. In some settlements, the folke school¹⁹ has only 3 to 15 students in grades one to nine and one or two teachers. Ib Goldbach says that there is a mixture of Inuit and Danish culture in today’s Greenlandic society (Goldbach, 2010, p. 262). The earliest formal schools in Greenland were established by the Christian missionaries in 1721. In those early schools, Greenlandic was the language of instruction.”

“...an Inuit language which is related to the Inuit languages of North America. The number of speakers of Inuktitut is estimated at 50,000 (85-90% of the total population), divided in three main dialects, Kalaallisut (West-Greenlandic, 44,000 speakers and the dialect that is used as official language), Tunumiit (East-Greenlandic, 3,000 speakers) and Inuktun (North-Greenlandic, 800 speakers). The remainder of the population mainly speaks Danish; Greenlandic Sign Language is the language of the deaf community” (Olsen K. K., 2013).

During the early period, teachers were mainly Danish missionaries who did not speak Greenlandic. To make education more relevant to the Inuits, a teachers college was established in Greenland in 1845 to educate Inuit teachers. But the need for native speaking

¹⁸SMS language is a term for the abbreviations and slang commonly used with mobile phone text messaging

¹⁹ Folke school is a state run school, grades 1 to 10, in Greenland it is called Folkeskolen

teachers remained great as Greenland had a shortage of teachers who could teach in Greenlandic and “...in 1905, a school Act was promulgated and the Teachers college was enlarged to accommodate more students, and some Greenlanders were sent to Denmark for further education” (Olsen K. K., Education in Greenland, 2013).²⁰ “One positive by-product of the missionary activity was that most children in Greenland went to school, and as early as in the middle of the nineteenth century it was recognized that almost the whole population of Greenland could read, and the majority could also write in their own language” (Rasmussen, 2000, s. 118).

In 1928 the Danish language was introduced as a school subject in Greenland. It was not until the modernization period²¹ in the 1950s and 1960s, that Danish became a language of any importance in Greenland. In that period teachers from Denmark were engaged to teach Greenlandic children that mostly spoke only Greenlandic and the Danish school system was introduced to Greenland.

This change in the standards of education brought with it, more needs for funding and resources in the educational system, more than the Greenlandic society could afford. To accommodate to this need, a considerable amount of teaching material and teachers were transferred from Denmark (Rønning & Wiborg, 2008). Education in Greenland was ‘Danified’²² in this period and today Danish and English are the languages most used in higher education, Greenlandic is used in the lower grades. Modernization was a boost in the school system and this modernization of the educational system that took 200 years in Denmark, happened in twenty years in Greenland (Olsen T. R., 2005, p. 99).

With the Home Rule, it was explicitly stated that “the Greenlandic language is the primary language. There must also be careful teaching of the Danish language. Both languages can be used in public affairs” (Goldbach, 2010, p. 264). This changed in 2009, when Self Rule was established and then article 20 was added in the Act on Greenland Self-Government²³ stating that: “Greenlandic shall be the official language in Greenland”.

²⁰ From the site of Alaska Native Knowledge Network. <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/IEW/EdGreen.html>

²¹ Modernization period in Greenland. A period after 1953 when the Danish government set out to modernize Greenland

²² The Danification period , assimilation or Modernizing period in the history of Greenland

²³The Self-Government Act no. 473 of 12 June 2009

In Narsaq, Greenlandic is the dominant language. Most people however are fluent in Danish and many spoke English to me. It was surprising that among my informants who spoke both Danish and English, most preferred to speak English or to blend English and Danish.

It is my observation that Greenland is becoming a trilingual nation which is in accordance with their educational goals. One of the educational goals is for all students to have competence in Greenlandic, Danish and English, with Greenlandic as a mother tongue, and Greenlandic, Danish and English as educational languages. According to Karl Kristian Olsen “Danish as the language of instruction, has had devastating consequences for Greenlandic identity and self-worth in the form of colonial devaluation of Inuit traditions, wisdoms, skills and cultural values and the Greenlandic leadership today is clear that decolonization and establishing a viable nation depends on a radical reform of the Danish-designed and operated educational system” (Olsen K. K., 2014). A further study into how an educational system is decolonized could be useful.

2.1.2 Quest for Independence

At the Arctic Frontier Conference in Tromsø in January 2014, Aleqa Hammond, Greenland’s premier said;

“The Self-Governance Act amongst other things recognized that the Greenlandic people are under international law and therefore have the established right to self-determination. Greenland is therefore in the unique position of being the only indigenous people in the Arctic, which has its own Government with a recognized and agreed right to independence”²⁴ (Naalakkersuisut Government of Greenland).

Greenland could possibly become the first independent country of indigenous people in modern times but according to a new report there are several obstacles on the road to independence. A report from the Committee for Greenlandic Mineral Resources to the Benefit of Society,²⁵ a joint effort of the University of Copenhagen and the University of Greenland, published 24th of January 2014, discusses the change that might occur in Greenland’s society, if there is genuine natural-resource rush (Society, 2014, p. 6).

²⁴ Premier of Greenland, Aleqa Hammond at the Arctic Frontiers conference in Tromsø 21. January 2014

²⁵ *Committee for Greenlandic Mineral Resources to the Benefit of Society*,²⁵ a joint effort of the University of Copenhagen and the University of Greenland, published 24th of January 2014

Since the report came out, politicians and others have argued whether or not the mineral wealth in Greenland is enough to fund Greenland's independence from Denmark. By funding independence, what the scholars refer to is for Greenland to become a self-sustainable state, able to sustain the population without the yearly grant from Denmark which in 2011 was almost a third of Greenland revenues or 3,555 DKK million in subsidies. The report claims that;

“An independent self-sustaining Greenlandic economy based on mineral resources contains an intrinsic dilemma. Extracting sufficient mineral resources to Greenland's independence within 20 to 30 years would require such extensive foreign investment and massive inflow of foreign labor that there is a real risk that the current Greenlandic population would become a minority in Greenland” (Society, 2014, p. 23).

Many Greenlanders have dismissed this report for being too pessimistic. The experts that compiled this report point out that the report is about the value of Greenland's raw materials, not whether or not Greenland can become independent.

2.2 Economics and Mineral Resources

Fishing is today the mainstay of the Greenlandic economy, but this could change as the society is rapidly evolving politically and gaining more independence from Denmark. With more independence it is likely that we could see an increase in mining for valuable minerals in the country. That of course, is connected to the topic of climate change, as melting sea ice and glaciers are significantly altering the entire landscape and opening access to mineral rich areas hitherto too difficult or costly to reach. On 24th of October 2013, a slim majority of the Greenlandic Parliament (15 to 14) voted to overturn a long-standing ban on uranium and to permit foreign investors access to mining licenses. With this decision the government of Greenland has stated that it “hopes that the country will become economically independent and soon in position to become an independent state” (Naalakkersuisut Government of Greenland). Greenlanders need to activate their mines to become economically independent. “We long to be strong again like we were before colonization. We want to stay strong among nations and contribute,” a young man told me in Narsaq.

Regardless of how the mineral resources are tapped, Greenland will experience many changes in the decades to come. Some of these adjustments will occur as a result of internal developments such as cultural and political shifts. And some of these changes come because the climate is changing. The economic benefits to Greenland are on the horizon in relation to easier access to natural resources. New mines will undoubtedly open where the ice has melted, and with that, there will come new challenges. Due to the increased need for labor, foreign workers will have to be brought in to work in these mines and they will most probably set up camps in or around Narsaq and other small towns. Other nations and non-state actors will also vie for their share of the potential economic opportunities. This only increases the urgency to improve the participation and the education level of young indigenous people in Greenland. One of the educational goals of the government is “making Greenland successful in global commerce and technology, though demanding curriculum and trilingual requirement” (Olsen K. K., 2014).

The young people in Greenland are the ones who will have to hold their own and protect cultural and economic interests of their nation in the years to come. They will need both education and skills to manage and cooperate with international companies and at the same time incorporate their own Greenlandic vision into the future of Greenland.

“In many respects, Greenlanders are at the forefront of indigenous peoples globally in responding to threats to cultural survival. Rather than being simply victims of progress, they have struggled continually to secure control over their homeland, to protect their language and culture, and to ensure their rights to determine what course future development will take” (Caulfield, 2000, p. 181).

The Greenlanders are both a minority group and indigenous peoples within the Danish realm. “Inuits constitute the majority within their own geographical borders and have a vast amount of self-determination within those borders with the establishment of Self Rule” (Pedersen, 2009, p. 21). Karl Kristian Olsen says “the reforms are based on culture and education research from the circumpolar north, and ongoing research in Greenland and on contemporary international human development theory” (Olsen K. K., 2014).

2.2.1 Kvanefjeld and the Potential Effects on the Community in Narsaq

In Narsaq in the summer of 2013, people were waiting for the Parliament to make a decision regarding mining permits in the area which could bring employment to the inhabitants and long awaited economic growth to the town inhabitants and long awaited economic growth to the town.

Just outside the town of Narsaq is Kvanefjeld, the site of a mineral deposit. The minerals in Kvanefjeld are considered to possibly be the world's second-largest deposit of rare earth oxides, and the sixth-largest deposit of uranium. The recent relaxation of regulations²⁶ by the government of Greenland has opened up the possibility of large-scale mining that can form the basis of potentially lucrative mining industry. If this is right, it could make a big economic difference in Narsaq and nearby farming areas.

In Narsaq before the government decided to allow mining, most people were convinced that international companies would be coming to town to extract the minerals. The people I talked with differed on their prediction about timelines and also whether or not they considered it a good or bad development and what kind of changes to their community they expected this would bring.

One informant said that “mining was the only way for Narsaq, it will bring economic growth to the area and employment, without employment, people will move even faster away from Narsaq than today and maybe now people will start coming back home.” Another said; “It might bring money for a new school, bigger hospital and an airport for planes, not only helicopters.” Other informants were not so positive towards mining: “I am afraid of the consequences it will have on our community, I am afraid the changes, will make Narsaq a totally different place from what we know now and I don’t know if it will be good changes or bad changes”, “I will move away to Nuuk or Denmark, if mining will come through” There has been talk about all kinds of mining adventures for so long in Narsaq that the thought of it has manifested itself in the community.

Greenland Minerals and Energy Limited is an Australian company that now holds the rights for mining in Kvanefjeld. On the homepage of the company says:²⁷ “Kvanefjeld differs to many other emerging projects, in that it is a multi-commodity project that is anticipated to

²⁶ Parliament October 24, 2013

²⁷ <http://www.ggg.gl/projects/kvanefjeld-rees-uranium-zinc/>

also produce uranium and zinc.” It is the uranium mining that most of my informants seemed concerned about: “There have been lots of accidents with mining in the past and accidents here can cost more than our lifetime and our children’s to mend” one of my informants said and another said: “mining can be good for our economy and unemployment now, but at what cost for the next generations?” Working in the mining industry is a possibility for young people in Greenland and some have already started to prepare for employment in association with the mines. The municipality in Narsaq has held several courses in English for mining and is preparing shorter courses on the technical side of mining for anyone looking to work within the mining industry in collaboration with the ministry of Ministry of Finance & Domestic Affairs.

2.3 Economic Opportunities for Young People in Narsaq

Narsaq is a small town in Southern Greenland with a population of 1,699 people ²⁸(2013). When the population exceeded 600 people in 1959, Narsaq achieved a town status. Until 1900 seal hunting held up the local economy but in the early 1900s seal hunting began to fail and the main basis for economy slowly shifted to fishing. Today fishing, slaughtering and to some extent tourism are the basis of the local economy in the town. Olesens Brothers²⁹ a locally owned fishery has few boats in Narsaq and employs around 20 fishermen.

Royal Greenland established a fish processing plant in Narsaq, in 1953 but due to shrimp and cod populations moving farther north, the plant’s production slowed down in 2010, and around 80 people lost their jobs. However, production has increased again and the plant is buying lumpfish and other fish, from fishermen in Narsaq and other places. This has been harsh for employment in Narsaq, and here, as elsewhere in south Greenland the unemployment is fairly high or around 15 percent, somewhat higher than in Nuuk. In August 2009, Narsaq Seafood was launched, a company that purchases and processes crab both for import and export. Today there are 12 employees working directly in production all year round. Several boats in Narsaq sell their products to Narsaq Seafood and aboard every boat there are one or two fishermen.

²⁸ Greenland in figures Published by Statistics Greenland

²⁹ Locally owned fishing business

Almost every family has access to a boat in Narsaq. Many boats are used for fishing for the consumption of the family but some of the catch is sold at the local market. During spring, the small boats are used for fishing lumpfish, mainly female lumpfish for their eggs, which are then sold to Royal Greenland. Royal Greenland produces caviar from salted eggs of the female lumpfish. Lumpfish season is from April to July depending on the ice situation in the Ocean.

The plains in the Narsaq area are one of the few places in Greenland where sheep farming is possible. Of around 50 sheep farms in Greenland, 30 are found in the vicinity of Narsaq. In Narsaq there is a large butchery, the only slaughterhouse on the island. Every year, up to 23,000 lambs are slaughtered in the slaughterhouse. Neqi A/S supplies lamb to all of Greenland. The company employees are 12 all year round and around 100 seasonal workers during the fall slaughtering season. Last summer (2013) Neqi A/S was building an addition to the slaughterhouse, to facilitate for slaughtering of reindeer, horses, muskoxes and other animals.

The tourist industry in South Greenland has experienced a decline in tourist revenue in recent years. The locals blame it on the economic downfall after 2008. Informant told me that there were around five persons working with tourism all year round and fifteen more during the summer, so all in all in 2013 there were around twenty persons involved in tourism. There were not many tourists there in the summer of 2013, a few came for hiking, some for muskox hunting and others were in Narsaq to collect Tugtupit³⁰, or other rare gemstones, that can be found at the roots of Kvanefjeld, just outside Narsaq. I met a man from the United States, a very active stone collector that had been coming to Narsaq every year for twelve years, collecting fluorescent stones such as tugtupite and chkalovite. These fluorescent minerals are much sought after by stone collectors all over the world. He has always hired the same Inuit guide and the guide was a one family tourist operation, with a four-wheel drive and a computer. He would collect the tourist in the morning and take him to his house for breakfast, his wife provided and then they would go out and collect stones, if the weather permitted. If not, they would do other things with the family. The guide provided transportation and meals. The guide has been doing this for 15 years and he was very satisfied with his lifestyle and income.

³⁰ Greenland's national stone. It is a very rare gemstone, only found in the strong pink variation at Kvanefjeld

“There were more tourists here few years ago” an informant said adding that “tourism has gone down in recent years, probably because it is so expensive to travel to Greenland. We had a lot of tourists around 2000 when global warming and climate change were the main topics around the world. Maybe people wanted to come and see the last of the glaziers”, the informant told me with laughter in his voice

The tourists who come here for precious stones or hunting of muskoxens rely on local guides and for some of my informants taking on such projects was an important part of their income. Cruise ships stop by Narsaq a few times during the summer. When they do, inhabitants put up entertainment in the forms of kajak raises and other Inuit entertainments, and organize markets with crafts and traditional Inuit food. Narsaq becomes a very lively town with the addition of tourists.

Many of my male informants said their income was a mixture of the above. One woman worked at an office during the day in the summer and at a bar during the night. During winter she would only work at the bar. Some informants worked in the stores, in the school, at the hospital, in the hotel or at the municipality office but most males had their income from a wide range of subsistence activity, seasonal work and other short time employment and income from benefits.

My informants told me that most families had at least one family member that worked full time, sometimes families had two persons working full time. Unemployment is relatively high in Narsaq and from my data; I gather other or others work around fishing, hunting and short-term jobs. In the summer the whole family tends to go fishing and hunting. “We do not need very much here; we have a roof over our head, food on our table and warm clothing. What else does one need?” “There is no shame involved in getting unemployment benefits or other benefits from the government here, the Danes owe us” said another informant.

‘Sharing’ is an important part of the Inuit culture. The concept of sharing “is central to hunting, where the image is that the hunter goes out to “fetch” the animals which have indicated their willingness to be killed, and then shares the catch with his family and neighbors, to be able to fetch more animals in the future (Feit, 1994, p. 297). Greenlanders are generous people and share their food and fortunes with others in their community. Sharing for the Inuits means belonging to a group and closeness to nature. Kaffimik is a good example of this, where family and friends get together and eat and drink coffee and tea throughout the day. Today the food in the Kaffimik is not necessary something that has been fished or

hunted, it is also cakes and bread and other things. Some of the young men I talked to in Narsaq went fishing or hunting and sold some of their catch at the local market and some they gave away, it varied based on what the catch was. Fishing, hunting and seasonal work plus government benefits was the ideal life for many of my informants. They said this was a good life. This is a very viable option for young men. They said they could easily provide for themselves and their family with variable subsistence and this was a life that was never boring, bringing always something new, every day. “I don’t have to get higher education to live a comfortable life. This kind of life is all I need,” one informant said. Another informant, with a big smile, told me “working is fine as long as it does not interrupt fishing and hunting.” Then he went on and said, “I work from time to time and go hunting or fishing, when weather conditions are good, I get social benefits from the government, so my life is good. I have everything I need and my father lives the same kind of life.” Many informants both in Narsaq and in Qaqortoq told me the same story, they worked, or fished when they wanted and had their security from benefits from the government.

2.4 Housing Problems and the Folke School in Narsaq

Although Narsaq is a beautiful town with houses painted in vivid colors, all is not what it seems. The houses all look fine but there are some houses that are not lived in, which does not rhyme with the fact that there is a shortage in the housing market in Narsaq. In the middle of town there are two high-rises, built in the 1980s; both have been empty for some years. The Municipality Office gave the explanation that these houses are not considered safe to live in because of health problems for inhabitants. There is asbestos in the walls, rampant problems of mold and Radon gas is also seeping in from the ground.



Figure 4 Two high rise buildings in Narsaq. No one lives in the blue and yellow high rises in the back

Other buildings in Narsaq are also infected with these issues. The elementary school that should house grades 1 to 10 was in such a bad condition, that in the fall of 2013, the municipality had to make temporary classrooms in various houses around the town. This time the Municipality Office gave the following explanation: “We have been waiting for promised funding for a renovation of the school for four years. We are hoping to start construction on a new school house in 2014”. Another informant said: “The school is unsafe for students and staff, I will not let my 12 year old daughter study in this schoolhouse any more, if something is not done, I will have to move to another place. If this was a school in Denmark it would have been closed long time ago. Both students and teachers have been having unnaturally amount of sick days these last few years”. “The Municipality is aware of the problems with the school house and is pressing for funding in Nuuk” said another informer. The school needs a total renovation and so does the playground on the school grounds. Parents and students protested in the winter 2013-2014 in front of the Town hall several times and demanding a new building. The library has been somewhat renewed and there students and the public can use computers and internet, free of charge. The use of the Internet is expensive in Narsaq. At the Information Center and in the hotel a person can get fifteen minutes internet use for 30 Danish kroner.

2.5 Greenland, Narsaq and the Welfare System

The welfare system in Greenland is the same as in Denmark. In this type of welfare system the government is responsible for the economic and social welfare of its citizens and has policies to provide health care to all citizens, unemployment-, social- welfare-, retire- and maternity benefits.

This table shows the percentage of the population in Greenland receiving benefits in the year 2013. 19.6 percent of population, age fifteen or older collects social welfare benefits and 8, 3

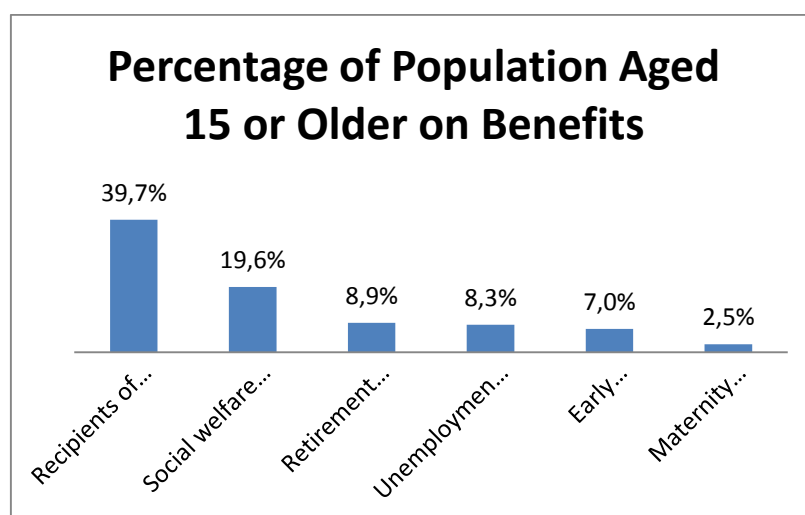


Table 1 Percentage of Population Aged 15 or Older receiving Benefits 2013

percent collect unemployment benefits. Table 1 shows the general unemployment data from Greenland. In South Greenland the figures for unemployment were higher than average or around 11 percent unemployment in 2013 (Greenland, 2013).

These numbers indicate that out of 43.925 people older than 15 in the year 2011, 12.228 were collecting social welfare benefits or unemployment benefits. This amounts to 27.8 % of people over 15 years old who are thus not working or collect social welfare benefits for some other reason. According to Langaard; "...existence is secured less by productivity than public assistance, by wage earning in public institutions, and to a certain degree, by a subsistence economy" (Langaard, 1986, p. 307). This was written almost thirty years ago but in Narsaq the situation has not changed that much according to my informants.

An informant stated that this was all right or as he put it: “it is our right to get benefits when the employment situation is like it is.” Another said: “this is alright, with benefits we can go hunting and fishing whenever the conditions are right and take short term jobs and employment when we can. With the benefits we can make a sustainable living.” Both told me this was fine life. Other informants wanted a better economic situation for themselves and their families. One informant told me that she was a newcomer to Narsaq: “I moved here in May 2013 and within a week I got a job in the tourist industry.” This informant recently moved to Narsaq from a settlement in the south and loved having a steady job.

However, the municipalities want to reduce the amount of benefits they pay out to the population and in 2006 the municipalities established guidance centers in their area, Piareersarfiit in Greenlandic. The purpose of Piareersarfiit is to prepare unemployed persons and students for education or activity on the labor market. Piareersarfiit is an education initiative from the Ministry of Finance and Domestic Affairs, not the Ministry of Education, to decrease unemployment in the country. Karl Kristian Olsen, said in an interview: “the Ministry of Finance and Domestic Affairs should not finance these centers, it would be much wiser to set this funding into vocational schools and extend the programs there³¹” (Olsen K. K., 2014). Centers like the Piareersarfiit have worked well in other Nordic countries.

2.6 Conclusion to chapter

As this chapter explains, there are many challenges ahead for the Greenlandic nation as it faces a period of potentially great change, with independence in sight, new economic opportunities to navigate and a fight ahead to preserve their cultural heritage. This chapter also addresses how housing issues and the welfare system affect education in Narsaq.

³¹ Karl Kristian Olsen in an interview with Elin Thora Fridfinnsdottir in Tromsø 04.04 2014

Chapter 3 Educational Goals and Secondary Education

This chapter focuses on the educational system in Greenland. In particular the educational reforms and goals the government in Greenland has implemented and set, with a special look at how they work out in South Greenland. The chapter will also discuss the educational programme that the government implemented in 2006 and how it relates to the young people in Narsaq.

3.1 Education as a priority

Aleqa Hammond the premier of Greenland said in an interview in RUV, Icelandic State Television in October 2013:

“For the Inuit peoples of Greenland, education is very important. Alongside looking for new opportunities for economic growth in Greenland, we have to lift education to a higher level. New opportunities for economic growth call for higher educational level” (Hammond, Vidtalid, 2013).³²

From these words from the premier of Greenland, it is evident that education is a priority for the Greenlandic government. The issue of education is more pressing than ever because of the economic and political change that Greenland is going through and the country’s need for an educated population.

According to the Arctic Human Development Report II,” one of the key indicators of human development in the Arctic is access to education, the content of the education, and how well the education offered fulfills the needs of the community. Embedded in the term education are “values, history, languages and culture” (Arctic Social Indicators Follow-up to the Arctic Human Development Report, 2010, p. 67). Few policy makers question the importance of the issue of education, and decisions regarding its content and where and how education is delivered. In Greenland according to an EU Report, “the issues that dominates the qualitative evaluation of higher education is; the use of Danish standards and the small number of students” (Ministry of Education, Church, Culture and Gender Equality).

³² Aleqa Hammond in an interview on RUV, Iceland, 04.11 2013 Translation Elin Thora Fridfinnsdottir

3.2 Greenlandic educational system

“The educational system today is founded on Greenlanders values and ways of relating. The goal is making Greenland successful in global commerce and technology, through demanding curriculum and trilingual requirements”, said Karl Kristian Olsen in a conference at UIT in April 2014.

“The Greenlandic school system is based on the Danish school system. The Greenlandic School Act of 1967 and the Danish public school laws from that time are almost identical, and the Danish law concerning teacher education was applied to Greenlandic teacher education in with the same act” (Olsen K. K., Education in Greenland, 2013).

Karl Kristian Olsen contradicts himself in these two public statements given less than a year apart. This is in a way an indication of the root causes of problems related to education policy in Greenland as the government sends conflicting messages and seems to vacillate between announcing its success in shaping and educational system based on its values or defeatingly blaming Danish colonial influences for its shortcomings.

In the *Study to evaluate the performance of Higher Education in Greenland* says: “The curriculum in secondary education in most programs is very similar to the Danish curriculum in secondary education” (Ministry of Education, Church, Culture and Gender Equality, s. 3). Today students are taught Greenlandic as their first language, Danish as a second primary language and English as a third language.

In Greenland, as in Denmark and other Nordic countries³³, basic folke school is compulsory. Folke school covers grades one through ten. Children start school at the age of six and are usually fifteen or sixteen when they graduate from folke school. After graduating from folke school, students can go to gymnasium, which offers a three year comprehensive education, or they can take vocational education or different kinds of courses. After graduating from gymnasium students are ready to matriculate at a university.

In the lower classes there is a good supply of instructional materials in Greenlandic in most if not all subjects. But the higher classes, to a greater extent, have to use Danish language materials. “There is a lack of teachers who speak Greenlandic and a lack of material written in Greenlandic” (Commission, Study to Evaluate the Performance of Higher Education in

³³ Nordic Countries: Greenland, Denmark, Iceland Faroe Islands, Norway, Sweden and Finland

Greenland, 2013). There is a need for more textbooks for subjects taught from the high school level up. “In folke school most of the teaching is in Greenlandic and when they (i.e. students) start higher education they meet a lot of Danish teachers and the books and other educational tools are in Danish. So they have a lot of problems with the language,” said an informant. It has its difficulties to produce textbooks and other teaching material in Greenlandic. It is difficult because the language group is so small and books get outdated fast.

Inerisaavik³⁴ Greenland's center for the distribution of educational materials on the School Data Net produces and distributes educational tools in Greenlandic to schools throughout Greenland. If the Internet connection to the villages is not good, materials are sent with post to the schools. Teachers can also request information and materials, literature and specific materials for the solution of particular instructional problems.

Grades 10 and 11 are not compulsory. An informant told me: “My parents don’t like school, so they did not care if I continued my education after folke school, so I did not continue my education in Qarqortoq, but I have taken English for mining here in Narsaq. Education in Greenland is free for all and in higher education; students get stipends from the government, like they do in Denmark, and do not have to rely on student loans.

The extent Greenlandic students learn about their history, culture and traditional knowledge is different from one school to another. It is at the discretion of the headmaster and the school boards in every community.

3.3 Educational reforms and policies and how it relates to Narsaq

Greenland is reforming their whole educational system. In a Forum Conference at UIT Tromsø, 2 - 4 April 2014, Karl Kristian Olsen spoke about the reform of education concerning the indigenous people of Greenland and argued that in the case of Greenland “educational reforms may offer a proof-of-concept for the possibility of the decolonization of education” (Olsen K. K., 2014). In Greenland: “the reform is based on social scientific knowledge, contemporary international educational research, all conditioned by operational

³⁴ <http://www.inerisaavik.gl>. Greenland's center for the distribution of educational materials on the School Data Net

compatibilities with Greenlandic culture and values, traditional and contemporary” (Olsen K. K., 2014). On this base, the Greenlandic government is working towards educational goals and teaching methods through a standard European curriculum with Greenlandic emphasis and in relation to Inuit culture and values.

In order to implement these educational goals in schools all over the country, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Church and Gender Equality has implemented seven principles of Inuit instruction methods. These seven instruction principles are as follows:

1. Joint productive activity: Involves cooperation between teachers and students in content development.
2. Developing language and literacy across the curriculum: Develop competence in the language and literacy of instruction in all content areas.
3. Teaching in context: Connecting curricula and teaching with Inuit experiences and life skills.
4. Using challenging activities to teach complex thinking: Purposeful use of challenging activities in the classroom to train students ability for cognitive complexity.
5. Instructional conversation emphasized over lectures: Engage students through dialogue rather than lectures, with special emphasis on instructional conversation.
6. Modeling and Demonstration: This is essentially “learn by doing” or teaching students through modeling and demonstration and by using immersive learning techniques.
7. Student directed activity: Active encouragement of student decision making and include activities that are generated or directed by students or small groups.

The reforms include the entire educational system, from preschool to the university, and from gymnasium to vocational/technical schools.

Although the intentions of the government are very clear; more is needed for to make the plan a success. The government has to follow up by clear instructions tools and examples to work with, for educators and instructors. For example, teaching geography and history in Narsaq should include the geography of South Greenland, and especially the area around Narsaq as well as geography on Greenland as a whole and the world. In language teaching, emphasis should start by learning about the words for everyday life and community of the students, not everyday life of students somewhere else in the world. A teacher has to have materials about

the closest community in other languages. This makes it easier for students and teachers to engage in a dialogue. According to Karl Kristian Olsen, the Ministry of Education is endorsing and supporting educators to educate in line with these seven principles. My informants who are educators both in Nuuk and Narsaq, had never heard of these principles but still tried to teach along these lines. “Where did you find these principles, I have never gotten these” said one informant an educator and another said “Is there an education programme, we have not been informed of that”. The reasons why they have never heard of these principles are unknown to me, but it could be that communication between the Ministry of Education and schools might be better.

Before an educator can educate he or she has to have a place. The schoolhouse in Narsaq is in such a bad condition as I have mentioned earlier that as a short-term solution the Municipality has made schoolrooms in various houses around the town. Students, parents and teachers have protested this housing situation in front of the Townhouse several times, but still the necessary constructions on the schoolhouse are not finished. Without a schoolhouse, teaching is made very difficult.

3.3.1 Greenland Education Programme

The central focal point of the education policy in Greenland since 2005 has been the *Greenland Education Programme*; “This programme is a part of a long-term strategy, to contribute to Greenland’s development into a more self-sustaining economy in which a well-educated and well-trained population is paramount” (Commission, 2013). The programme is in two phases. The first phase of the programme was to run from 2005 to 2013. The second phase of the programme started in the beginning of the year, 2014, and will run for six years or until 2020.

The results from the first phase have just been published (Commission, Study to Evaluate Performance of Higher Education in Greenland, 2013). The goal is for one hundred more graduates from higher education every year, which is needed for Greenland, in the next ten years according to this report.

During the first phase of the *Greenland Education Programme* “the total number of graduates from formal post-primary education has increased by 64 % nationwide” (Commission, 2013).

When I asked about the situation in Narsaq, there were no numbers but the officials at the Municipality center they said it was probably a much lower number there. They had not seen this change happening in their schools. Boolsen talks about *social inheritance theory*, meaning that many students come from families with no tradition for education and therefore these students are going against their social inheritance This leaves the students vulnerable to not finish their education (Boolsen, 2009). This theory helps to explain how hard it is to go against your culture when it comes to education, as the parents of many young people in Narsaq lack higher education and there are few positive role models in the area who do.

The education programme is a part of a

”..long-term strategy to contribute to Greenland's development into a more self-sustaining economy in which, well-educated and well-trained population is paramount. Enrolment into education has developed positively through the duration of the Greenland Education Programme phase 1”³⁵ (Commission, 2013).

This is a comprehensive and ambitious program for education in Greenland. The minister of Education, Church, Culture & Gender Equality, Mr. Nick Nielsen states on the ministries homepage: “The central objective for our educational policies is that the youth of Greenland are trained to handle management in this country and that the youth become aware of their global citizenship”³⁶ (Ministry of Education, Church, Culture and Gender Equality).

The initiatives in the Greenland Education Programme are having an effect, not always the same effect, all over the country. In Narsaq and Qarqortoq courses are held in mining English and there are technical courses to help train local residents to find jobs with oil and mineral companies, if and when they set up operations in their area.” Much of the training can be completed as short courses allowing students to go straight to work in the industry” (Weaver, 2013). Four of my informants in Narsaq took the course in mining English two years ago; “We are still unemployed, maybe when mining finally starts, we have forgotten what we learned in the course. We are tired of just waiting”.

The programme has been successful, according to the Greenlandic government. Merete Watt Boolsen, one of the evaluators of the programme for the Greenlandic government, on the

³⁵ <http://naalakkersuisut.gl/en/Naalakkersuisut/Departments/Uddannelse-Kirke-Kultur-og-Ligestilling/Uddannelsesplan> The homepage for the Ministry of Ministry of Education, Church, Culture & Gender Equality accessed 15 mars 2014

³⁶ Nick Nielsen, Minister of Education, Church, Culture & Gender Equality. Accessed 3.mars 2014

other hand finds the results of the programme to be ‘disappointing’ thus far, more students are entering into the higher educational system but more students are also dropping out of the system. Boolsen states that “‘cultural dimension’ must be prioritized; they must learn what it means to go to school, study and get an education.” (Boolsen, 2009, p. 75). Here again Boolsen is saying that the lack of Inuit cultural dimension in the programme is the problem. The government must accommodate and intergrade the Inuit culture into the programme for the programme to be successful.

According to the *Study to evaluate the performance of Higher education in Greenland*, there is a need for “at least 100 extra graduates per year to meet a projected shortage of 2000 graduates by 2025” (Commission, Study to Evaluate Performance of Higher Education in Greenland, 2013). Like everything else in Greenland, things have to move with a speed. In 2006 the Greenlandic government started a plan to increase the educational level in the country and to reach this goal. “We have to make decisions very fast in relation to education and everything, so some of them turn out to be wrong, I feel that we take two steps forward and one step back in our decisions about education” (Olsen K. K., 2014).

“The Greenlandic government has also prepared the way for students if they want to study in other countries by entering into cooperation with universities in North America and Nordic countries” (Olsen K. K., Education in Greenland, 2013). The Greenlandic government wants Greenlanders to be ready and able to manage relations and cooperate with the international companies that are now coming to Greenland to start mining.

3.4 Students in Greenland

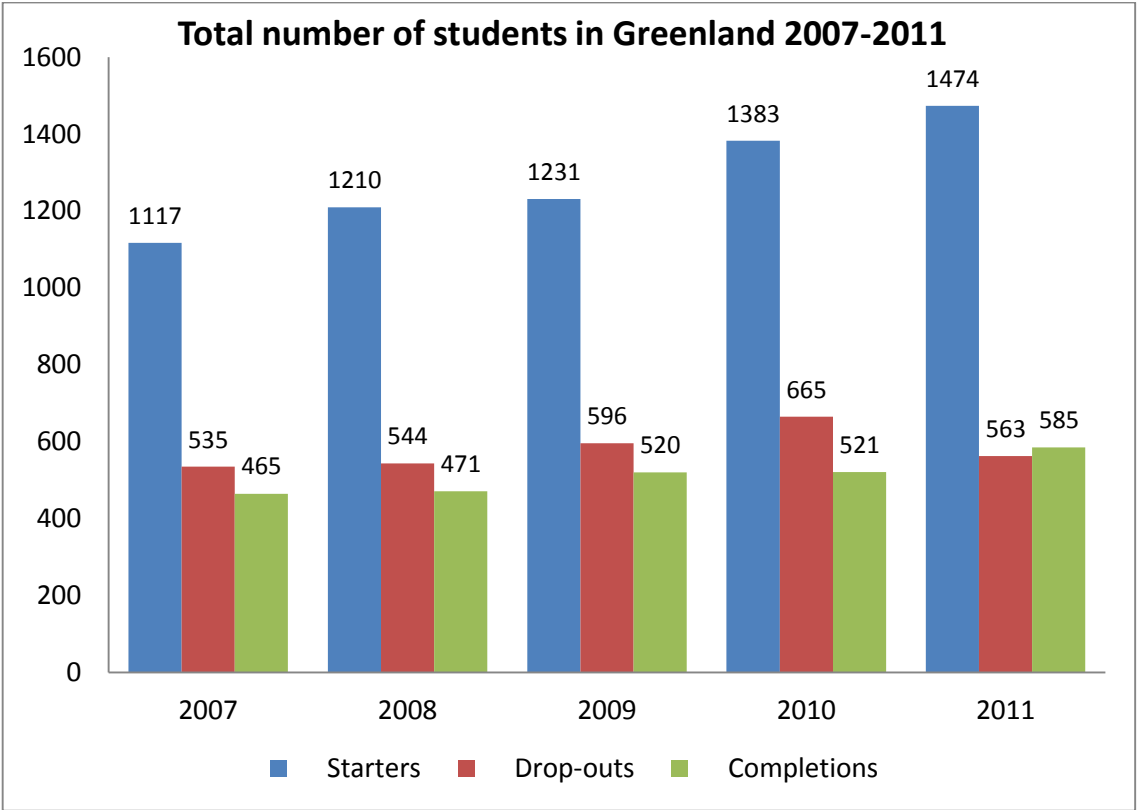


Table 2 Overall figures of students in Greenland

From *Figures in Greenland, Statistics Greenland* and from the *Study to evaluate performance of higher education in Greenland* I have the total numbers of students in Greenland 2007 to 2011. These are the overall numbers of students in the Greenlandic school system. To clarify table 2³⁷, I concentrated on the numbers of students in 2011 and examined them especially

Starters: Students who have started an education in 2011. Dropouts: are students who have started their education in any number of years leading up to the year 2011 but dropped out that year and Completions: are students who started their education some years before in order to finish their education during 2011.

The total number of students that started education in the year 2011 was 1474. Of the 1474 students, 1148 students either dropped out or completed their education and 326 are active students who are underway in their education. In the year 2011, 563 students dropped out of higher education in Greenland. The drop-out figures are high; almost fifty per cent of students

³⁷ Study to evaluate the performance of Higher Education in Greenland

drop-out of the school system. An informer, who is a teacher, told me “In folke skolen grades 1-10 most of the teaching is in Greenlandic but when they (i.e. students) start high school or vocational school or other higher education, most of the teachers speak Danish and the books are in Danish. Another informant said: “The level they come from folke skolen is too low. The pupils generally do not take lower school seriously so they struggle with higher education”. When asked “why don’t the students take school seriously?” The answer was; “Because the parents do not take school seriously”. The parents in Narsaq told me that this was maybe right for seventy five per cent of the parents. “School is school and when my children go to school, the school is supposed to take care of them. When they get older and go away to school, there is nothing I can do, the school has to take care of them” a parent told me. This seems to be in accordance with the social inheritance theory in Boolsen writings (Boolsen, 2009).

3.4.1 Commenced Educations

The number of Greenlanders who each year commence an education in Greenland, Denmark or other countries in the world, has in recent years been approximately 500 to 600 students. The number of women beginning an education is every year a little higher than the correspondent number of men. In 2004 and 2005, however, more men than women started a qualifying education.

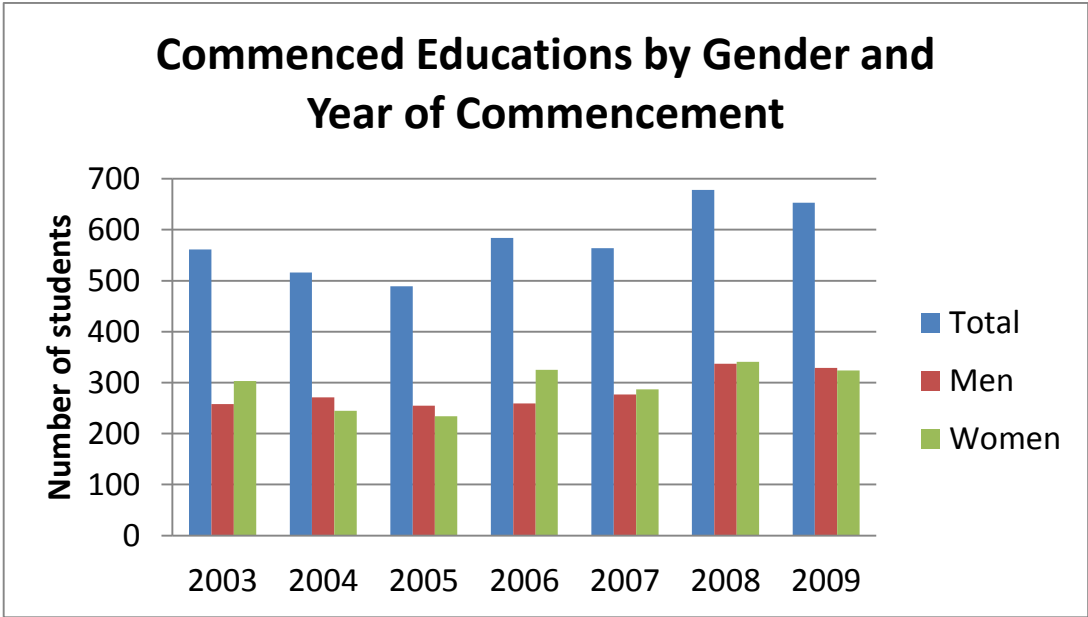


Table 3 Higher Educations by Gender and Year of Commencement 2007-2007 from Statistics Greenland 2013

The overall figures in students finishing their education are slowly getting higher. The difference between commencement of men and women is smaller than in overall figures of the North. In Iceland the figure of women finishing higher education is considerable higher than men. “In the Arctic, the general pattern is that there is a higher percentage of women compared with men that pursue and accomplish higher education” (Rasmussen, Barnhardt, & Keskitalo, 2010, p. 79). This table does not show the figure of students that live in the south of Greenland especially, but my feeling from my research is that the figures in Narsaq are going up but much slower than in Nuuk. During my fieldwork in Narsaq I met one person that was thinking about getting university education and two that had graduated from a higher level education and stayed on in Narsaq. There is no information or statistics on young people and education in Narsaq only on Greenland as a state. One of the explanations on why I met so few people aiming at university education, is that my fieldwork took place during the summer of 2013 and many young adults were on vacation or the persons that were in higher education had moved away from Narsaq. The young people I met had little interest in going away to university.

3.5 Ilisimatusarfik - The University of Greenland

Greenlandic educational system has increasingly acquired its own special characteristics though it is basically following the Danish system. In the Greenlandic system there is an “implementation, since the turn of the century, for more language learning, first and foremost in Greenlandic and English, more information technology, more creativity and democracy and more room for individual curriculum” (Goldbach, 2010, p. 267).

Accordingly, higher education has improved and there are more students graduating now than ever before as we saw in table 3. What is lacking in subjects in University of Greenland is Science. Greenland needs more educated persons, especially in science. Unemployment for university educated people is rare and salaries are high.

The University of Greenland or Ilisimatusarfik was established in 1987 and now 2014, there are around 600 students in the school. Ilisimatusarfik specializes in the following academic disciplines: “Social Science; Cultural and Social History; Language Literature and Media; Journalism; Theology; Social Work, Translation and Interpretation; Nursing and Health Sciences; and Teaching” (Ilisimatusarfik, 2014). Ilisimatusarfik offers Bachelor and Candidate education, major and minor subjects, Diploma and Masters and Ph.D. studies. In September 2013 there were 9 Ph.D. students at the University (Commission, Study to

Evaluate Performance of Higher Education in Greenland, 2013, p. 40) Most Greenlanders that have sought higher education have travelled to Denmark over the years but this is changing slowly. The overall curriculum in the Iisimatusarfik is copied from Danish curriculum and there is a co-operation between Iisimatusarfik and Danish Universities. Foreign teachers are still in majority (Commission, Study to Evaluate Performance of Higher Education in Greenland, 2013, p. 42). However there are also Greenlandic elements in the curriculum, there is a strong arctic element in nursing and in teacher training. “Nursing practice in rural and remote Greenland is characterized by high variability and complexity. Nurses often work in rural areas, at a great distance from any medical support with meager levels of information and communication technology” (Gaard, Jensen, Wilche, & Domer, 2013). The nursing programme at Iisimatusarfik includes courses in acute medical care, preventive care, social work, psychology and pedagogy to accommodate with the many roles a nurse has to play in a remote community. Future teachers also have many roles in rural communities and they therefore have courses in social work and first aid.” Arctic elements are by nature related to social needs in Greenland and the needs of its people”. (Commission, Study to Evaluate Performance of Higher Education in Greenland, 2013, p. 12).

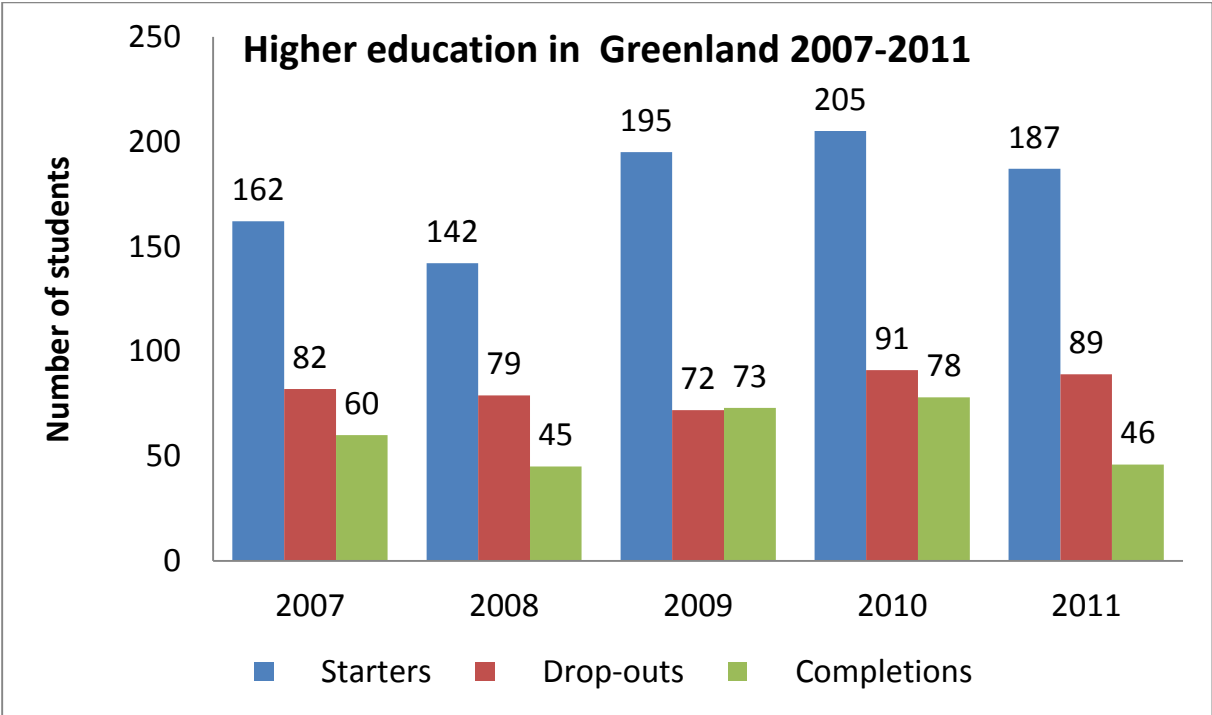


Table 4 Higher education in Greenland 2007-2011 from Statistics Greenland 2013

With the exception of 2009 when the dropout rate was a little lower, the drop-out rate is around fifty per cent each year. This is what the Greenlandic government wants to change.

Greenland needs more graduates. Looking at individual programs at the University of Greenland, Teacher training and Nursing are the most popular programs. In both programs there is a considerable higher number of Greenlandic speaking teachers and teaching material. When doing my fieldwork in Narsaq, I met only one person that had been to Ilisimatusarfik and had graduated with a BA. The informant had graduated with a BA from one of the few programs that has most of the educational tools are in Greenlandic and the teachers speak Greenlandic. When I asked about people that had graduated to Ilisimatusarfik or some other university, my informants just looked at me and one said “They probably never came back”. Another said “I know two persons that did not get into Ilisimatusarfik, because they had poor grades”. Here again there seems to be some lack of communication from schools to students. If students do not know what is expected of them, in grades to get into a university, just like students that went to the Commercial school in Qarqortoq and expected to get practical training in tourism, they were not prepared for so many written texts in Danish. .

Iisimatusarfik	Stock	Graduates	Drop-out
Journalism	21	1	3
Cultural and Social history	45	5	15
Social Sciences	79	11	21
Social Work	40	6	5
Lang.,Litt. & Media	49	6	15
Theology	12	2	4
Translation, Commercial language	6	0	1
Institute of Learning	Stock	Graduates	Drop-out
Teacher Training	231	40	10
Other (master, candidate &more)	69	37	11
Institute of Nursing and Health Science	Stock	Graduates	Drop-out
Nursing	55	3	6
Others	Stock	Graduates	Drop-out
Others	1	0	0
Total number of students	608	111	91

Table 5³⁸ - Iisimatusarfik, - Stock (students in the program), graduates, average study time for graduation and dropout 2012 (Commission, Study to Evaluate Performance of Higher Education in Greenland, 2013).

In table 5 we see high numbers of dropouts. In nursing and teacher training however the numbers are lower. That could be because there are more Greenlandic speaking professors in these programs and more Greenlandic texts. In both programs there are courses related to the Arctic and Greenland and the situations there. In cultural and social history the dropout rates are somewhat lower also and there the Greenlandic values and traditions, is probably at play. What is lacking in Iisimatusarfik are science and science related courses but according to the ministry of education, the plan is to start science degrees soon. Today, students wanting to study science have to go abroad. There has been a problem of funding science program at the

³⁸ Statistics based on administrative records from the student grant system as well as data from Statistics of Denmark. Study to evaluate the performance of Higher education in Greenland 2013

Iisimatusarfik. Science programs are costly and the students are few. Dropout rates will be discussed more in the next chapter.

The main conclusion in *The Study to evaluate the performance of Higher education in Greenland* is that;

“The fundamental quantitative challenge in the next decade is a need for more graduates from higher education in Greenland. There is a shortage of graduates in all subject areas and concerns, all departments at the university and schools providing shorter courses in higher education” (Commission, 2013).

3.6 Concluding remarks to chapter

This chapter has discussed education, educational systems and goals and higher education and how it relates to Narsaq. In my findings there are not many young people who choose higher education in Narsaq. According to Barnard’s (Barnard, 2002) general hypothesis, this might be because of the young people’s mode of thought. The thought of going for higher education, that takes years of living away from family and friends, is not so appealing to young people in Narsaq. Lack of information is also a part of the problem. My informants were not prepared for the studies in secondary education. Some came home when they realized that the education that they were after was different in reality than they thought it would be. This could also be explained by the social inheritance theory of Merete Watt Boolsen . Boolsen’s social inheritance theory states that many students come from families with no tradition for education and by entering higher education these students are going against their social inheritance (Boolsen, 2009). Better information and preparation is crucial when students go for secondary and higher education.

Chapter 4 Educational Opportunities and Choices – Narsaq

This chapter provides an overview of the educational opportunities available to young people in Narsaq and discusses how well those choices fit the needs of the population. The issue of other opportunities is also explored, such as employment, benefits and the general future economic prospects of people, especially the younger generation, of Narsaq inhabitants.

4.1 Secondary Education from Narsaq

When young people in Narsaq want to pursue secondary education, most of them have to go to other towns or cities, if they do not want to attend Inuili³⁹ (School of food science), the only secondary school in Narsaq. Students from Narsaq usually travel to Qaqortoq, which is a two hour boat ride in good ice conditions, to pursue secondary education, or they go to Denmark and complete part or all of their secondary education there. Moving to Denmark is not as feasible as it was a decade ago. At that time, students from Greenland had an option to go to Danish Afterskole⁴⁰ for one semester on full scholarship from the government, before returning back home to finish secondary school. Today, students do not get a scholarship for Afterskole in Denmark. Qaqortoq is the main center for education in South Greenland and has a folke school, high school, a folk high school,⁴¹ commercial school, basic vocational school and the Upernaviarsuk (School of Agriculture). Students from Narsaq live in student

³⁹ School that educates chefs, waiters, receptionists, butchers, bakers, kitchen assistants, cafeteria and canteen assistants, and hotel and tourism assistants

⁴⁰ Afterskole is a special type of residential school where students from the ages of 14 to 18 can choose to spend one, two or three years to finish their primary education

⁴¹ Folk high school offers non-formal adult education. Most students are between 18 and 24 years old.

housing in Qaqortoq, away from their families. This is often very stressful for them as studies show (ADHR, Arctic human Development Report, 2004) and there are many indications that stress is an important factor in dropout rates.

Some of my informants confirmed this and said that moving Qaqortoq to go to school was very stressful for them and they felt they lost the security they had with their families in Narsaq. In my informal interviews in Narsaq, I asked my informants why it was so stressful for them to go to Qaqortoq for school. Qaqortoq is also situated in South Greenland, and the culture is the same. “I do not want to leave my family” was the answer I got most often. An informant said “it was alright in the beginning, but then I felt homesick but I could not go home. It is too expensive to go with helicopter and the boats could not go, and finally when I got a boat ride to Narsaq, I did not want to go back to Qaqortoq,” and three others agreed with him.

“When you move to another town here in Greenland, you can’t go home in the weekends and small holidays because it is so expensive to travel here, so the contact with family is scarce and that is why I don’t want to go,” said another informant. The ice situation in the ocean makes it impossible to for small boats to cross from Narsaq to Qaqortoq during the winter.

Of students who start a secondary programme, fifty-four percent complete their studies, while the completion statistics for students who start vocational training is forty-four percent⁴² - these are general numbers for Greenland. According to my fieldwork and interviews, the dropout rate was higher from vocational school and from the commercial school in Qaqortoq than in the folke school. The dropout rate is around half in all higher education in Greenland and it might be higher in southern Greenland, but there is no official statistic on that. In conversations a few informants said they loved going to school and they would like to get an education, have a good career and hopefully help their country and their community in the future. Many thought that with mining, there would be improvements in schools in Narsaq. Some expressed hope that when the mining industry would start its operations in town and the population increased, more funding would be provided for education and more schools and more diversity in the courses offered. Most of my informants had no doubt that mining operations would start, they were just not sure when. Four of my informants were so optimistic as to say that maybe in the near future, students would only have to move away to

⁴² Ministry of Finance and Domestic Affairs – Political and Economic Report

go to university, that because of the increase in population, secondary schools would be raised in Narsaq.

4.1.1 Vocational Schools

The vocational education include formal training in construction, metal work, office and commerce, food, social and health work, graphic arts, electrician and services. The length of these trainings varies. There are vocational schools both in Narsaq and Qaqortoq. In Narsaq, students can be trained in culinary arts but in Qaqortoq students can choose between many different studies. In both towns students can attend shorter technical courses and English courses for mining industries. Many of my informants had attended these shorter courses but were still unemployed, and they considered those courses useless unless they led to employment.

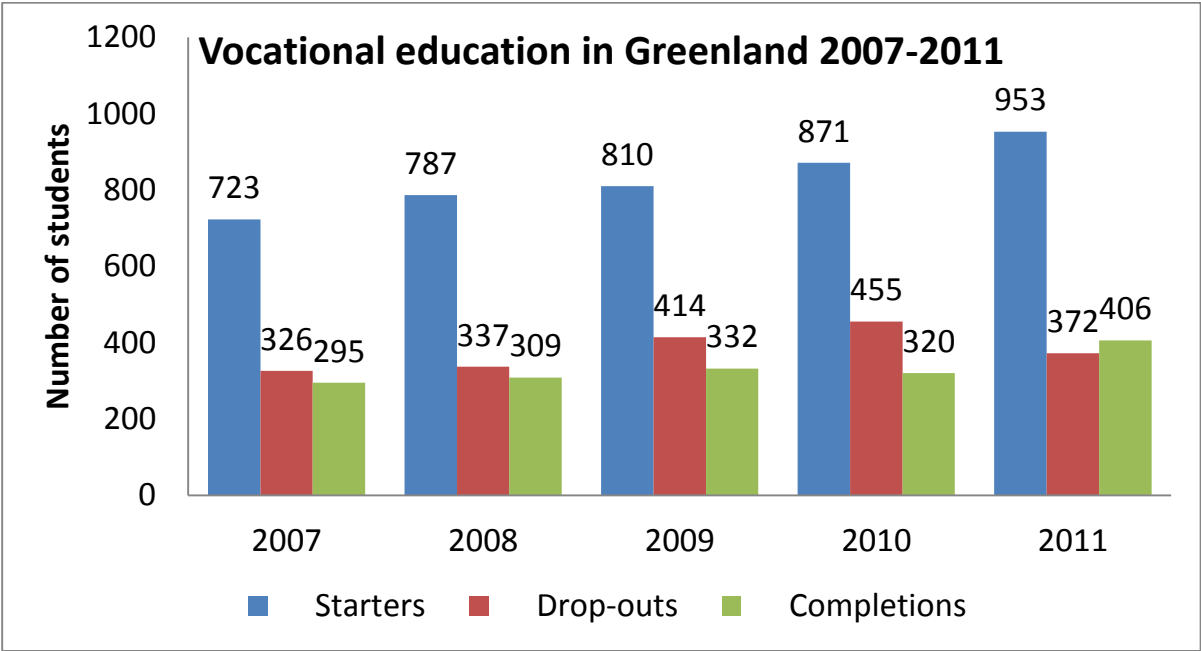


Table 6 Vocational education in Greenland 2007 - 2011

In the year 2011, 953 students started their education in vocational schools in Greenland. Of these 953, 372 students dropped out for one reason or other, but 406 students completed their education. 175 Students are enrolled at the school (Statistics, 2012). Here like elsewhere in the school system there seems to be an average of fifty percent drop-out rate.

Vocational education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance & Domestic Affairs, not the Ministry of Education, Church, Culture and Gender Equality, like other schools in Greenland.

In the *Political and Economic Report 2013* (Naalakkersuisut Government of Greenland) it says that “the shortage of apprenticeships is one of the bigger problems for vocational training programs in the country. In 2013 there was a shortage of 375 apprenticeships compared to 2012. In the year 2014 there will be increasing funding to enlarge school apprenticeship facilities and the government will set up apprenticeships in Denmark” (Affairs, 2014). In Narsaq there is Inuili (food science school) where students fulfill apprenticeships at the school. There is one student in apprenticeship in a car repair shop and one in apprenticeship at a construction company. To get apprenticeship most students from Narsaq have to go away from Narsaq, because of the scarcity of opportunities there.

4.1.2 The Commercial School in Qarqortoq (Handelskolen)

The Commercial school in Qarqortoq offers professional education focused on preparing students for a career in the service sector, including specialization in tourist management. Ten to twelve students start their education in the school every year but only three to five complete their studies and pass the final exam. According to the *Study to evaluate the performance of Higher Education in Greenland*, the main reason for such a high drop-out rate is connected to the educational materials, as they are exclusively in Danish, and the students are not prepared to read and understand higher level Danish texts. Another issue appears to be the focus on tourism education. In part, it could be said that the students are not made aware of how they need to prepare for matriculation, or indeed simply, what kind of education the school offers. There is not adequate communication about the types of courses offered and what will be expected of them academically. The curriculum is comparable with similar schools in Denmark, with the exception that in Qarqortoq, students spend an additional six months participating in practical training sessions, hiking around the area, and learning survival and First Aid training. Basic medical training is considered a necessity for any person hoping to work in the field of tourism in the Arctic where conditions can change quickly and hazards are many. Two of my informants in Narsaq, went to the Commercial school in Qarqortoq,

both dropped out: “The first semester was fine, but in the second semester there were a lot of texts in Danish and I am not that good in Danish,” one of them said.

4.2 Education and Economics

One of the main reasons many nations want to increase the level of education in their country is that, “secondary education serves not only as the ground for higher education and training opportunities it also serves well as preparation for entry into the labor market. Over time, it has become more and more important in deciding how economic and other life benefits, such as good health and well-being, are distributed” (Lamb & Markussen, 2011, p. 28). In Greenland there is a direct correlation between individual education and economics. With more education a person has a higher income as we can see in table seven.

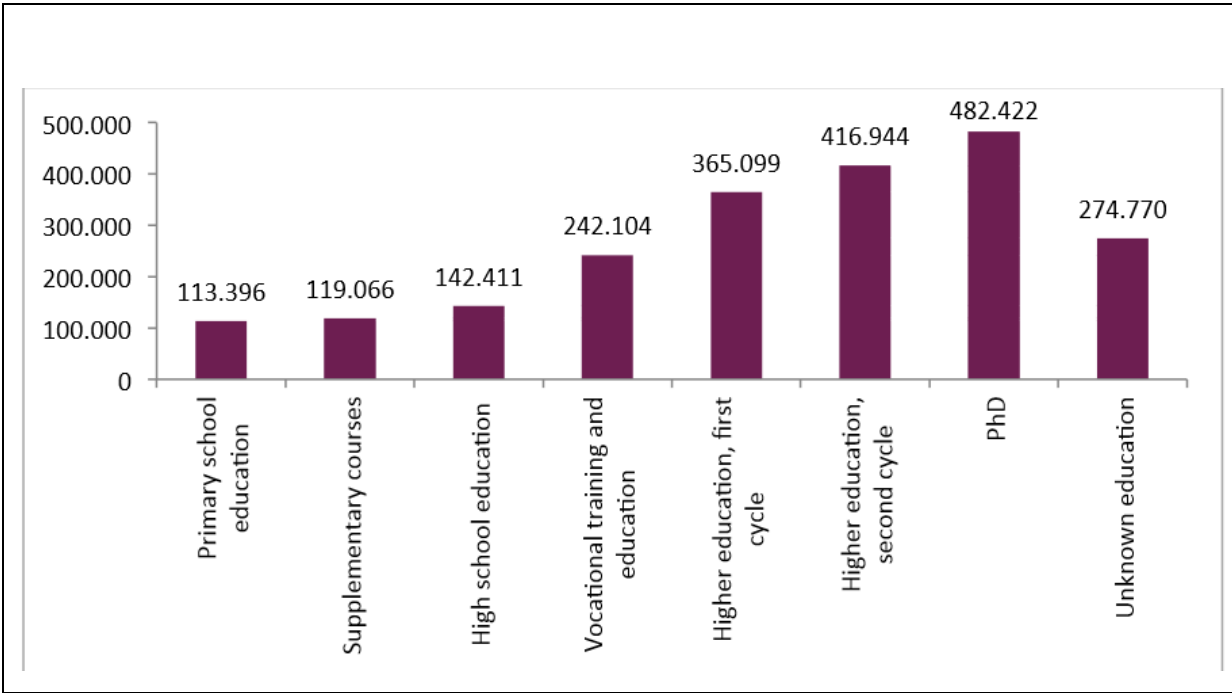


Table 7 - Income for different education 2011

The above chart shows chart showing median income according to the individual’s education. There is direct correlation between education and income. This should be a motivational factor for young adults to continue their education. Higher income usually means a better life, a least in urban areas. In rural areas, however, it might be debatable whether higher education leads to better quality of life. In Narsaq, many of my informants had very little interest in

pursuing a higher education, even if with higher education a person could have an employment with considerable economic wealth attached. There are not many employment opportunities for young people with higher education in Narsaq today and so to seek those higher paying jobs young people have to move away. It is possible though, that if and when international companies start mining in the area, some employment opportunities will open up for highly educated people.

Why is there a gap between the government's ambition to educate the population and produce higher educated people and the ambitions of young people in Narsaq? In Narsaq, many of the young people interviewed as informants expressed little interest in pursuing higher education. The prospect of a professional life, with higher earning potential, did not seem to appeal to them. Their answers were along the lines of: "money is not everything," and "university means that most probably I have to move away from Narsaq, if I don't want to learn to be a nurse, doctor or a teacher." Answers from other informants include: "If I go to university I will have an 'inside' (literally meaning working inside of a building) job for the rest of my life," and that according to the look on the informants face and body language was comparable to death (the informant made a gesture of cutting his throat).

Many families in Narsaq survive mainly on one income, because of the current lack of employment opportunities. Of my informants there were three families that were single income families, that is to say, the men were seasonal workers and had a boat and the women were working in a year round employment. "We don't need much," said one of the women, "the men fish and hunt and during the summer we all go out on the boat and fish and travel around".

The young people in Narsaq are not interested in higher education, in part because of the lifestyle that in their mind, an university education leads to. This can be partially explained, again, by Merete Watt Boolsen who says that "the 'cultural dimension' must be prioritized; they must learn what it means to go to school, study and get an education" (Boolsen, 2009, p. 75). Vocational training does not seem to be a viable option either. "I know fishing and hunting, been doing it since I was a little boy," one informant said, "and I helped build the house we live in, I do not need education for these things." Another informant said: "I went to the Commercial school in Qarqortoq and then quit and came home, I learn thing by doing, not by reading Danish." These young people want to earn their living by mixed economics of seasonal work, hunting and fishing. Only one informant was thinking of possibly attending a

university. This is in line with the responses in chapter 2, from my informants when asked about sustainable living. Most of them said that with working with different kinds of seasonal work, hunting, fishing and having benefits was enough for them and their families.

Per Langgaard states; “It is widely held among Greenlanders that there is a qualitative difference between life in the dynamic towns and life in the rather static fringe areas and small villages” and he goes on and says; “It is generally held opinion that the slower pace of villages is more ‘Greenlandic’ and therefore more satisfying than town life” (Langgaard, 1986, p. 299). Nuuk is the biggest town in Greenland and the home of the government. The comments my informants made regarding Nuuk and the presumed lifestyle fit Langgaard’s observation. There is more quality to life in Narsaq, than to Qarqortoq (the next big town) or Nuuk according to my informants. In a smaller place, everyone knows everyone, they commented, and a person can always be sure to have food and shelter. “Being content is a very individual condition. To be content is like being happy and to be happy one has to feel safe, and to feel safe one has to have food and shelter, this is what life is all about and here I have it all,” said an informant and his friends all nodded their heads

According to my informants, “a person can easily get lost in a big town where everything happens with a faster pace”. It is a risk to go for higher education in Nuuk or in other countries. Many questions come up in relation with young people shying away from education if it almost guaranties a person a secure employment and good economic expectancies. In Narsaq there is no guaranty that a person will be employed with good economic expectancies after graduation from higher education. There are not enough employment opportunities for young people with education so these good opportunities only apply to Nuuk and the surrounding area. Another reason for not seeking higher education could be it doesn’t meet the needs or dreams of the young people that want to live in Narsaq.

4.3 Students left behind – Dropouts

Secondary education is seen universally as “the foundation for entry to university and other education and training opportunities as well as preparation for entry into the labor market” (Lamb & Markussen, 2011, p. 22).

The definition of a dropout is not the same in all the Nordic countries. In Greenland the definition for a dropout as “a person who has been enrolled in a study programme, but currently has a status of “absent” in the USF (Study Grant Administration) in Greenland. That means that a dropout one year can be active the next year if that person decides to “give it another go.”⁴³ All students who register for higher education in one area of study and then change to another field of study and those that have not acquired higher education twenty five years after completing folke school fall under the definition of drop out (Markussen, et al., 2010, p. 194). Also included in the number of students that drop-out of education, are students who change schools, students who take a year off and students that get sick or die. The number of students that continue their education later in life is high in the Nordic countries and these students are also in the drop-out numbers (Markussen, et al., 2010, p. 196).

The people I met and spoke with in Narsaq in the summer of 2013 knew that secondary education could lead to further education, but they were not so sure about the labor market. In Narsaq, informants told me a person could live a nice life and provide for their family without higher education. This is in direct conflict with the goals of the government declaring the need for an educated population as soon as possible. Why do the young people not apply themselves to education like their government is encouraging them to? Maybe there is more than a geographical distance between Nuuk and Narsaq when it comes to higher education. Young adults in Narsaq do not seem enthusiastic to go to university for various reasons. It could be that communication between Nuuk, the capital town in Greenland and the center of governmental activities, and Narsaq and other small communities could be better.

Why do so few of my informants consider furthering their education as important to their future while others were somewhat indifferent? Does the explanation lie in the culture? A teacher informant said: “What I experience here in the Folkeskole, is that parents do not show up in the meetings when the school calls for them. It differs from class to class, but normally when I have parent-teacher meetings, only one third shows up. These meetings are used to tell the pupils’ parents, how it is going in school and if there is anything they need to work on, to be better. But it is strange, because the pupils first day of school are very important for the families, and there is a lot of big Kaffimik to celebrate. But it is almost like when the families have delivered the pupils to the school, and then it is not the parent’s problem or job to take care of the kids anymore”. This is in line with Per Langaard when he writes:

⁴³ Søren Bjulf, special consultant at Statistics Greenland

“Small children are raised according to traditional patterns, but by the age of four or five they enter some kind of vacuum waiting for enrollment in school at age six. From this age until the child leaves school, a high degree of responsibility for the child's progress and cognitive development is put on the school, even to the point where parents on enrolling day symbolically leave their children in the hand of the teacher uttering: "Now we give our baby to you!" (Langgaard, 1986, p. 308).

This I heard from other informants as well. They felt that after the first day of school, the parents did not care if their children went to school the next day or brought their books. The children were from the first day on, the schools or the teacher's problem. This might be explained again with not enough attention to the Inuit culture according to Merete Watt Boolsen (Boolsen, 2009, p. 73).

In conversations I had with parents and other adults, they agreed that majority of parents in Narsaq thought along these lines. Parents are welcome to be a part of the school committees and through the committees, they can have influence on how the education is prepared and distributed to their children, yet, very few parents do take interest in the school. “Communities can build schools, but schools, no matter how independent they are, cannot build new communities” (Sissons, *First Peoples. Indigenous Cultures and their Futures*, 2005, p. 55).

“When the parent has higher education this is probably different” my informants told me “parents want children to be like they are.” This is in line with Merete Watt Boolsen's theory on social inheritance (Boolsen, 2009) and Eifred Markussen. Markussen say that: “students who have parents with higher education are less likely to drop out of school than students who have parents that have not graduated from colleges or universities” (Markussen, et al., 2010, p. 209).

There is an ongoing struggle in Nordic nations to reduce dropout and increase completion rates. The high numbers of dropouts from the educational system makes it expensive for governments. “Over time, it has become more and more important in most OECD countries, in deciding how economic and other life benefits, such as good health and wellbeing are distributed” (Lamb & Markussen, 2011, p. 8). In Greenland the dropout rate is close to fifty percent and although education is highly appreciated by the establishment and politicians, the same does not appear to apply for all the people. In Narsaq and most likely other similar

towns, there is a palpable shortage of role models who have advanced degrees and a large portion of the population does not understand the reasoning for the government's push for education. "Why go to school, if you can have a fine life, not going to school" an informant said to me.

In Greenland as in other Nordic countries, the reported number of students who do not participate in or do not complete upper secondary education is viewed as a serious concern by the governments and education agencies in the North. The Ministry of Education in Iceland says that it cost the state approximately 25 million Icelandic kronas or 1.334.000 NOK for every student that drops out of the education system. In Iceland the drop-out rate is around 20% and on 17.mars 2014 the Association of Municipalities decided to design a seven-year plan in an effort to cut the drop-out rate in half (<http://www.ssh.is/frettir/hofudborgarsvaedid-verdi-leidandi-i-skolamalum-a-nordurlondunum>, 2014). In Greenland the drop-out rate is around 50%, there the Ministry of Education is implementing measures to help students stay in school. Their goal is, to cut the drop-out rate in half (Markussen, et al., 2010).

4.4 Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has become accessible for everyone as long as a person can connect with the Internet and has a device to work with. It has become one of the educational tools of the 21st century. Satellites, television and Internet have opened up a whole new spectrum of education and in many aspects young adults in Greenland receive similar system, school administration and curriculum as students all over the Arctic (Johansson, Paci, & Hovdenak, 2010)

In Greenland, a greater use of this educational tool has the potential to change the school environment because with distance learning there is a possibility to teach students in rural areas that do not have the possibility to travel to the nearest town. In comparison, in Iceland, a student can finish secondary and higher education via the Internet. At the secondary level in Iceland, ten schools have used this technology to educate students from all over the country, offering different courses from the same internet site. Teachers conduct online courses and combine them with several organized in-person sessions over the semester. With this technology, students have more courses and technical training opportunities to choose from,

and it does not depend on where they live.⁴⁴ Universities all over Iceland also offer distance learning in many of their courses. More and more students in Iceland are getting their education with ICT.

The use of information communication technology could bring more diverse educational opportunities to Greenlandic students and teachers. Broadband is still very expensive and unstable in some settlements due to the geographic situation in Greenland, but it is also on the priority list of the government to increase the quality of Internet connectivity in the country. This often results in broken communication from the capital city Nuuk to other places in the country.

In the report “To the Benefit of Greenland,” it is noted that there is a large need to strengthen civil society to engage in informed dialogue with companies and decision makers (Society, 2014, p. 40).). This can only be done with strengthening Internet connection all over this big island. This is high on the agenda of the Greenlandic government, strengthening the Internet connection all over the country. “We of Naalakkersuisut⁴⁵ will actively take part in developing this area and seek to ensure wider use of ICT in the classroom in all municipalities and throughout the educational system” says Vittus Qujaukitsq, minister for Finance and Domestic Affairs Domestic in the Political and Economic Report 2013 from the Greenlandic government.

OER or Open Educational Resources is a Nordic network to promote open education and collaboration amongst stakeholders in all educational sectors. The network has members from all Nordic countries and facilitates discourse and dialogue on Open Education but also participates in projects and development programs. The Nordic OER is funded by Nordplus⁴⁶. OER can be a good addition to the educational resources Greenlandic teachers already have and use and enormous help in distance education.

In Narsaq there is no physical center for distance learners. Students can engage in distance learning on their own, but with little or no assistance, it is very demanding and hard for them. Where distance learning environment has been the most successful and the students motivated to graduate from their studies, is where learning centers have been set up in the smaller communities. Learning centers, where students come every day and be assisted and

⁴⁴ http://www.fjarmenntaskolinn.is/?page_id=2

⁴⁵ The Greenlandic government

⁴⁶ The Nordplus Programme offers financial support to a variety of educational cooperation between partners in the area of lifelong learning from the eight participating countries in the Baltic and Nordic regions.

supported, both from professional teachers and fellow students. In Narsaq, students engaged in distance learning can go to the community library and use the computers there along with everyone else in the town, but there is no professional assistance to be had.

Very few of the young people that I met in Narsaq had tried distance learning and all of them had taken only one or two courses. An informant involved with education in Nuuk said; “you can also see how busy people are complaining, Nuuk is favored in many ways. A lot of jobs and stuff is placed there but out in the smaller towns there is not happening very much. The boats from Denmark are transporting all things directly to Nuuk and then it is transported to the rest of Greenland. Internet is cheap in Nuuk. Only Qaqortoq enjoys the same rates for service. . A lot of people are complaining, but it is very expensive for the private companies to maintain good service for the small towns and settlements. They have to charge more as their costs are high, but that could change with government subsidies.

Villum foundation is a non-profit foundation created by the Danish Villum Kann Rasmussen in 1971. This foundation is giving Ipads to students and teachers in Greenland with courses for teachers on how to integrate Ipads into curricula in the schools. It is a promising start, and may lead to increased interest in education, especially because the teachers appear to be seeking good uses for these digital tools in education. The students seem to like using the educational apps available on the Ipad and they are also fascinated by the tool itself as a technological marvel. The first Ipads were handed out in the beginning of the year 2014 and by year end every student in Greenland should be able to access an Ipad and use it for study. But an Ipad is merely a tool and in order for gifts like these to make a true difference there has to be follow through with supportive teacher training and academic materials.

An attractive learning center might be a viable option for many of my informants in Narsaq. With distance learning, they can stay home and get education instead of having to move away. Information and communication technology is constantly evolving and ICT along with cycle instruction (when students study at an institution with the help of ICT and then travel to the institution twice every semester) is also a viable option for young people everywhere there is Internet connection. Schools and schooling are changing; distance learning has become a large part of higher educational institutions. Today a student can commence from higher education through the internet, from institutions all over the world. I have taken courses from The University of the Arctic, University of Akureyri in Iceland and Stanford University in USA online, from a distance and that has worked according to plans.

4.4 Conclusion to chapter

Educational opportunities of young people in Narsaq were discussed in this chapter with a special focus on the perceived relevance of these opportunities. In order to seek higher education, students in Narsaq have to leave town, and for many of them, that is a great hindrance. Inuili, (food science school) the only vocational school in Narsaq, is a place of study for few of my informants and other apprenticeships are hard to find in Narsaq. Fourteen students graduated from Inuili in the year 2014 and out of these fourteen graduates, two were from Narsaq.

My informants among young people in Narsaq were not enthusiastic about the idea of pursuing higher education. Apprenticeships are fewer now in the town than they were ten years ago, because of the economic and unemployment situation. “You know, the mining business will open up and then I will get work and nice salaries, I do not want to go away from Narsaq. Things take time”. Young people in Narsaq take the choice to wait for the international companies to come in, they are sure there will be courses for them to take in connection with mining and apprenticeships with international companies. “I am not worried, I see no point in going to higher education, I have what I need now and I will have money for things when the mining company starts up.” All of my informants appeared to be happy with the status quo and willing to wait for new mining ventures to come to town and change their financial prospect.

This attitude of young people in Narsaq is in line with Barnard’s (Barnard, 2002) ‘foraging mode of thought’ as they seem comfortable waiting for the next opportunity, instead of hunting it is mining. There doesn’t seem to be a culture appreciating higher education in Narsaq and that rimes with Boolsen’s (Boolsen, 2009) ‘social inheritance theory’ because most of my informants did not have family members with higher education.

Chapter 5 Minding the Gap

The government of Greenland has made promoting education among its population, its highest priority. Greenland needs a well educated population especially now when the country is going through substantial environmental, political and economic changes and looking forward to the prospect of independence as well. This study examines higher education in Greenland, the educational goals and the educational reforms the government has set and how they relate with reality in Narsaq.

In my findings there was a clear gap between what the government of Greenland wants to produce in terms of higher educated population and the reality in Narsaq, which for the purposes of this thesis serves as an indicator of the situation in smaller towns and settlements in South Greenland. After the implementation of some of the proposed educational reform in 2005, Greenland has seen more students than ever before enter higher education institutions, but at the same time, more students are dropping out without completing their degrees.

There are various explanations for this high drop-out rate. For young people in Narsaq, higher education is considered just one choice among other choices regarding their future, financial security and status. For many of them the 'foraging mode of thought' still prevails but in its modern reincarnation, which is to rely of mixed income from multiple sources, with the inherent characteristic that allows for the freedom of being available to grab new opportunities when they present themselves, much as hunting has been through the history of Inuits. Alan Barnard has written about the impact of the 'foraging mode of thought' for understanding not only the mode of thought of foragers in foraging societies but also for foragers in mainly non foraging societies think. In this study 'foraging mode of thought' is easily comparable, but not identical to the situation in Narsaq. Barnard has five sub divisions in 'foraging as a mode of thought', economy, politics, kinship land and identity (by ethnicity and former lifestyle). Some of these relate to Narsaq and the young people there. The sharing economy, Greenlanders indigenous identity and traditional knowledge is valued. The young people in Narsaq learn from older to survive in harsh

environment. There is no land ownership in Greenland, the connection to land is embedded in the local knowledge.

Merete Watt Boolsen, argues that “studies of the processes in the education system and student’s lives suggest that the reason behind student dropping out of education is due to excessive focus on the organizational factors in combination with a lack of attention to the ‘cultural’ dimensions in Greenlandic society” (Boolsen, 2009, p. 78). Greenlanders are Inuit peoples and structure of the educational has to take into consideration the Inuit culture.

There is a lack the of attention to cultural dimensions in the educational system and that seems to be a factor contributing to young people’s reluctance to attend institutes of higher education. When you combine the remnants of Alan Barnard’s foraging mode of thought with of social inheritance theory, it is not hard to see why the government of Greenland is facing an uphill battle when trying to reach its ambitious educational goals. These counter-forces have to be recognized and addressed before improvements will be made. The fieldwork in Narsaq described in this thesis supports these findings.

Further limiting educational choices for young people, is the fact that it is very difficult to land an apprenticeship in Narsaq. That means getting vocational training is only an option for very few young people.

A multitude of languages, or the expectance of essentially trilingualism for young people in Narsaq, again is a another factor that complicates the issue of higher education for many young people as they find it difficult to pursue higher education in their second and third languages. As they climb higher on the educational ladder, less teaching is conducted in Greenlandic and even fewer materials become available in their native tongue. A young person has to be multilingual to attend any higher education in Greenland. For a country with a small population it is extremely expensive to keep up a higher education with only Greenlandic as a language of education.

Danish as the language of instruction has had consequences for Greenlandic identity and self-worth in the form of colonial devaluation of Inuit traditions, wisdoms, skills and cultural values. According to Charles Taylor ‘multiculturalism’ Greenlanders should assert themselves in their own identity and their first task should be” to purge themselves of this imposed and

destructive identity” and he goes on, ”misrecognition shows not just a lack of due respect it can also cause grievous wounds” (Taylor, p. 26).

Niezen writes about healing from colonization with the process of collective self-definition that he calls” *therapeutic history* involves the appropriation or sponsorship of narratives about the past as a way to define the moral essence of a people.....representation of the accomplishments of one’s ancestors are a vital healing inheritance” (Niezen, 2009, p. 150) Healing their identity is important for the society as a group or a whole.

The Greenlandic leadership today is clear that decolonization and establishing a viable nation depends on a radical reform of the Danish-designed and operated educational system. How this radical reform is played out and how young people connect with it, would be an informative research for other indigenous people that are striving for independence and decolonization of their education. Thus relating Greenland is a huge island and the distances between towns and villages, and transportation is difficult. Adding to these problems is that the three Inuit languages spoken in the country are very different. The internet communication is expensive. This often results in broken communication from the capital city Nuuk to other places in the country. Lack of educational tools in Greenlandic and native speaking teachers is adding to the difficulties.

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List of Figures:

1. Map of Greenland.....	2
2. Map of South Greenland, Narsaq, Qarqortoq and Narsarsuaq (airport)..	3
3. Narsaq, Greenland.....	7
4. Two high rises in Narsaq.....	28

List of Tables:

1. Percentage of Population Aged 15 or older receiving benefits.....	29
2. Overall figures of students in Greenland.....	38
3. Commenced Education by Gender and Year of Commencement.....	39
4. Higher Education in Greenland 2004-2011.....	42
5. Ilisimatusarfik – Graduates, Average Study Time and Dropout 2012.....	43
6. Vocational Education in Greenland 2007 – 2011.....	47
7. Income for Different Education 2011.....	49