

Iceland

Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System

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Title: Iceland: overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2006

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Abstract:

This is an overview of the VET system in Iceland. Information is presented according to the following themes:

1. General policy context - framework for the knowledge society;
2. Policy development - objectives, frameworks, mechanisms, priorities;
3. Institutional framework - provision of learning opportunities;
4. Initial education and training - pathways and transition;
5. Continuing vocational education and training for adults;
6. Training VET teachers and trainers;
7. Skills and competence development and innovative pedagogy;
8. Validation of learning - recognition and mobility;
9. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment;
10. Financing: investment in human resources;
11. European and international dimensions: towards an open area of lifelong learning.

This overview is part of a series produced for each EU Member State (plus Norway and Iceland). Each report is prepared by Cedefop's national network member (ReferNet) and is updated on an annual basis: this one is valid for 2006. Later editions can be viewed from August 2007 onwards at http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/ where more detailed thematic information on the VET systems of the EU can be found.

Keywords:

training system; training policy, initial training, continuing vocational training, training of trainers, skill development, vocational guidance, recognition of competences, validation of non formal learning; financing of training

Geographic term:

Iceland

THEMATIC OVERVIEWS



Iceland

01 - GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT - FRAMEWORK FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

0101 - POLITICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL/ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Iceland is a representative democracy with an elected president. The current constitution came into effect on 17 June 1944, when Iceland achieved independence from Denmark. The system of government is based on the principle of the tripartite division of power. According to the Constitution, parliament (*Althingi*) and the president jointly exercise legislative power. The President and other governmental authorities are entrusted with executive power and the judiciary with judicial power.

In 2005 there were 98 municipalities. Municipal councils are elected by universal suffrage every four years. There is great disparity in population; the population of the largest municipality, the capital Reykjavík, had 112,490 inhabitants on 1 December 2002, while some of the smaller rural districts had population of fewer than 50.

Municipalities are responsible for pre-primary and primary education whereas the state is responsible for all post compulsory education.

0102 - POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Iceland is an island in the North Atlantic Ocean, Its total area is approximately 103,000 km². On 1 December 2004 the population was 293 291.

Table 1: Annual births minus annual deaths			
ANNUAL BIRTHS MINUS ANNUAL DEATHS			
YEAR			
1991	1996	2001	2004
2,737	2,450	2,366	2,309

Source: Statistics Iceland 2006

The average number of children per couple has fallen from 4.1 in 1956 to 1.9 in 2001. At the same time, life expectancy rates have increased to 78.1 (men) and 82.2 (women).

In 1999 a quarter of the total population were aged 0-15 years, 65% of the population were aged 16-66 years and approximately 10% were aged 67 or above. It is estimated that by 2025 the population will have reached 334.762 (Statistics Iceland 2002).

Table 2: Age specific demographic trends						
	AGE SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS					
	2002	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
0 - 24	108,866	108,626	108,150	108,620	107,347	107,676
25 - 59	135,481	138,615	144,215	146,641	148,877	148,789
60 +	44,124	45,992	52,346	60,292	69,466	78,297

[Source: Statistics Iceland 2004]

As can be seen from the table, the population is still relatively young and there are large cohorts that need upper secondary end tertiary education and training.

0103 - ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

The biggest source of income has been fisheries, which is losing its significance as other industry grows. Unemployment hardly exists and drop-out from education and training is high. A free-market economy predominates marking a change from earlier times when government intervention was frequent.

Gross domestic product has risen annually since the 1990s and is now among the highest in the world per capita; Euro 27,948 in 2004 (Statistic Iceland 2006)

Table 1: Gross domestic Product			
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT			
1991	1996	2001	2004
SDR 5,017,415*	IKR 477,691,000 SDR 4,927,698*	IKR 749,953 EUR 9,513,548*	IKR 885,009,000 EUR 9,859,726*

*Exchange rate as per 1st January each year. EUR rates not available for 1991 and 1996.

Source Statistics Iceland (2006) – *Landshagir*

The service sector is dominant in Iceland followed by the manufacturing sector which has experienced strong decline in recent years.

Table 2: Economic Composition by sector				
ECONOMIC COMPOSITION BY SECTOR	YEAR			
	2000	2001	2002	2004
Agriculture:	6.8%	6.5%	6.6%	1.4%
Manufacturing:	24.4%	23.6%	23%	12.3%
Service:	68.8%	69.9%	70.4%	77.7%

Source Statistics Iceland (2006) – *Landshagir*

The demand for labour has for a long time exceeded supply, even though periodic unemployment has taken place in some sectors, for example, there has been a tendency toward seasonal unemployment in the fishing industry. Over the last few years unemployment has averaged 3% and it is relatively easy for early school leavers to enter the job market. There is a strong tradition for students at upper secondary school to work during their three-month summer vacation. In recent years, many students have also had a part-time job in addition to their studies. Students have thus had a relatively close relationship with the employment market.

Table 3: Employment rate				
EMPLOYMENT RATE	YEAR			
	2000	2001	2002	2004
MALE:	88.3%	88%	87.3%	85.0%
FEMALE:	78%	79.1%	78.2%	76.3%

Table 4: Unemployment rate				
UNEMPLOYMENT RATES	YEAR			
	2000	2001	2002	2004
Total:	2.7%	2.4%	3.2%	3.1%
Male:	2.5%	2.4%	3.6%	3.2%
Female: Young people under 25:	2.9% 5.3%	2.4% 4.3%	2.7% 7.1%	2.9% 8.1%

Table 5: Expenditure on Education				
GDP EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION:				
YEAR	2000	2001	2002	2004
	5.9%	6.2%	8.4%	Not available

Table 6: Public spending on education and training				
PUBLIC SPENDING ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PUBLIC SPENDING:				
YEAR	2000	2001	2002	2004
	14.4%	15.9%	18.3%	Not available

Source: Statistics Iceland 2006

0104 - EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION

Compared to other Nordic Countries, relatively few Icelanders complete upper secondary education. Only a 1/3rd of those who do complete it have chosen VET. This low level of VET graduates and the high demand for skilled personnel has resulted in the immigration of foreign workers qualified to journeymen standards. The same can be said for some tertiary fields, for example, there has been a large influx of foreign nurses.

Table 1: Population aged 25-64, Highest level of education attained, 2004.						
POPULATION AGED 25 - 64 BY HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED, 2004 (*)						
	PRE-PRIMARY, PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION (ISCED 97, LEVELS 0-2)		UPPER SECONDARY AND POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION (ISCED 97, LEVELS 3-4)		TERTIARY EDUCATION (ISCED 97, LEVELS 5-6)	
	Total (1000)	%	Total (1000)	%	Total (1000)	%
ICELAND	45	31	56	38	43	29
DENMARK	512	17	1 467	50	975	33
SWEDEN	812	17	2 580	54	1 342	28
FINLAND	620	22	1 240	44	979	34
NORWAY	301	12	1 345	55	809	33
UNITED KINGDOM	4 585	15	16 508	53	8 789	28

(*) 4th quarter

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey; NewCronos, release date 29/06/2005

Table 2: Percentage of Population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training.

PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION AGED 18-24 WITH AT MOST LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION AND NOT IN FURTHER EDUCATION OR TRAINING (*)					
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
European Union 25	17.3 (i)	16.9 (i)	16.6 (i)	16.1 (b)	15.7 (i)
Iceland	28.6	30.0	27.3	22.3	26.3
Denmark	11.6	8.8	8.4	10.0 (b)	8.1
Sweden	7.7	10.5 (b)	10.4	9.0 (b)	8.6
Norway	13.3	9.2	14.0	6.6 (b)	4.5
Finland	8.9 (b)	10.3	9.9	8.3 (b)	8.7
Germany	14.9	12.5	12.6	12.8 (i)	12.1
United Kingdom	18.3 (i)	17.6 (i)	17.7 (i)	16.7 (i)	16.7 (p)

(*) ISCED 97, level 0, 1 or 2; respondents declared not having received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, NewCronos, release date 29/06/2005

(l): Footnotes

02 - POLICY DEVELOPMENT - OBJECTIVES, FRAMEWORKS, MECHANISMS, PRIORITIES

0201 - OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

Two laws set the framework for VET policy: the 1996 law on upper secondary education (*lög um framhaldsskóla*) gives the right of any pupil who has passed compulsory education to enter upper secondary school (which includes IVET) and; the 1992 law on labour market training (*lög um starfsmenntun í atvinnulífínu*), which covers CVET, stresses the importance of increased education on the labour market.

VET as a whole has been moved closer to general education with the establishment of comprehensive schools in the 1980s. It is possible to graduate with a general certificate (the matriculation exam) and a VET degree. During the first two years of a vocational course, fields of study are broad. For example, pupils opting for construction are taught together before they specialise.

Many studies that used to be classified as VET have now moved to university level and are thereby automatically classified as general education. This has been done to increase their status and offer more extensive education and training.

The issue on high drop-out rates is unresolved. Employment rates are very high and it is easy, especially for men, to get a well paid job without any education or training.

Participation in CVET has increased in the past decade. This can be credited more to general interest than change in government policy. Unions have managed to negotiate new educational funds, from which their members can get a scholarship to attend the training of their choice.

03 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK - PROVISION OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

0301 - ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Table 1: Ministries and their Responsibilities	
MINISTRY	RESPONSIBILITY
Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (<i>Menntamálaráðuneytið</i>)	Responsible for almost all upper secondary education and training, including VET.
Ministry of Social Services (<i>Félagsamálaráðuneytið</i>)	Responsible for CVET (through <i>Starfsmenntaráð</i> – the Vocational Education Council) and education and training for unemployed people (through <i>Vinnumálastofnun</i> – The Directorate of Labour and the local employment offices)
Ministry of Fisheries (<i>Sjávarútvegsráðuneytið</i>)	Responsible for education and training of sea officers
Ministry of Agriculture (<i>Landbúnaðarráðuneytið</i>)	Responsible for education and training in the agricultural sector
VET schools (<i>Starfsmenntaskólar</i>)	Responsible for theoretical and sometimes practical education and training.
Employers	Responsible for giving their apprentices a complete hands-on experience in their respective fields.
Private schools or training centres	Some schools belong to certain trades and are obliged to offer CVET in their respective fields. Others can offer the training they like and call it what they want, provided that it is not a certified title.

0302 - LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Two laws set the framework for VET policy: the 1996 law on upper secondary education (*lög um framhaldsskóla*) gives the right of any pupil who has passed compulsory education to enter upper secondary school (which includes IVET) and; the 1992 law on labour market training (*lög um starfsmenntun í atvinnulífínu*), which covers CVET, stresses the importance of increased education on the labour market.

0303 - ROLE OF SOCIAL PARTNERS

Table 1: Roles of social partners		
	RESPONSIBILITIES OF SOCIAL PARTNERS	TYPE OF ROLE (ADVISORY/DECISION-MAKING, DIRECT/INDIRECT)
NATIONAL LEVEL	Both unions and employers have national organisations that set the main lines for labour negotiations. Since 2000, an increased emphasis has been on education and training, and national vocational study funds now exist for almost all groups of employees.	Social partners form Vocational Councils (<i>Starfsgreinaráð</i>) that advise ministries on pathways, curricula and other aspects of VET. Employers who take apprentices make contracts with VET schools and apprentices themselves. These contracts are standardised by the Vocational Councils and the Ministry.
SECTORAL LEVEL	The difference of education and training between sectors is large. In some sectors social partners have established their own schools whereas in others the development has been much slower.	Social partners tend to lay down the main rules for education and training but it is left to schools or training centres to work out the finer details.
ENTERPRISE LEVEL	Many enterprises (especially the larger ones) take apprentices to train.	Apprentices must be given a complete overview of their field and in each trade this is thoroughly outlined (see the first cell in this column).

04 - INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

0401 - BACKGROUND TO THE IVET SYSTEM AND DIAGRAM

Education in Iceland has traditionally been organised within the public sector, and there are very few private education institutions. Municipalities are responsible for compulsory education and the state for post compulsory education. It also monitors that educational laws and regulations are followed.

Education System in Iceland [Diagram 1](#)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Compulsory education extends to primary and lower secondary levels and covers children aged 6-16. School is divided into ten grades. Municipalities are responsible for the operation of compulsory education. They pay for instruction, administration and specialist services as well as establishing and running schools. In 2002 there were also six private compulsory schools (1% of the pupil population attended in 2002-03). All private compulsory schools receive financial assistance from the municipalities in tandem with pupil fees (Eurydice)

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*Menntamálaráðuneytið*) is responsible for the nationally coordinated curricula of core subjects and carries out central (not

compulsory) examinations in six subjects, i.e. Icelandic, Danish, English, mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences, for all school leavers.

Compulsory education provides school leavers with no formal qualifications, but they may enter the labour market on completion, usually for occupations requiring no specific qualification (which is a substantial market). Most school leavers (around 90%) enter upper-secondary schools straight after compulsory education.

IVET

IVET usually begins at upper secondary level, even though there are a few courses that for statistical reasons are classified as lower secondary education (e.g. the licence to drive trucks or other heavy machinery). The most common form is apprenticeship where 1/4th to 1/3rd of total study time is spent at a work-place.

VET is not as popular as general education and it is not uncommon that students start first in general education and then move to VET. Since the 1980s it has been made easier to change paths or to graduate with double qualifications.

The main providers of VET are:

- Industrial-vocational schools (*iðnskólar*) which offer theoretical and practical programmes of study in certified and some non-certified trades;
- Comprehensive schools (*fjölbautaskólar*) which offer theoretical and practical training as in the industrial-vocational schools and some other programmes providing vocational and artistic education. These schools also offer general upper-secondary education and training and it is possible to combine a general degree with a vocational one;
- Specialised vocational schools (*sérskólar*) which offer specialised programmes of study as preparation for specialised employment, such as marine schools. At post secondary and tertiary level, there are also special schools for the agricultural sector.

0402 - IVET AT LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL

Several courses that can be classified as lower secondary education are on offer but they all fall outside of the official system of education and training. These courses could also be classified as continuing education and training. For example:

- Licences to drive heavy vehicles and operate heavy machinery;
- Courses for low skilled workers by *Iðntæknistofnun* (IceTec), a public institution belonging to the Ministry of Trade and Industry (*Iðnaðar- og viðskiptaráðuneytið*);
- Heavy Industry School (*Stóriðjuskólinn*) offers workers at the aluminium smelter in Straumsvík a 3 semester part-time training which leads to increase in both responsibilities and salaries;

- Private courses of various length which give some limited rights on the job market.

0403 - IVET AT UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION (SCHOOL-BASED AND ALTERNANCE)

Upper secondary education is the responsibility of the state but in 2002 there were also 3 private schools. About 36% of upper secondary students enrol in VET.

Anyone who has completed compulsory education can enter upper secondary school in the year they turn 16. All students who have finished compulsory education and have passed at least the minimum requirements in Icelandic and mathematics can start IVET. It is also possible for students aged 18 or over who have not finished compulsory school to get exemption from this rule.

The duration of programmes can be between one semester and four years. The law on upper secondary education allows for varied admission requirements to different programmes according to course demands.

School time is often divided into a basic part, which is common for several studies in similar sectors, and specialisation in a number of trades. IVET at upper secondary level can be divided into two main categories: training which confers legally recognised certified qualification and training which does not lead to certified qualifications.

IVET that confers certified qualifications includes: study in certified trades; vocational study within the health-care system; study for officers of transportation vehicles in the air and on sea; and study of law enforcement officers. This type of study is generally divided between the school and the workplace, where schools are responsible for basic education and the theoretical part of vocational training, whereas practical training takes place in the workplace. This type of training is offered by industrial vocational schools (*iðnskólar*), comprehensive schools (*fjölbrotaskólar*) and specialised schools (*sérskólar*).

Upper secondary schools generally have examinations at the end of every semester. For certified trades, there are journeyman's examinations at the end of upper secondary education. Students also have the opportunity to participate in additional studies to prepare for study at the higher education level and complete the matriculation examination.

Formal IVET for non-certified trades: study in the non-certified trades usually takes place at an educational institution, i.e. there is usually no on-the-job training at a workplace. A wide variety of study programmes are counted as non-certified trades such as: agriculture and horticulture; livestock and fish farming; drafting, computer studies; design; massage; travel services; and commercial, secretarial and office studies. Most of this training is offered at state schools (the same as offer certified training), although private schools have grown here and become more numerous.

Final examinations in non-certified trades are generally not as well defined as in certified trades and the certificate awarded does not confer the right to perform a certain occupation.

0404 - APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

The definition of apprenticeship training is that students spend some part (usually 1/4th to 1/3rd) of total study time in work-place training. Apprentices can be aged 16 to over 40 although most are aged 20-25 when they graduate. Apprenticeship is a regulated part of certified training. Approximately 4 times as many men participate in apprenticeship programmes as women.

An apprenticeship can start either at school or at a workplace with which a student has a training contract. The most common rule is to start at school, then undertake workplace training (which lasts 4-36 months) which ends with an assessment of their skills. During this time the trainee carries out a broad range of tasks introducing all the most common subjects of the trade. Studies at schools and on-the-job training at a workplace are based on the National Curriculum Guidelines (*Aðalnámskrá framhaldsskóla*) and rules concerning workplace instruction in the occupation concerned.

A special training contract for workplace instruction is concluded between a school and the workplace or an apprenticeship contract between the student and employer. The apprenticeship contract is signed at the commencement of workplace instruction. It specifies the trial period and contract duration. Provisions concerning wages and other working conditions are in accordance with collective bargaining agreements for apprentices in the occupation concerned. A regulation, issued by the Minister for Education contains provisions concerning contracts for on-the-job training.

IVET that confers certified qualifications: has always involved some on-the-job training and comprises: study in certified trades; study within the health care system; study for officers of air and sea transportation; and study for law enforcement.

Studies usually take four years and are completed with a journeyman's exam: a prerequisite for pursuing the trade in question. An apprentice who has completed the journeyman's examination can become a master craftsman after a year of work experience and advanced studies at a vocational school. A master craftsman has the right to supervise work in his field.

Students can also participate in additional studies to prepare for higher education and to complete the matriculation examination. Apprenticeship students can mainly choose from eight different fields: printing; construction and woodwork; tailoring; food-related industries; metalwork; electricity related trades; landscape gardening; and cosmetic trades. Each field is sub-divided into specialised programmes.

The school is responsible for basic education and the theoretical part of the course, whereas hands-on training takes place in the workplace. In many certified trades students can choose between alternative programmes.

IVET in the health care sector: health care studies vary considerably both in scope and structure as they are directed at conferring a variety of qualifications. However more emphasis is placed on general studies as the basis for specialised study than is the case in the certified trades. Certified studies within the health care system provide qualifications after 1 – 3 years of study (work-based training varies from 16 – 40 weeks).

IVET in the transport sector: the structure and duration of studies for officers of air and sea transportation vehicles are variable. Most common are within the field of ship navigation and engineering. The structure of training has been developed in Iceland and does not comply with the international qualification system. Each module of school based training plus sea time gives navigation certificates for different ship types or sizes.

IVET in the law enforcement sector: IVET as a law enforcement officer consists of two terms of study in school with at least eight months of on-the-job training between the first and second of these terms.

0405 - OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

No such programmes exist.

0406 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT POST-SECONDARY (NON TERTIARY)

LEVEL

Post-secondary IVET is still fairly limited, but growing. Different courses are offered at various institutions, all of which are public and provide certification for well-defined professions. The age of students varies because many have spent some years on the labour market.

Main pathways are:

- Certificates for a master of trade in certified trades. Students must have completed the journeyman's exam and have worked as journeymen for at least a year. Studies are business oriented with the focus on providing students with qualifications needed to oversee large projects and operate businesses. Studies are 2 terms at a school (both some comprehensive schools and industrial technical schools offer them) and complete with a master of trade exam which gives the graduate the right to train journeymen. Masters of trade can enter university directly;
- Assistant nurses for the elderly. Students must have completed an exam and the matriculation exam. The programme is 2 semesters at school and some months in the workplace. Students graduate with a certificate that qualifies them to work in these institutions. The studies do not give additional rights to further studies;
- Marine engineering and captains 4th grade. Students must have completed 3rd grade and additional sea time. Studies are several months at a school and more sea time must be added. Certification gives unlimited rights to become a captain or a chief engineer. It also gives the right to enter university;
- Tour guides. Students must be aged at least 21 and have completed the matriculation exam and have an extensive knowledge of at least one foreign language. Studies take two semesters at a school, with visits to e.g. museums. A graduation certificate is necessary to become a certified tour guide. This does not give additional rights to commence tertiary education;
- Industrial technicians. Students must have completed at least half their upper secondary education in science.

Studies are two semesters at a special (private) technical school. Industrial technicians can progress to university;

- Some degrees in agriculture are also registered as post secondary education, even though the matriculation exam is not a prerequisite. Two agricultural schools offer these programmes, which most often are 4 semesters plus several months hands-on training at e.g. a farm.

0407 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT TERTIARY LEVEL

10 institutions offer IVET at tertiary level. Most of them are run by the state, but private parties with state support run three institutions. Students are required to have passed the matriculation examination, have finished other equivalent education or have, in the view of the university in question, acquired equivalent maturity and knowledge. Universities can impose further admission requirements, including admission tests.

Degrees on offer are bachelor, master and doctorate. Typical study time varies and it is common that people (re)enter university after several years of working.

Traditionally little distinction has been made between purely vocational and general studies at this level, although some programmes are obviously more work-related than others. The leaders in more practical programmes are the Bifrost School of Business, the Technical University of Iceland and the University of Akureyri, which offer a variety of programmes purely aimed at preparing students for specific professions. Two agricultural universities have also been established.

It is possible for students from comprehensive (*fjölbrautaskólar*) or grammar schools (*menntaskólar*) to enter tertiary level IVET and for graduates of vocational institutions to enter university. In most cases some additional studies are required to gain entry, but the general rule is that access is relatively easy.

It further complicates the picture that universities have gradually taken over studies which used to be vocational at upper secondary level. Because of this it is difficult to assess the number of students in tertiary IVET or with tertiary vocational qualifications.

Almost all study time at tertiary level is spent at university. The exception is in programmes for the healthcare sector where students spend several months working at a hospital or other health institution.

05 - CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

0501 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

CVET provision is mainly private and is designed to meet the training needs of enterprises and individuals. The largest change in recent years has been the increase in demand which is more the result of general growing interest than any change in government policy. Overall planning and forecasting has not taken place. With improvement in technology, distance education has flourished and many schools now offer a combination of distance and on-campus education and training.

CVET can be divided into:

- Further education and training for those already with some qualifications. This is conducted by schools and

training centres and is sometimes subsidised by employers and can give rights to a salary increase;

- Basic training for those with compulsory training or less. Unions have negotiated the establishment of a vocational training fund (*Starfsmennasjóður*), into which employers pay a certain percentage of salaries. Employees can get grants for training which can give them increased salaries or better working conditions;
- Training at the workplace. This is a growing field, even though it is mainly larger companies that provide it. The vocational training funds mentioned above can subsidise such training;
- Training for unemployed people. Unemployment offices advise unemployed people to seek further training, if this is deemed to increase their possibilities of getting a job. Specific rules stipulate how long people can participate in training without losing unemployment benefits;
- Hobby courses. There is a variety of provision of training for individual requirements and it has been very fashionable to undergo some sort of such training. Participants pay all costs and private companies carry out the training.

0502 - PUBLICLY PROMOTED CVET FOR ALL

Very little information has been gathered on this rapidly growing field and statistics are outdated.

CVET for certified trades is the only form of CVET which is offered at public schools and in only a limited number of fields. The Regional Lifelong Centres (*Símenntunarmiðstöðvar*) which are public and have been established in 9 places (1 per region) offer some CVET courses, although their main aims are more in the field of general education.

Otherwise CVET is private and unregulated. In some professions, there are schools or training centres belonging to social partners, which offer further specialisation or courses on new technologies. Certificates usually do not give any specific rights to jobs, even though they can make it easier to find well paid jobs.

No official quality assurance is in place, but guidelines are in progress and likely to be ready in 2007.

0503 - TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHERS VULNERABLE TO EXCLUSION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

As unemployment levels have been very low for a long time, there are not many education and training opportunities for unemployed people that are not also open to everyone else. Employment counsellors at local employment offices (*Svæðismiðlanir*) under the Directorate of Labour (*Vinnumálastofnun*) can advise an unemployed person to undergo training if they think it will increase the likelihood of finding a job. Unemployed people who undergo training do so mostly at private training centres and the state subsidises the training.

The main rules for training without losing unemployment benefits are:

- After 3 months of unemployment a person can attend part time training but is then obliged to take any job they are offered for the remaining part of the day;
- After 6 months of unemployment a person can participate in 3 months full time training;
- After 12 months of unemployment a person can participate in full time training for one semester (around 3 months) on full benefits and another semester on half benefits.

According to the labour force survey in 2003, about 19% of unemployed people had participated in CVET in 2003, including courses, lectures or other kind of education with a teacher/mentor.

	NUMBER OF PROVIDERS	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	% OF PARTICIPANTS
PUBLIC PROVIDERS	37	2,653	53.3
PRIVATE PROVIDERS	34	1,078	21.6
LEARNING CENTRES	17	1,170	23.5
VARIOUS PROVIDERS	No information	79	1.6
TOTAL	88	4,980	100.0

Source: Vinnumálastofnun, 2004

There are no specific measures for quality control for training for unemployed people.

0504 - CVET AT THE INITIATIVE OF ENTERPRISES OR SOCIAL PARTNERS

There has been an increase in training promoted by social partners since 2000, when the first labour market contracts on vocational training funds (*Starfsmenntasjóður*) was established. In 2006, almost all employers were paying into such funds (usually a certain percentage of their total salary bill). Employees can seek scholarships to study.

The rules between funds differ but the most common form is that each employee gradually amasses an amount that they can use (usually as a subsidy rather than to cover the whole cost). Employers can also apply for grants from these funds to train their employees.

No recent statistics are available on training promoted by social partners and the latest survey from 1998 would give misleading information and will not be quoted here. Iceland did not participate in the CVET2 survey.

0505 - CVET AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

CVET of any kind has been very popular in recent years. Even though specific information is not available for this unregulated field, it appears that the biggest group seeks general education rather than VET. Re-education courses at universities have expanded rapidly, especially for language courses which seem to be popular. The availability of vocational courses is much smaller and the aim seems to be towards increased specialisation or re-training at special schools (see 0504).

06 - TRAINING VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

0601 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN VET

Table 1: Types of Teacher/Trainer roles in VET.	
TYPE OF TEACHER/TRAINER	ROLES
Practical subject teacher	Curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and general tuition in schools
Vocational theory subject teacher	Curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and hands-on tuition in schools
General subject teacher	Curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and general tuition in schools
Work-place trainers	Hands-on tuition at a work-place
Special education teachers	Curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and general tuition in schools
Special education trainers	Theoretical and hands-on tuition in schools
Teachers and trainers in the private sector	As this field is completely unregulated, detailed information on their roles does not exist but many of them would deal with curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and general tuition

PRACTICAL SUBJECT TEACHERS TEACH IN WORKSHOP SETTINGS.

Vocational theory subject teachers teach in classroom settings. Generally, vocational teachers in the upper secondary school system teach both vocational theory and practical subjects.

General subject teachers teach subjects such as languages and life and study skills.

Work-place trainers teach on-the-job training.

Special education teachers and trainers teach general and practical subjects in special education classes.

Primary school, lower and upper secondary school teachers become certified teachers according to law 86/1998 of the Ministry of Education. Other teaching occupations are not regulated by law and then those teaching are referred to as instructors or trainers.

0602 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN IVET

The table below lists all types of teaching occupation within the upper secondary school system and their place of work:

Table 1: Types of teaching occupation within the upper secondary school system and their place of work			
TYPE OF OCCUPATION	PLACE OF WORK	PRE-SERVICE TRAINING	IN SERVICE TRAINING
Practical subject teacher	Comprehensive schools (<i>fjölbraitaskólar</i>), industrial-vocational schools (<i>iðnskólar</i>) and specialised vocational schools (<i>sérskólar</i>)	Training in a particular subject and pedagogical training at university	No official requirement but there is pressure from teachers and schools for frequent updating of skills. Training is available at universities.
Vocational theory subject teacher	Comprehensive schools, industrial-vocational schools and specialised vocational schools	Vocational qualification plus pedagogical training at a university	No official requirement but there is pressure from teachers and schools for frequent updating of skills. Training is available at specialised institutions.
General subject teacher	Comprehensive schools, industrial-vocational schools and specialised vocational schools	Teachers' education at university.	No official requirement but there is pressure from teachers and schools for frequent updating of skills. Training is available at universities.
Work-place trainers	Enterprises	Masters of craft in their profession.	No official requirements but they need to keep abreast of new technology. Training is available at specialised institutions.
Special education teachers	Comprehensive schools and industrial-vocational schools	Vocational qualifications plus pedagogical training at a university.	No official requirement but there is pressure from teachers and schools for frequent updating of skills. Training is available at universities.
Special education trainers	Comprehensive schools and industrial-vocational schools	Vocational qualifications.	No official requirement but there is pressure from teachers and schools for frequent updating of skills.

			Training is available at universities.
Special education trainers	Comprehensive schools and industrial-vocational schools	Some vocational qualification but no teachers' licence	No official requirement.

Practical subject teachers and vocational theory subject teachers teach in workshop settings and vocational theory subject teachers teach in classroom settings. Generally, vocational teachers in the upper secondary school system teach both vocational theory and practical subjects.

General subject teachers teach subjects such as languages and life and study skills.

Work-place trainers: On-the-job training.

Special education teachers and trainers: General and practical subjects in special education classes.

0603 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN CVET

In CVET the scope of teachers and trainers is very wide and mostly unregulated. Most organized CVET is conducted by training centres owned jointly by social partners in each certified trade. The centres do not have any formal requirements for employment as teaching staff. An exception to this is if the training centre also plays a formal role in the official vocational education system (for example, when it carries out all or part of training and assessment for the master's certificate in a trade).

	TYPES OF SCHOOLS OR INSTITUTIONS	PRE-SERVICE TRAINING	IN-SERVICE TRAINING
TEACHERS	Vocational schools (<i>starfsmenntaskólar</i>) and (social partners') training centres	Same as teachers in IVET, i.e. university degree in education and specialisation in a general or vocational field.	Same as teachers in IVET, i.e. no official demands are made but possibilities are many.
TRAINERS	Vocational schools, training centres and enterprises	Usually experts in their fields but do not have a degree in education.	No formal demands and training is voluntary and individual.

07 - SKILLS AND COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGY

0701 - MECHANISMS FOR THE ANTICIPATION OF SKILL NEEDS

Vocational Councils (*Starfsgreinaráð*) are appointed for all regulated occupations or occupational groups in which education and training are offered. They work with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*Menntamálaráðuneytið*) and define occupational needs in terms of the knowledge and skills required of skilled employees. They also set out the objectives of vocational study and make proposals concerning the structure of vocational studies, the curriculum in special subjects, the form and methods of evaluation, and monitor the quality of instruction and instructional materials. They try to forecast future training needs. No summary of such forecasts is available.

0702 - BRIDGING PATHWAYS AND NEW EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

A main reason for establishing comprehensive schools back in the 1980s was to create closer links between VET and general education.

It has also become easier for VET students to enter universities. Students at comprehensive schools can take the matriculation exam which grants direct access to university. Journeymen, who do not have the matriculation exam, can take a bridging course of 2 semesters and can enter university upon its completion

0703 - RENEWAL OF CURRICULA

In certified trades curricula is developed by VET schools on the basis of guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education. These are in turn drawn up in cooperation between the Ministry and the Vocational Councils, which are appointed by social partners. In uncertified trades the schools are free to draw up their curricula. Demand for new elements in the curricula come both from the Vocational Councils and from the labour market generally.

With improved technology distance learning has multiplied and many schools offer a combination of distance and on-site learning. This is especially important for rural schools which can now offer studies at tertiary level through links to the universities in Reykjavík and Akureyri.

08 - ACCUMULATING, TRANSFERRING AND VALIDATING LEARNING

0801 - VALIDATION OF FORMAL LEARNING: GENERAL CONCEPTS AND SCHEMES

Validation arrangements depend on whether the qualification is in a certified or non-certified trade. In certified trades the legal framework is very specific and strict. The law on upper secondary education stipulates that Vocational Councils define what each journeyman must know to pass their final exams. The exam is conducted by a board of masters in the trade in question. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture passes further regulations on the exam in each trade. Exams for sea officers are strictly controlled by the Ministry of Fisheries.

In uncertified trades, schools set and assess the exam, in some cases according to guidelines from a ministry, in others completely at their own discretion.

0802 - VALIDATION AND RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

As yet, there is no validation of informal or non-formal learning but work on such guidelines is in progress by the Education and Training Service Centre (Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífins).

09 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR LEARNING, CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT

0901 - STRATEGY AND PROVISION

Professions in educational and vocational guidance are relatively new. School counselling and guidance within the educational system have been the most important but vocational guidance within the Public Employment Services and guidance within human resource departments of enterprises, has grown considerably. The importance of creating lifelong learning opportunities for all citizens has put new challenges on the guidance profession and this new situation has forced guidance counsellors to look for solutions to update their resources, methods and ideology to serve their clients better and maintain professionalism.

In the broad sense, guidance has mostly been the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*Menntamálaráðuneytið*), but the Ministry of Social Services (*Félagsmálaráðuneytið*) have developed vocational guidance within the Public Employment Services. Other actors who have influenced the development of guidance are, for example, local authorities, guidance experts, trade unions, employers and various associations including the Association of Guidance Counsellors (*Félag náms- og starfsráðgjafa*). The division of guidance affairs is based upon different clients, different subjects, different settings and different ways of funding. No formal channels exist for the co-operation of the actors responsible, but most innovations have occurred when ministries, professionals and social partners combine resources.

Guidance services within the educational system and the Public Employment Services are free and state funded. Guidance and counselling in other settings is contracted, subsidised or free, apart from privately run profit organisations. Guidance counsellors work in all these environments.

0902 - TARGET GROUPS AND MODES OF DELIVERY

Guidance services are included in legislation for school pupils and students as well as for people registered with the Public Employment Services. Their role and responsibilities, however, are vaguely expressed. For compulsory level schooling, all local municipalities (who administrate that school level), are obliged to provide school counselling services. The same legislation also stipulates that schools are supposed to provide students with career guidance and an introduction to educational pathways and occupations to facilitate their career decisions. Requirements for staff providing special educational services, including school counselling, are broadly defined and do not mention guidance counsellors particularly.

The Ministry of Social Services (*Félagsmálaráðuneytið*) is responsible for providing information, guidance and counselling within the Public Employment Services to all those who seek assistance (unemployed or otherwise). The Directorate of Labour (*Vinnumálastofnun*) supervises and co-ordinates a network of nine Employment Services located in the main regions of Iceland. Their main tasks are defined according to legislation on Labour Market Measures, to assist job-applicants and unemployed people and to provide information or counselling on career development, career pathways and educational or vocational opportunities. In other regulations more details are provided on the implementation and procedure of counselling for job seekers. The Ministry of Social Affairs also supports the role of occupational counselling for the handicapped as a part of their rehabilitation programme.

0903 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PERSONNEL

At upper secondary level a guidance job profile is outlined in regulations. There it is stipulated that guidance counsellors must have completed a diploma in school counselling from a university and have teachers credentials or work experience as teacher at upper secondary level. The main tasks of guidance counsellors are described according to seven categories. Such categorisations are to guarantee quality within the guidance profession.

A post graduate School Counselling Programme is offered within the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Iceland. This is a 9 month programme that consists of 34 credits. Twelve students are accepted into the programme each year and to be admitted, applicants must have either a Bachelor's degree in education or psychology or in another field with a teacher's certificate.

A five semester distance educational programme is offered to staff working within the employment sector in cooperation with the Ministries of Education and Social Services.

10 - FINANCING - INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

1001 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRAINING

The funding structure for VET has not changed for many decades. The basic principle is that almost all funding for IVET comes from the state, through the Ministries of Education, Science and Culture, Fisheries and Agriculture. Even private schools receive their funding in part from the state.

There are no laws regarding financial contributions from social partners but with growing demands for CVET their contribution has multiplied in recent years. Their main

contribution is in the form of wages for apprentices. Many social partner organisations have established common funds to pay for employers' continuing education and training.

1002 - FUNDING FOR INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Table 1: Funding for initial vocational education and training.		
TYPES OF IVET	INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR FUNDING	PAY FOR*
CERTIFIED TRADES	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	Education and training at schools
	Social Partners	Apprentices' salaries
	Individuals	School fees and study material
SEA OFFICERS	Ministry of Fisheries	Education and training at schools
	Fishing or cargo fleet	Salaries for trainees at sea
	Individuals	School fees and study material
HEALTH AND WELFARE PROFESSIONALS	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	Education and training at schools
	Ministry of health	Salaries for trainees at hospitals
	Individuals	School fees and study material
PROFESSIONALS IN AGRICULTURE	Ministry of Agriculture	Education and training at schools
	Agricultural sector	Salaries to trainees
	Individuals	School fees and study material
POLICE OFFICERS	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.	Education and training at schools plus salaries of trainees
	Individuals	School fees and study material
PILOTS	Individuals	Pay all costs
NON-CERTIFIED TRADES	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	Some of the training at schools
	Individuals	School fees and study material

*Precise information is not available on each partner's share of funding contribution.

The main changes which have occurred during the last few decades are that overall funding has increased rapidly and that individuals gradually pay more for their training than before. This is because there are now more private institutions and because training at public schools has become more expensive.

1003 - FUNDING FOR CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND ADULT LEARNING

The total public expenditure in CVT has risen rapidly over the last decade or so, and no accurate figures are readily available at the moment.

Table 1: Funding for continuing vocational education and training, and adult learning.		
TYPES OF CVET	INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR FUNDING	PAY FOR*
PUBLICLY PROVIDED CVET	Ministries of Education, Fisheries and Agriculture	Education and training at schools. Contributes to vocational training funds operated by social partners
	Social Partners	Costs training at schools run by different trades or industries
	Individuals	School fees and study material
ENTERPRISE-BASED CVET	Social partners (enterprises or vocational study funds that belong to the employees)	Pay all costs

*Precise information is not available on each partner's share of funding contribution.

1004 - FUNDING FOR TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHER GROUPS EXCLUDED FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

Because of the low level of unemployment, funding for training for unemployed people is limited. The Directorate of Labour (*Vinnumálastofnun*), which falls under the Ministry for Social Services (*Félagismálaráðuneytið*), is responsible for providing some funds through the local unemployment offices (*Svæðismiðlanir*), where counsellors assess whether or not training may help a person to get a job. Usually such training is partly paid for by unemployed people and there are strict rules as to who can get a subsidy.

1005 - PERSPECTIVES AND ISSUES: FROM FUNDING TO INVESTING IN HUMAN RESOURCES

In 2006 work commenced on the restructuring of VET. As yet, no information is available on the future structure of VET or its funding.

11 - EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS, TOWARDS AN OPEN AREA OF LIFELONG LEARNING

1101 - NATIONAL STRATEGIES RELATED TO POLICY PRIORITIES, PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES AT EU LEVEL

Even though Iceland is not in the EU many of its rules and regulations have been adopted into national law. In VET, principles such as lifelong learning, transparency and transnational accreditation of skills have been favourably viewed by the state, although few concrete provisions have been made. On the other hand, the private sector has adopted the principle of lifelong learning, which is very fashionable in all sectors.

1102 - IMPACT OF EUROPEANISATION/INTERNATIONALISATION ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Tuition of foreign languages is a core element in all VET. This has been necessary, both because of foreign textbooks students must read and also because new trends tend to come from abroad. Two foreign languages (English and a Nordic language – usually Danish) are obligatory and in some professions a third language is required.

Many students travel to other countries to receive parts of their education and training. This is especially if they want to add further specialisation to the education they have acquired in Iceland. The easiest access is in other Nordic countries and the biggest group studies in Denmark.

New technology has been utilised to its fullest potential in all education and training, something which is popular in a nation that prides itself on owning most computers per capita in the world and have the best internet access.