A.p.p.l.e.

Report to the Corps

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Sudden impact

In July 2000 A.P.P.L.E. co-founder, former Director and current Deputy Minister of Education of Lithuania,Vaiva Vebra, spoke to education policy analysts in Budapest at the invittaion of the Soros Foundation. Her remarks include a succinct overview of a decade of reform in Lithuanian education, as well as a summary of the challenges ahead. For those who are interested in a clear-eyed assessment of the environment for A.P.P.L.E.'s work in the future, I have taken the liberty of republishing her speech in full in this special, PDF-only issue of Report to the Corps

—Jim Gust

I am standing before you today at a distinct disadvantage —that is, as a member of a minority, an often despised and sometimes despicable minority. That is, as a politician. I am a minority in this room, and sometimes it is very beneficial, maturing experience (although sometimes simply a nasty, provoking one) to feel lonesome in one's role. I feel a little bit defensive too, because I cannot represent all politicians of our countries – nor could I possibly wish to – but during the classes this week I have felt a little bit like a member of the chorus on stage in an ancient Greek play : the chorus that keeps commenting on the characters: "Oh, if they only knew what fate holds in store for them!" I don't believe in fate, but I believe in politics, in every sense – in the idealistic sense, but also in the sense of being "in the trenches," digging the ditches of politics. I unfortunately believe from experience, in our countries, in political whiplash.

Do you all know what whiplash is? When you are peacefully driving along in your car, focused on your destination, and someone hits you from behind, and your head snaps back, and then forward again. It hurts for a long time. I don't want this to happen to education reform in Lithuania, or in any of our countries. Thomas Jefferson once said: "Education is the anvil upon which democracy is forged." I think this is true, and a very serious reason to become a policy analyst in the field of education, and even perhaps a politician. In other words, the reason to choose education as a life's work in the postcommunist world is the very re-creation of our peoples as independent, just and joyful societies of individuals that share a history and commit to sharing a future.

The reason is indeed very serious, but the execution can be fun. Why not? We must do well, and we must do well quickly, but I for one enjoy the sensation of speed. We don't have much money, but we are rather brave and we have an abundance of desire. What is my desire today? My desire is that you succeed at these courses and in your education policy analyses of the future. This is important to me as a politician and as a citizen. I am well aware of the gaping hole, politely called a niche, that awaits conscientious and professional analysis of potential education policy in Lithuania. We need to take and defend action based upon well-prepared analyses rather than sheer instinct. We need to protect our children from the threat of systemic whiplash. I think it is much the same elsewhere in our countries.

And so, for fun, but also in all seriousness, I am here as your experimental object, as your politician, I am easy as a first experiment because I am humble. I already know that there is plenty that I don't know. I am no academic, I have not even attended the first week of your courses. So in a sense I am a potential victim. I am likely to believe all that you tell me. For this reason you must remember that your work has consequences far beyond your personal professional success or failure. Your work will have consequences for your

countries, and your assumptions, your biases, your impulse to buy into one theory, one ideology, one policy or another, may shape – in some small way - the way children think and act sooner or later. So you must be very good, and if you can't always be good, you must then be very careful. It is a good thing that you have me to experiment on!

If I were the one running this course - of course, I'm not in the least bit qualified. But if I were, I must admit that I would have set the agenda yesterday to match those issues that wake me sometimes in the night. It's true, I dream about my work, I don't know why you shouldn't as well. I wish that all of you could advise me when I go home, because there are issues rising in a wave, a tsunami, a tidal wave, before the parliamentary elections in the fall. Those of our advisers who are parliamentarians – they have their own reelection agenda, understandably. Our universities also have an agenda – more resources for higher education. It seems as though everyone belongs to a special interest group. Does the balance of special interests in itself create good policy? This is one of the overarching questions that I would like to ask you today.

I want to ask your help through a discussion of those issues that are urgent, that will create breakthrough changes. Although originally Tomas asked me to do something else. He asked me to present the history of education reform in Lithuania as a sort of case study, and to expand on two current aspects – minority language policy and our proposal for school renovations via a World Bank loan. I intend to do all this, but I would be remiss in my duties and also my common sense if I didn't take the opportunity offered to ask your advice and also to get to know you better. So I will try to present our history of reform as a context for five questions that we musk ask, and answer, now, ten years after the re-establishment of independence.

Of course, history matters. But history can be boring to listen to, if it's not your own. So I'll just tell you what you must know to begin to consider Lithuania's particular dilemmas. For you must suspend your disbelief, for just the duration of this class, and pretend that you are all Lithuanians, or at least all employed as analysts in the Lithuanian situation.

I am the deputy minister of education in charge of general and vocational, but not higher, education, in Lithuania, appointed in 1998. We have another deputy minister for higher education, but that's fine, our relationship is a good one. Together with our minister, we are currently engaged in a most unpopular, all-encompassing structural and curricular reform of the system, just before an election, in a year of financial crisis. Everyone tells us we are crazy. You may want to ask : "Are you crazy?" This is where history matters. I will try to tell it as a story, after all, I am no professional historian, I have learned it – and experienced it – as a story myself.

Lithuania is about the size of Ireland, with a population of 3.8 million. It rains a lot, people sing the ancient songs wonderfully and they drink a lot, sometimes it seems we must be Irish. Of course, we have plenty of bad qualities that are uniquely our own. And maybe some good ones as well. About 80% of the population are ethnic Lithuanians, a similar proportion are Roman Catholics. We are a Baltic Sea state with a 99 km border. 16% of the population lives in our capital Vilnius, in stark contrast to our nearby friends Latvia and Estonia, where nearly 50% of the population lives in the capital cities. We have a more evenly distributed and unfortunately far too numerous struggling rural population. And most unfortunately, our birth rate is steadily falling and population declining in a climate of severe economic conditions.

We continue to have – I think – a brutally powerful sense of history. Our statehood extends back a thousand years and sometimes it seems as if our grandmothers remember it all, every single moment. At the end of the Middle Ages Lithuania was a large empire extending nearly to the shores of the Black Sea. In 1579 Vilnius University was established. But from 1795 Lithuania fell under Tsarist rule, the Lithuanian schools were closed and Lithuanian publications were outlawed. Of course, the predictable happened. Education and language became both hidden treasure and secret weapon.

The Lithuanian government during independence from 1918 to 1940 threw its moral power and material resources into education for all. It worked by all accounts, the country flourished according to most indicators, and not least important is the psychological afterglow. Now, sixty years later, to say that a particular educational policy has its roots in pre-war pedagogy remains a very convincing argument. During World War II and the early years of the Soviet occupation, Lithuania lost one third of its population – killed, deported or fled. In this number were many – most – of Lithuania's teachers and virtually all professors of higher education. We rebuilt. Both treasure and weapon. And the built-in resistance to change of such an iconicized sector of national life cannot help but be a challenge to modernization and reform.

We declared re-establishment of independence on March 11, 1990. Again, as in 1918, education wasn't relegated to a back burner. The first cabinet was a heady mix of people of various parties and ideologies. A young firebrand, a 28-year old historian, became the first minister. His agenda was already in place, since Lithuania had been engaged – illicitly, according to Soviet authorities – in creating a draft national education program since 1988, an effort spearheaded by a doctor of pedagogy, a beloved grand dame then in her seventies, now in her eighties and still the moral voice of education reform in Lithuania. The young man and the old lady were a magical team. Their charisma was

unbeatable, their conviction total, their respect for one another and for their country, palpable. I am witness to the fact that they worked very hard, twenty-hour days, and it has taken me nearly ten years to begin to recognize the missteps that were indeed made. Even now people will speak nostalgically and reverentially of the first minister, as though he were Moses in yesterday's example, although of course he's still around, still younger than I am after all these years, they'll say "in Darius' times things were different…" and it drives those of us working in the ministry crazy, because we'll never re-create Darius' times. Euphoria comes, and euphoria goes, and I don't think that Darius could re-create Darius' times now, any more than John F. Kennedy could re-create Camelot.

Still, we are speaking of something unquestionably real and beyond political context. We are speaking perhaps of synergy, of leaders both born and taught for a time which we absolutely believed would come. Perhaps Lithuania was lucky and stumbled upon such leaders. Perhaps we made our own luck. I don't know. But the constant public visibility, utter novelty, charm and intellectual steel of our first team allowed our educational establishment – so conservative in most of its manifestations – to lower its defenses and take reform to heart. And to our everlasting benefit, the documents written by that first ministry are so far-reaching, so fundamentally sound, that Lithuanian educational reform has not in fact varied from the essential course set in 1990. Eventually published in 1992, approved by the Council of Ministers and the Parliament, the "yellow book" called ***The General Concept of Education in Lithuania*** set out fundamental guidelines for reform and has inspired its implementation ever since. How can a text still be so relevant after ten years of momentous change, especially in a field like education where our heads spin from new theories and buzzwords daily? I think the answer can be found by looking at certain other documents, like the U.S. Constitution, for example. Unlike some other constitutions, it is written in simple, comprehensible language, not what we would call "legalese." It is fairly short. Its words are so beautiful that they flash in one's memory. It doesn't try to answer a morass of regulatory questions, but sticks to basic principles, and it is for the most part true to the essential aspirations innate in nationhood.

So, if ***The General Concept*** laid out our road map so well, why am I telling you that the ministry is now caught in a labyrinth of pressing, puzzling and momentous decisions? Like the U.S. Constitution, ***The Concept*** was adequate to its time and in most ways adequate far into the future. But some issues weren't even touched upon. Education financing, for example. The ethos of the time was that the central government would provide adequately, and enlightened and decentralized authorities would spend wisely. In fact, no such luck. Similarly, ***The Concept*** is silent on the issue of school mapping – that is, who should decide how many schools there should be, where they should be located, who may decide to close a school and for what reasons. At the time the document was written, the population was growing, Lithuania was on the cusp of a new life and the authors very likely believed that there could never be too many schools. Lithuania's current educational reform has now entered its second phase. In a period of rapid and sometimes seemingly chaotic social change, the reformers must engage in nation-building and pursue clearly targeted goals while social and economic pressures turn those goals into moving targets.

But I am getting ahead of myself. Let me first speak of what we have indeed done, and then of what we have yet to do. The first exercise of independence that the architects of our education reform engaged in was to ask: "What is the purpose of education?" Since we don't live in an absolutist age, it's not so easy to find a permanent answer. Yet as a society we must reach an acceptable consensus and as a government we must commit ourselves to its implementation. The Mission statement of Lithuania's famous "yellow book" states that our goal is "to create a foundation for a dynamic society capable of self-renewal, for a cultural awareness based upon open-mindedness and critical thought." How can we possibly manage this?

Not an easy task for bureaucrats, nor easy for educators, since education is by its very nature a conservative system, a process designed in large part to convey past experience, giving knowledge from one generation to the next. Naturally enough, in a new-born democracy, conservative systems are tested by new freedoms. School reforms were a first priority for the Lithuania of 1990 and the first wave consisted of sweeping curriculum changes. It was a time for rapid reassessment of skills needed for engagement with a free market economy, a modern democracy. New subjects found their way into our programs, new, more appealing, more pupil-oriented textbooks were published.

But there were some problems as well. Teachers were ill-prepared for proposed new methods, and teacher in-service, the entire acknowledgement of human resources as the essential underpinning of quality and judgment in any system, was under-emphasised and poorly funded. Lithuanian teachers had been accustomed to stability. No longer.

A second gap in the first phase of our reform was a lack of commitment to physical infrastructure. The euphoria of independence led some to believe that schools could subsist on air. With salary increases to mollify teacher discontent, the percentage of municipal education budgets going to salary plus social security hit eighty percent. As a result, buildings became more and more run-down, teaching equipment more antiquated. The status of the teaching profession was weakened. The overload of new information in the curriculum, especially for the upper grades of second-

ary school, with each teacher pulling the curriculum as far as possible in his or her direction, as teacher salaries were and still are based on number of hours taught, led to discontent and scepticism toward the entire reform among pupils and parents.

Meanwhile there were indications that many of the newly autonomous universities, now responsible to no body outside of themselves, were holding fast to antiquated, overstaffed, narrowly focused study programs while giving innovations in secondary school curriculum short shrift in the admissions process, with the result that to secure a place pupils were paying huge fees to university personnel for so-called personal tutoring in preparation for highly unpredictable and sometimes outlandish, bizarre entrance exams.

Clearly there came time for a reassessment, a reaffirmation of the basic principles of the first phase combined with redress of emerging problems. The second phase of our reform found its vanguard among practitioners as well as theoreticians. Some schools had clearly pulled away from the mainstream and were successfully experimenting with creative directions in providing exceptional services with standard resources. The breakthrough schools set an example that forced the issue: why can't all schools in Lithuania pursue and ensure quality education for all? Government needed to find ways to support distinguished teachers and to "mainstream" standards that excellent schools had set. We had to mandate structural organisational change and to respect increased needs for human and material resource development alongside continued curricular change.

What does this mean in simple language? It means that those of us who came into government following a democratic labour, or post-communist party period in power, in about 1998, ended up with the most demanding job that one could think of, the kamikaze job that had been conveniently shunted aside in favour of curricular reform - that is, structural and financial system-wide reorganisation. Most of what we had to do was encoded in the 1992 ***Concept*** and it still made perfect sense. However, the previous government had been in no hurry. After all, why – and when – should one oppose the will of the majority of the people in a democracy? And this is the second overarching question that I want to ask you today.

Consider – who are the stakeholders in changing curriculum? Well, the children like it. After all, it's not really a change to them – after all, they're learning it for the first time. Besides, it's generally seen as more interesting, more relevant. Parents are willing to go along. Maybe their children really need these new skills in a new environment. Administrators tend to ignore curriculum change; they see it as the teachers' problem. And indeed it is a problem, when support structures are lacking. Teachers were dissatisfied, but few were willing to listen closely to their complaints. Society as a whole perceived the teacher unwillingness to change as mulish and unprofessional. That wasn't really fair, but the stakes for implementation were very high and we do indeed have a new curriculum fully implemented one grade per year, starting with grade 1, so our eighth graders are our "reformed children" now.

The situation with structural change is diametrically different. Everyone panics, because no-one can avoid disruption. Children may have to change schools. They will have to make entirely unaccustomed choices. They will have to take external exams for the first time. Who wants this? The old way was much more comfortable. Parents are up in arms, principally because of the school consolidation and busing plans. We have schools presently where the teachers outnumber the pupils. If we change the system, not only will children have to travel, but some teachers may indeed lose their jobs. Job security in a post-Soviet society is one of the unshakeable priorities, making our education system in part into a state-run jobs program. There is a similar problem with the integration of handicapped children into regular classrooms – some institutions will cease to exist. All this is far more threatening than curriculum change – we intend to bring agricultural vocational schools into one unified vocational system, this will mean that the ossified agricultural schools will no longer be funded for provision of two major study programs leading to specialist degrees- tractorist for boys and home economist for girls. What does structural change mean for heads of academic gymnasiums? It means they will not be allowed to admit fifth-graders, sometimes even first graders as they sometimes do now, based on rigid academic testing, because a gymnasium is a four-year institution – 9-12, and that's all. What does it mean to the director of a Polish-language secondary school, say? It means that he or she must prepare students for external university-standing exams in the national language for the first time, and also that all the same curriculum choices must be made available to eleventh and twelfth graders as in Lithuanian language schools, now that we are introducing profiling in these grades. What does it mean for the head of a rural school? It means that his upper secondary school may well be reorganised as a ten-year basic school and the director will feel deeply injured – does this mean that his good initiatives were meaningless after all? What does it mean for a post-secondary technical school? It means that the staff must work very hard to raise standards, compete with other schools on a national level and apply to become a non-university higher education institution or accept devolution to vocational school standing. And the universities? They must now for the first time submit to a mixed stakeholder Board of Trustees for financial oversight, besides there is all this new competition for students foreseen from the new colleges to be. What does it mean for a municipal education department head? It means that he must find a way to supply basic schools

with computers, since the ministry has increased basic education by a year and now informatics must be taught in basic school, although Lithuania currently has only one computer per 73 students. What does structural change mean for the mayor? It means that the mayor will have to maintain a reasonable number of schools with a reasonable budget, as we move toward transparency and partial "money follows the child" financing, rather than driving the town into disastrous debt in a bid to hold on until the next election.

What does this whirlwind of structural change mean for the ministry? Lots of political abuse. Still, I am no cynic. I think that indeed, just about every one of the people that I have listed, realises in theory that these changes are needed, that they are in fact both long overdue and interdependent, that they will benefit the citizenry, that they are appropriately targeted at those aspects of our system that remain in discord with our most basic principles. The problem is that what we believe is very different from what we are ready to practice, most especially when we are personally affected by change. Here Patricija's example about integration in the U.S. was a good one. There is always a river to cross to get to the other side of any reform. And in the river we always get wet. If the people were to vote today, they would say – "heck, no, we won't change. We know that things aren't great. In fact they're somewhat bleak, somewhat corrupt. But the best kids always pull through. We're comfortable. So why worry?" This attitude is why structural change has been slow. Until now.

In November of 1998 the collegium of the Ministry of Education and Science approved a document detailing the second phase of education reform. This document, too, in my opinion is remarkable in its simplicity, a rare quality in post-soviet societies. The document brings the second phase into focus through three fields of action, three priorities. It's laudable in terms of the document that complex needs flow easily into three streams, as it were, this makes the document easy to read, easy to understand, easy to remember, easy to talk about. The directions of our second phase are not mere statements of intent - they are detailed by way of a map of thirty-two associated specific goals, more recently, each goal was defined by tasks to be accomplished in the near term. The tasks are a map of decisions made, a guidebook for systemic structural change.

The priorities of the second phase of education reform can be conceived as three aspects of one concept, that of assurance. The priorities are:

- Quality assurance and modernisation of the learning and teaching process,
- Improvement of accessibility and social conditions for learning and teaching,
- The "harmonisation" of education.

Having defined these three priorities we are able to speak of Lithuanian education as a seamless system based upon three principles that we hold to be fundamental to just progress: quality, social justice and systemic consonance.

The priorities are equally applicable to pre-school education, to special education, to general education, to vocational and higher education and to the network of establishments needed for life-long learning in a modern society. Each of the priorities is of concern to every stakeholder within the system: administrator, educator, student. We hoped that for these reasons the possibility of consensus could now reach across earlier gaps in communication.

The first priority, ***modernisation of teaching and learning***, is oriented towards quality assurance in the broadest sense. But what is quality? I heard some reference to the issue but no answers this week. Of course our society needs to ensure far more than the transference of information from teacher to student. Truly we need the best of today's educational tools for our children, so that they may be thrilled by learning, so that Lithuania becomes a country open to the world, with a stream of visitors on their way in rather than a stream of young people on their way out. But such quality cannot be measured by the gloss of new paint or ensured by the best of computer hardware. Education must assure the development of independent critical thinking skills, schools must support the formation of value systems not easily shaken by each new experience, our curriculum must enhance the ability of our young citizens to take effective moral action in building economic, civic, cultural and family contexts in their lives. Perhaps this sort of competency-building is quality? But how can it be measured?

The second priority is intended to build a system of ***accessibility to learning, in other words education for all***. Our target is a level playing field, equal opportunities at every starting gate, and this mandates a great variety of gates. Active concern for minorities, for integration in regular classrooms of children with special needs, special opportunities for the gifted and provision for the ordinary child who needs and doesn't have proper shoes, proper books and secure transportation to and from a distant village school are all encompassed by this priority. In the "Priorities of the second phase of education reform" document extracurricular education is highlighted as a need that should be addressed for all children in the schools that they attend daily. Lithuania has inherited a stellar network of special and separate schools for art and music, for those talented in sports. These schools can be very proud of their results, yet we need to expand opportunities, expand access, so that our sons and daughters can try their hand at playing bugle as well as basketball, even those who cannot boast of world-level talent.

Our third priority has proved the most difficult to name in a word. We have called it ***"harmonisation"***.

Simply put, our systems were highly compartmentalised and out of joint, there was discord between various acts of law, between institutions, between policies that otherwise seemed reasonable, each in itself. As a result, there were no horizontal ties or bridges that would allow an individual to travel along individual educational pathways. The systems of vocational, special, arts and general education, for example, were monolithic and steered people into permanent choices, sometimes mistaken choices, and educational establishments sometimes functioned for their own sake rather than for the society and the people they serve. Similarly, resources and finances are disbursed along disparate pathways to ill economic effect, without considering the possible material benefits of co-operation of efforts.

There is another aspect of harmonisation. Although we earlier spoke of internal, systemic harmonisation, we also need to address harmonisation of the education system with the society as a whole, that is - external harmonisation. We could call this a national pact on education, an implemented mandate on a process of change that is consonant with overall national domestic policy. Schools cannot be divorced from social upheaval any more than they can be divorced from economic development. External harmonisation means that schools must change so that young persons are prepared for job mobility, for a market economy, for linguistic ease as EU integration proceeds and for civic pride and political choice. That is a goal calling for self-assurance among educators that we cannot yet meet.

There is a very famous Thomas Wolfe novel called *You Can't Go Home Again*. I am immensely grateful that Lithuania is free, and that I have in fact been able to come home. The whole idea of home, though, is I think one that we must newly create in our minds and in our countries, a self-image and a reality to match. Aleksander said yesterday that countries have the governments they deserve, but that hasn't always been true for us. Still, I believe in government and even politics as a wide-open field for individual honesty, for conscience. There are always many, many choices. One can always choose to do the right thing. The only difficult part is – how do I recognise the right thing when it comes up and bites me? But that's what you policy analysts are for.

WHAT CAN YOU BUY FOR $30 IN 2000?

YOU CAN CHANGE THE LIFE OF A LITHUANIAN TEACHER!

Our object with the A.P.P.L.E. Teacher Seminars has been to assist in the reformation of Lithuania's educational infrastructure, as she rejoins the community of nations and is reborn in democracy and freedom. The unfortunate reality is that the cost of transportation and lodging for the Seminar is a real—but unnecessary—obstacle to participation. In the past we have asked our members to sponsor Lithuanian teachers. In return, those who received scholarships wrote personal letters to their sponsors, providing a firsthand account of the influence that the Seminar experience had on their lives and professional development.

These letters confirmed our hopes—and the promise of our headline.

We hope to continue to provide scholarships to participants this year, and we believe that we can cover a good deal of their costs for $30 each. If you sponsored a teacher last year, you know the value that was received. If you didn't, this is your chance to find out. Consider honoring a friend with this special gift, giving a scholarship in his or her name. You will be making a difference! For $150.00 you could provide a stipend for a Lithuanian translator or lecturer who works in partnership with colleagues from the United States. *Please send scholarship and stipend donations to: A.P.P.L.E., Box 617, Durham, CT 06422. We can reach so many more people with your help.*

PS. We would like to remind you that because of strict Internal Revenue Service regulations, we cannot accept scholarships intended for specific persons. If you would like to support your relatives or friends, please do so directly. This scholarship fund is for those Lithuanian teachers who have no such friends in the United States. If, however, you would like your scholarship to go to a particular region or town in Lithuania, we will do our best to accommodate your request, if a teacher from the area that you specify registers for a seminar.

Reminder: A.P.P.L.E. membership is still $25 per year. If you haven't sent in your renewal, please include it with your scholarship donation.

SOME CRITICAL POLICY QUESTIONS:

1. How should teacher salaries be fixed in the new financing system? Locally or centrally? The Free Market Institute wants us to deregulate. An associated question: how do we move away from hourly compensation towards regular wages?

2. Who should decide which schools may open profiled 11-12th grade classes when it is clearly non-feasible for all to do so? How should a rational school mapping process be mandated?

3. As all secondary schools evolve either towards four year gymnasiums or ten-year basic schools by 2010, how to ameliorate the social stigma of year 9-10 classes remaining in basic school? Associated question: how to improve public perception of basic schools as a type of institution?

4. What to do about cheating in school-based exams? If cheating is indeed widespread, why organise the exams in the first place? They are frightfully expensive. Is there any alternative?

A SAMPLE OF SECTORS

Accessibility to education, appropriate social and pedagogic conditions

1. Pre-school education:

Done: universal academicised pre-school education starting in infancy has been abolished, replaced by family choice, which is supported by payments to those who raise their children at home. Program content of pre-school programs is greatly changed and also offers new, child-oriented choices. Disabled children are integrated into some pre-school groups. "School attendance maturity indicators" have been issued, this helps orient pre-school in a non-academic way.

Problems: The number of such institutions fell dramatically. Now groups are overcrowded and there are waiting lists. A far greater proportion of urban children attend pre-school than rural children; meanwhile, rural children are less school-ready.

To do: Villages should institute zero year programs in schools that are half empty. Zero-year should become mandatory over time in the interests of an equal start. Create a model for private pre-school as well as private day care.

2. The problem of street children:

Done: Administrative attempts to find and register these children are localized. However, their numbers may be falling somewhat due to a more child-centered attitude in schools, more options such as youth schools and vocational schools for those without basic education. A major factor was the provision of free lunches. New forms of care institutions and fostering have been established.

Problems: We lack clear statistics. We deal with results rather than causes of non-attendance. There is a proliferation of drug and alcohol abuse and crime among children. Poor academic performance remains the child's own problem, rather than the school's, and after school programs are diminished due to funding structure. Monies intended to ameliorate these problems are rarely used systematically or effectively and end up in the pockets of middlemen.

To do: We need to orient social policy toward the amelioration of poverty, to create extended-day groups in schools, create job positions for social workers and psychologists, improve pre-service courses about adolescent school problems and rapidly expand the (expensive) youth school network. We need to implement models for teaching juvenile delinquents. We need to assure transportation to rural schools.

3. Financial accessibility to job and career qualifications:

Done: Scholarships are available to vocational and technical school as well as university students. Virtually all secondary school graduates who wish to register at one or another institution.

Problems: There is no workable program for study loans (forgiven for successful graduates). Students who fail to get into highly competitive state-funded study programs may still attend if they are wealthy enough to pay the fees. Meanwhile, the government spends huge amounts on politically popular but meager and ineffective "living expense stipends".

To do: The new March 2000 Law on higher education provides for study loans to all, part paid to the school as tuition, part to the student for living expenses, these loans forgiven for successful graduates. Social welfare stipends are to be reserved for those in dire need.

4. Special education

Done: The 1998 Law on special education goes even farther than the ***"General Concept"*** to provide for people with special needs the right to be educated, the right to choose (with parents) the form and place of education that best suits their circumstances, to receive special services. This is a strong legal framework. Integration into general secondary schools has increased by 50% since independence.

Problems: There is a risk in de-institutionalizing children without increasing resources to the general schools which must absorb them. Our current financing structure is not helpful. Teachers are unwilling and ill-prepared. Regulations do not foresee the need for teachers' aides. There is no place for disabled children to go – at all – once they reach mandatory school leaving age, other than geriatric homes.

To do: Improve teacher pre-service training, placing emphasis on children's abilities rather than "defects", fit provision to actual needs so it is not supply-driven, educate educators about dyslexia, require schools undergoing renovation to take account of the needs of the disabled, overcome fragmentation and drop-off of services upon maturity.