



Research Liaison Office

UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

Iceland

Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System

2008

eKnowVet – Thematic Overviews



CEDEFOP

European Centre
for the Development
of Vocational Training

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This thematic overview is part of a series of reports on vocational education and training produced for each EU Member State plus Norway and Iceland by members of ReferNet, a network established by Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training).

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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 vocational education and training
5. Continuing vocational education and training for adults
6. Training VET teachers and trainers
7. Skills and competence development and innovative pedagogy
8. Accumulating, transferring and validating learning
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 has been updated in 2008 and its reference year is 2007. The latest versions can be viewed from October 2009 onwards at:

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/ where more detailed thematic information on the VET systems of the EU can also 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:

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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 its independence from Denmark. The system of government is based on the principle of the tripartite division of power. According to the Constitution the parliament '*Alþingi*' and the president jointly exercise legislative power. The President and other governmental authorities are entrusted with executive power and the judiciary with judicial power.

Parliament consists of 63 members elected for four years. The Prime Minister forms the government and leads the cabinet. Coalition governments are the conventional form and never in the history of the Republic has there been a one-party majority government, and rarely minority governments. The President of the republic is elected for four years by a plebiscite and has functions similar to those of a constitutional monarch.

In 2008 the country was divided into 79 municipalities. The municipal councils are elected by universal suffrage with four years interval, in municipalities with over 300 inhabitants by proportional representation, in others by simple majority. There is great disparity in population; the population of the largest municipality, the capital Reykjavík, had 116.642 inhabitants on 1 December 2007, while some of the smaller rural districts had population of fewer than 50 (Source: *Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga* (The Association of Icelandic Municipalities: <http://www.samband.is/template1.asp?Id=1876>).

Since 2000, there has been massive immigration to Iceland and at the end of 2008 21.434 people of foreign citizenship were registered living in the country, which was 6.8% of the total population (source: *Hagstofa Íslands* – Statistics Iceland). The number of immigrants was likely higher because several hundred foreigners have been granted Icelandic citizenship in recent years (e.g. 647 people were granted citizenship in 2007). The far biggest group (around half of all immigrants) comes from Poland but the immigrant community is from around 50 other countries. No detailed information is available as to the educational status of the immigrant population. Most immigrants stay only for short periods and do not bring their families but the number of foreign children and young people in need of education and training has gradually been growing. A massive effort has been put into teaching Icelandic to foreign children and grown-ups alike and both the state and social partners have allocated considerable amounts to fund this. There are several obstacles in this type of training:

- most immigrants speak only their mother-tongues;
- knowledge of their languages is limited in the native population;
- especially the smallest municipalities (responsible for compulsory education) have faced problems in getting trained teachers who can at least communicate with the foreign children;

- the immigrants often work very long hours;
- some of them intend to leave Iceland after a relatively short period of time and are therefore not very interested in learning the language.

Despite these difficulties, hundreds of immigrants have obtained some sort of a graduation exam in Icelandic and have repeatedly asked in the media for opportunities of using the language rather than Icelanders constantly switching over to English.

0102 - POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Country size: 103.000 km²

The population has been growing slightly for the past many years and on the 1st January 2008 it was 313.376 (source: *Hagstofa* (Statistic Iceland) <http://www.statice.is/>).

As can be seen in the table below, the youngest cohort is still relatively big, even though the oldest cohort is the fastest growing and has been for many years. The large size group of people between 25 and 59 is among others things, due to immigration.

Table 1: Age specific demographic trends 2008		
0-24	25-59	60+
111 542	151 556	50 278

Source: *Hagstofa Íslands* (Statistics Iceland): <http://www.statice.is/>

The massive immigration in recent years has greatly affected the Icelandic demography.

Table 2: Immigrants as % of the overall population					
YEAR	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008
TOTAL POPULATION	253 785	266 978	279 049	293 577	313 376
% PEOPLE WITH FOREIGN CITIZENSHIP	1.9	1.8	2.6	3.6	6.8

Source: *Hagstofa Íslands* (Statistics Iceland): <http://www.statice.is/>

When looking at the immigrant population in 2008, its young age as compared to the rest of the population is apparent. Over 73% of the group is of working age, whereas children and older people are very few.

Table 3: Age specific trends in the immigrant population		
0-24	25-59	60+
5 118 (23.88%)	15 659 (73.06%)	657 (3.06%)

Source: *Hagstofa Íslands* (Statistics Iceland): <http://www.statice.is/>

The population is still expected to grow as far into the future as the Statistical bureau is willing to predict. This growth is expected in all age groups as can be seen in the table below, but the biggest growth is expected in the oldest cohort.

Table 4: Age specific demographic trends					
AGE SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS					
0 - 24	108.774	113.042	118.117	121.692	127.014
25 - 59	136 705	152 648	154 964	157 534	158 567
60 +	45 091	53 432	62 664	73 479	83 754

Source: *Hagstofa Íslands* (Statistics Iceland): <http://www.statice.is/>

Iceland is very sparsely populated, which has great effects for its education and training. Especially people living outside the capital area cannot expect a great variety of educational offers, unless they migrate. During recent decades, schools' authorities have tried to increase their offer by distance education and by offering students the possibility to take parts of their upper secondary education in their home villages, which postpones the decision of whether to migrate to the capital area. Tertiary education offers have greatly increased in recent years and parliament has earmarked more resources to that sector than was the case a few years ago.

0103 - ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

As in most other European countries, the service sector is by far the biggest and fastest growing.

Table 1. Economic composition by sector: 2007	
AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES	5.92%
MANUFACTURING	20.64 %
SERVICE	73.10%

Source: *Hagstofa Íslands* (Statistics Iceland): <http://www.statice.is/>

The employment rate has been one of the highest in Europe for many years and 2007 was no exception as can be seen in the table below.

Table 2. Employment rate at the end of 2007	
MALE:	86.7%
FEMALE	76.4%
TOTAL	81.5%

Source: *Hagstofa Íslands* (Statistics Iceland): <http://www.statice.is/>

Unemployment rates are very low as can be seen in the table below. The number of women who are neither registered as employed or unemployed can be explained by the number of elderly women who have never been registered in the labour market and therefore have no rights to unemployment benefits. The relatively high percentage of young people registered as unemployed can be explained by the fact that many of them have worked for periods of time, which entitles them to unemployment benefits, and have later returned to schools.

Table 3. Unemployment rates: 2007	
TOTAL:	1.9%
MALE:	2.1%
FEMALE:	1.8%
UNDER 25:	6.2%

Source: *Hagstofa Íslands* (Statistics Iceland): <http://www.statice.is/>

Table 4. Percentage of GDP expenditure on education and training	
2006	8.3% (or 81 376 000 IKR)

Source: *Hagstofa Íslands* (Statistics Iceland): <http://www.statice.is/>

Information on private spending for education and training is not available. It is however known that this has increased considerably in recent years with the commencement of four private universities, some of which also operate departments on upper-secondary level.

0104 - EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION

As can be seen in the tables below, a relatively high percentage of the Icelandic working - age population only have compulsory education when compared to other nations in northern Europe. There are several reasons for this:

- for the oldest group, upper secondary and tertiary education were by no means everyone could expect to get; people had to be relatively talented, have parents who were reasonably well off and maybe be ready to leave their homes at a young age;
- for the youngest population, the problem is almost the opposite; there are numerous possibilities to choose from, not least the possibilities of getting a well paid job without having any education. This has especially been the case for young men;
- the third group are people with all sorts of learning difficulties, who gradually have been given more assistance and participate now, where possible, in general education and training rather than being in special schools as formerly (often dead-end) used to be the case.

Table 1. Population aged 25 to 64, by highest level of education attained, 2007							
	TOTAL	PRE-PRIMARY, PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION (ISCED LEVELS 0-2)		UPPER SECONDARY AND POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION (ISCED LEVELS 3-4)		TERTIARY EDUCATION (ISCED LEVELS 5-6)	
	TOTAL (1000)	TOTAL (1000)	%	TOTAL (1000)	%	TOTAL (1000)	%
EU27	268 116	77 859	29	125 857	47	62 688	23
IS (2006 DATA)	154	41	27	38	25	33	22

Source: Eurostat; EU Labour Force Survey; Cited: 27 May 2008

Table 2. Early school leavers: Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training[1]						
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
EU (27 COUNTRIES)	17.1	16.6	15.9	15.5	15.2	14.8
EU (25 COUNTRIES)	16.6	16.1	15.4	15.1	15	14.5
ICELAND	28.8	23 (p)	27.4 (p)	26.3 (p)	28.1 (p)	:

Source: Eurostat; EU Labour Force Survey; Cited: 29 May 2008

Special values:

(:) Not available

(p) Provisional value

[1] Short Description: Early school leavers refers to persons aged 18 to 24 in the following two conditions: the highest level of education or training attained is ISCED 0, 1, 2 or 3c short and respondents declared not having received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey (numerator). The denominator consists of the total population of the same age group, excluding no answers to the questions 'highest level of education or training attained' and 'participation to education and training'. Both the numerators and the denominators come from the EU Labour Force Survey.

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

0201 - OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

A major review has been undertaken during the last few years in revamping all laws on education and training. In 2008 four new laws on education and training were passed by parliament. At the time of writing this entry, the laws are too new to be able to draw any conclusions on what they will change in the system of education and training. Several aspects can be expected:

- there will be a gradually increased offer for pathways at all levels, which will increase students flexibility and options and (hopefully) minimise the polarisation between general and vocational education;
- the connection to the labour market will be much more direct and the labour market will have an increased say in the content, form and outcomes of education and training;
- there is a provision for a new 1 ½-2 year exam called 'the Upper Secondary School Exam', which is tied in with the state's new obligation of offering education to everyone until the age of 18. This may result in less upper secondary school drop-out.

In 2008 there is been a downwards trend in the Icelandic economy. At the time of this entry, it was too early to predict an increase in unemployment rates but enrolment figures to universities and upper secondary schools show that young people now expect it to be getting more difficult to get jobs without having at least some qualifications.

At the time of writing this entry, a new law on adult education and training was under preparation by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture but no information was available on its possible content.

The government's main policy for VET as a specific field within education and training is reflected in its general curricula for vocational education and training, which forms an integrated part of the curricula for upper-secondary education (based on law number 92 from 2008). The system of education and training is supposed to contribute towards the overall maturity of students and their active participation in a democratic society. Upper secondary schools shall prepare people for their future professions and further education and training. The school shall impart knowledge so that the students gain the

necessary competences to carry our specialised work (article 2) (source: <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>).

One of the major objectives at the policy making level has been that to move VET closer to general education with the establishment of comprehensive schools in the 1970s. In this way, it has been possible to graduate with a general certificate (the matriculation exam) and a VET degree. During the first semester of a vocational course, fields of study often are broad. For example, pupils opting for all professions in 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 in statistics as general education. This has been done to increase their status and offer more extensive education and training.

03 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK - PROVISION OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

0301 - LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Two laws set the framework for VET policy:

- the 2008 Upper Secondary School Act (*lög um framhaldsskóla* – number 92/2008) gives the right of any pupil who has completed compulsory or equivalent education or is 16 years of age to enter upper secondary school (which includes IVET), where they have the rights to study for at least two years (Source: Upper Secondary School Act 92/2008 article 32. In article 25 it is stipulated that Occupational Councils for different professions make curricula suggestions to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*menntamálaráðuneyti*) for each profession. (article 2) Source: <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>) and;
- the 1992 law on labour market training (*lög um starfsmenntun í atvinnulífinu* – the Act on Training in the Labour Market number 19/1992), which covers CVET, stresses the importance of increased education on the labour market. In the Compulsory School Act number 91/2008 it is stipulated that students have the right to partake in individual subjects at upper secondary level if they have shown the necessary skills (article 26) (Source: <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>).

In several labour market agreements between labour unions and employers signed since 2000 it was decided that each employer on the labour market is obliged to pay 0.05% of his/her salaries towards an education and training fund and all employers must pay 0.15% of the same amount. The state contributes to these funds through the Unemployment Security Fund (*Atvinnuleysistryggingarsjóður*).

Several such funds exist, classified according to occupations and/or skills. Employees can apply for training funds according to certain rules and employers can also apply for funds to give specific courses at the work-place. These funds have not only given a colossal boost towards continuous training but also made it an accepted fact that people resume their education and training at any age.

NAME	FOR WHOM	ESTABLISHED IN	WEB ADDRESS
<i>Landsmennt</i>	Unskilled workers outside the capital area	2000	http://landsmennt.is
<i>Starfsafl</i>	Unskilled workers in the capital area	2000	www.starfsafl.is
<i>Starfsmenntasjóður verslunar- og skrifstofufólks</i>	Office and shop employees	2000	www.starfsmennt.is
<i>Starfsmennt fræðslusetur</i>	State employees in the capital area	2001	http://smennt.is/
<i>Sjómennt</i>	Semen	2002	www.sjomennt.is
<i>Ríkismennt SGS</i>	State employees outside the capital area	2005	www.rikismennt.is
<i>Sveitamennt SGS og LN</i>	Municipalities' employees outside the capital area	2007	www.sveitamennt.is

0302 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: IVET

The EU's role in IVET is insignificant as Iceland is not a member of the Union.

The central government is in charge of all upper secondary and tertiary education (giving specific framework to private institutions). Different ministries roles can be seen in the table below:

MINISTRY	RESPONSIBILITY
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND CULTURE (MENNTAMÁLARÁÐUNEYTI)	Bears the overall responsibility for almost all upper secondary education and training, including VET. This means that the Ministry is in charge of drafting and billing different acts on education and training, it coordinates the input of all other relevant actors and that it is responsible for passing the necessary regulations, etc. for the acts to be relevant. The Ministry furthermore bears the responsibility of overseeing quality in education and training and is in charge of distributing funds to the schools and training centres
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SERVICES (FÉLAGSMÁLARÁÐUNEYTI)	Bears the formal (legal) responsibility for training in the labour market according to <i>lög um starfsmenntun í atvinnulífínu</i> – the Act on Training in the Labour Market number 19/1992. In real terms this means mainly education and training of the unemployed (through <i>Vinumálastofnun</i> – The Directorate of Labour and the local employment offices)

Regional and local authorities play no role in IVET as they are responsible for compulsory education only and at that level, no IVET is on offer.

The Occupational Councils (*starfsgreinaráð*) are the strongest link to the industry. Article 24 of the Upper Secondary School Act stipulates that:

- The Minister of Education, Science and Culture shall appoint, for four years at a time, Occupational Councils for occupational groups or individual occupations. Each Occupational Council shall be comprised of five to nine representatives out of which two to four shall be nominated by federations of employers, two to four by federations of employees from the relevant occupations and one representative jointly nominated by the Association of Icelandic Upper Secondary Schools and the Icelandic Teachers' Union. Alternates shall be appointed in the same way;
- The Occupational Councils shall elect a chair and a vice-chair from among the representatives for a two year term. The nominating parties shall bear the cost of participation by their representatives in the Occupational Council. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture shall bear the cost of specialist assistance in compiling curriculum guides.

Article 27 states that, the role of the Occupational Committee shall be to advise the Minister of Education, Science and Culture regarding policy making and implementation of vocational education, to serve as platform for collaboration and coordination for the Occupational Councils, and to provide opinion of categorisation and division of occupations between Occupational Councils.

Employers also bear the responsibility of giving their apprentices a complete hands-on experience (placements) in their respective fields.

Non-governmental organisations play no role in IVET.

Apprenticeship training is the most common form of VET. Some relatively new professions (e.g. computer studies) are however exclusively taught at schools.

Upper secondary schools can be divided into two main types; those who offer some sort of vocational education and training and those who do not (grammar schools):

- grammar schools, offering only general education. Graduates can enter universities but do not have direct rights to certain jobs;
- schools offering vocational education and training. Most of these schools offer a combination of general and vocational education and training, where students can graduate with a general degree, a vocational degree or both.

Graduates with general education (Matriculation exam) can enter universities but do not have direct rights to certain jobs. Those who graduate with vocational education and training can be divided into two groups: those with legally recognised certified qualification and those who have not. In the former case, graduation is a pre-requisite getting a job as a skilled journeyman. In the latter, anyone can take up the trade in question, although those who graduate from these studies have priorities over those who do not. In reality, it is rare for an unqualified person to get such a job. In order to enter universities, vocational students must add on to their general education. Where the schools do not offer the possibility of taking the Matriculation exam, students can add the necessary addition in other schools.

Some universities now offer specific tuition for those who want to enter universities but are without the matriculation exam.

0303 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: CVET

The EU's role in CVET is more indirect than direct as Iceland is not a member of the Union. Some of the EU's policies, especially the lifelong learning policy have however influenced the interest in CVET and is expected to influence the adult education and training bill under preparation in 2007. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture was at the time of writing this text involved in what is called "open method of coordination", where hundreds of relevant partners have been called in for debating how a lifelong learning strategy, in similar lines with the one adopted by the EU, could be put in place. The final finding of this method will be presented at a conference in February 2009.

Table 1. Main players from the central government	
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND CULTURE (http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is)	in charge of policy development in CVET as in all other issues of education and training: in charge of the curricula for officially recognized education and training
THE OCCUPATIONAL COUNCIL (http://www.starfsmenntarad.is), INTO WHICH SOCIAL PARTNERS ALSO NOMINATE REPRESENTATIVES	award grants for vocational training and acts in an advisory capacity to the authorities on policy and methods in the field of vocational training
THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS (FÉLAGSMÁLARÁÐUNEYTI - http://www.felagsmalaraduneyti.is/). THE DIRECTORATE OF LABOUR SERVES UNDER THE MINISTRY	officially in charge of education and training on the labour market
THE DIRECTORATE OF LABOUR (http://www.vinnumalastofnun.is/)	in charge of unemployment registration and public employment offices

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture coordinates the work of all public actors in education and training and makes sure that there is no overlapping in the work of different partners.

Municipalities may assist indirectly with CVET when they offer subsidised housing for courses.

Various interest groups often offer e.g. lectures and seminar in their fields. Many social partners have established formal training centres for different fields. *Iðan fræðslusetur* is the biggest of those, offering CVET for the building, transport, food, metal and IT sectors. NGO's offer courses in e.g. handicraft and leisure courses.

CVET PROVIDERS

CVET is provided by a wide variety of organisations and has many forms and features. The main providers are:

- Public VET schools where people of any age can (re)commence studies;
- Private companies (e.g. schools and training centres owned by social partners and/or private individuals);
- Lifelong Learning Centres (publicly owned and operated by public bodies in cooperation with social partners);
- Centres of the training of the unemployed (public institutions under the Directorate of Labour);
- Workplaces (private and public).

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 post compulsory education. It also monitors that educational laws and regulations are followed.

COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Compulsory education extends to primary and lower secondary levels and includes in principle children from the ages of six to sixteen. It is divided into ten grades.

Compulsory education provides school leavers with no formal qualifications, but they may enter the labour market after completion, usually for occupations requiring no specific qualifications such as working in shops and fast food places, factories, assisting in gardening and with caretaking of children and the elderly through the social services (this is a substantial market). However, far most school leavers (around 93% of each cohort) enter upper-secondary schools straight after the completion of 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 IVET form is apprenticeship where 1/4th to 1/3rd is of total study time is spent at a work-place.

VET is not as popular as general education as can be seen in table 1 below and it is not uncommon that students start first in general education and then move to VET. Since the 1970s it has been made easier to change paths or to graduate with double qualifications.

	GENERAL SUBJECTS %	VET%
TOTAL	71.90	28.10
MALE	63.04	36.96
FEMALE	79.68	20.32

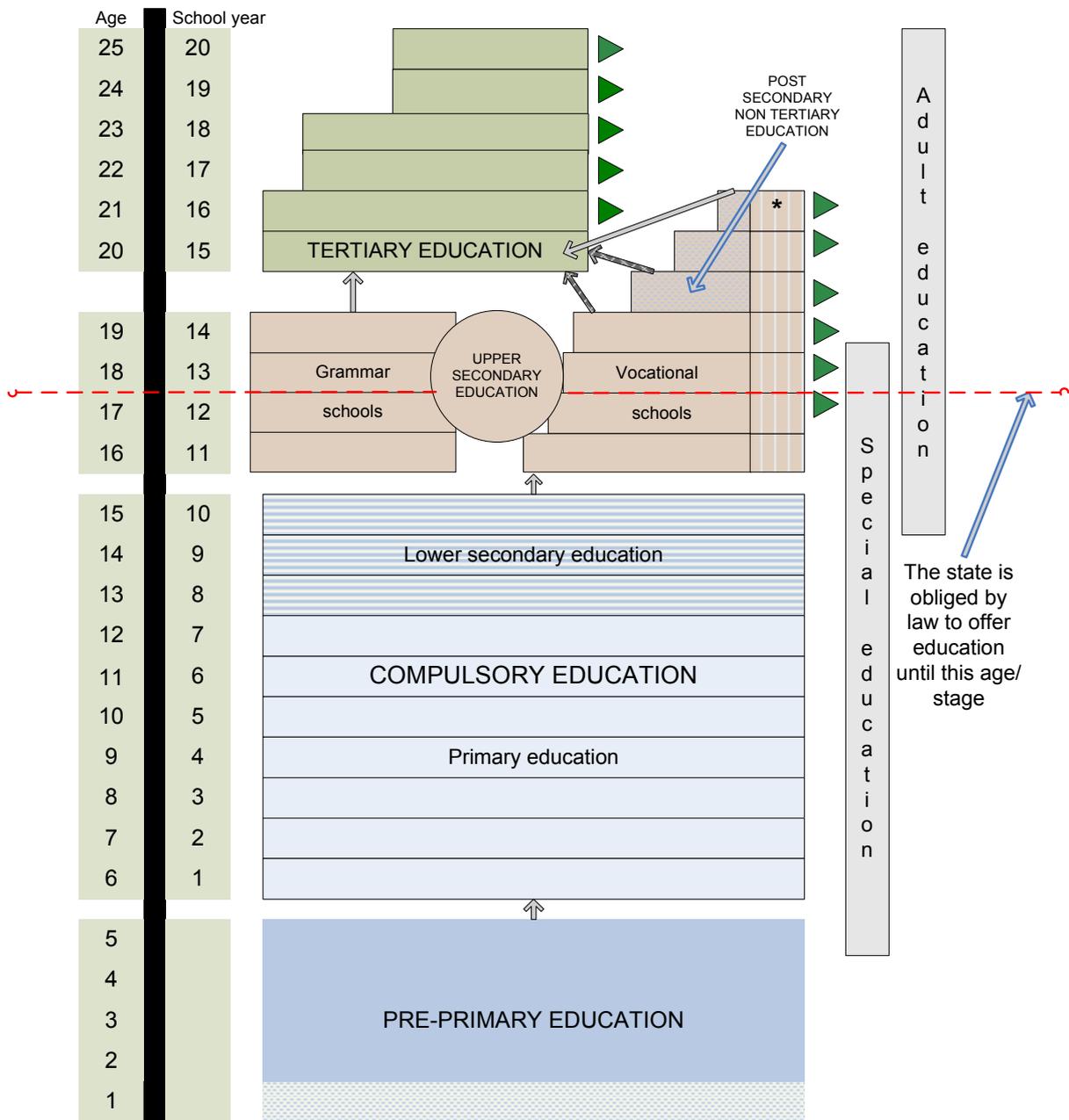
The main providers of VET are schools which offer a combination of general and vocational education and training, where students can graduate with a general degree, a vocational degree or both. Graduates with general education (Matriculation exam) can enter universities but do not have direct rights to certain jobs. Those who graduate with vocational education and training can be divided into two groups: those with legally recognised certified

qualification and those who have not. In the former case, graduation is a prerequisite to getting a job as a skilled journeyman. In the latter, anyone can take up the trade in question, although those who graduate from these studies have priorities over those who do not. In reality, it is rare for an unqualified person to get such a job.

In order to enter universities, vocational students must add on to their general education. Where the schools do not offer the possibility of taking the Matriculation exam, students can add the necessary addition in other schools.

Please find below the diagram of the Icelandic education and training system.

THE ICELANDIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM



- ▶ Entry into the labour market
- * Workplace training, length and timing depends on subjects
- ⇨ Open access
- ⇨ Access depending on additional courses or exams

0402 - IVET AT LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL

Several courses that can be classified as lower secondary education are on offer. They all fall outside the official system of education and training and complete information on these does not exist and statistics has not been gathered. These courses could also be classified as continuous education and training. The following are some examples:

- licences to drive heavy vehicles and operate heavy machinery. Students must be at least 21 years old and have a regular drivers' licence. Courses are offered for different types of vehicles (e.g. trucks and lorries, busses and heavy machines) where each vehicle is studied through books. Students are tested both in the theoretical part and in handling the vehicle in question. The qualification obtainable are the necessary prerequisite for handling the vehicles in question;
- courses offered by *Nýsköpunarmiðstöð Íslands* (the Icelandic Innovation centre), a public institution belonging to the Ministry of Trade and Industry. These courses are mostly tailor-made for different companies, teaching their workers e.g. to use new technology and/or ways of interacting. The courses do not give formal qualifications but the companies may put them as a prerequisite for getting or maintaining a job. The Centre also offers courses open to everyone in issues such as project management or personal leadership. Students at these courses tend to be university graduates who feel the need of adding their degree. Students' age varies a lot, and is between 20 and 65;
- *Stóriðjuskólinn* (The Heavy Industry School) offers workers at the aluminium smelter in *Straumsvík* a 3 semester part-time training which leads to increase in both responsibilities and salaries. The credits accumulated at the school can furthermore be used at upper schools, should students wish to continue studying. In 2008, when the school celebrated its 10th anniversary, 183 students had completed the lowest level of qualifications on offer and 11 with the highest level. Students are of all ages (25-60) and both sexes and the studies are conducted at classrooms (theoretical), at different stations of the workplace and by visits to companies which work in cooperation with the smelter;
- private courses of various lengths in e.g. IT which give some limited rights on the job market.

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

Anyone who has completed compulsory or equivalent education or is at least 16 years old has the right to enter upper secondary school. There, they have the rights to study at least for two years (Upper Secondary School Act 93/2008 article 32). The duration of study programmes can be between two semesters and four years. 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. To take an example, training for the building sector starts

with combined courses for house builders, furniture makers, painters, masons, wall-papering and technical drawing. After the first term of such common studies, students specialise.

The times between school-based training and training taken at a work-place varies a lot between sectors. In e.g. the building sector students spend 1-2 years at workplaces whereas in e.g. IT, they undertake all their training at the schools. Similarly, the balance between general and vocational subjects varies. In short VET courses, there tends to be a strong emphasis on VET related subjects whereas the longer studies (e.g. the 4 year journeyman's exam) puts much more emphasis on general subjects such as languages and mathematics.

Vocational training at the upper secondary level can be divided into two main categories: vocational training which confers legally recognised certified qualification (a) and training which does not lead to certified qualifications (b).

a) Vocational training that confers certified qualifications include the journeyman's exam in regulated professions, vocational study within the health-care system, study for sea officers and pilots and study of law enforcement officers. This type of study is generally divided between the school and the workplace, where the schools are responsible for basic education and the theoretical part of vocational training, whereas hands-on training takes place in the workplace. This type of training is offered by industrial vocational schools, comprehensive schools and specialised schools.

b) Vocational education at the upper secondary level that is formally recognised but does not confer a monopoly to a certain trade differs in structure to that of regulated professions. Study in the non-regulated professions 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-regulated professions 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 schools which offer certified training), although private schools have become more numerous in the past decade.

Upper secondary schools generally hold examinations at the end of every semester. For the regulated professions, there is also the overarching journeyman's exam at the end of upper secondary education. Journeymen (and some other groups of vocational students) have the opportunity of additional studies in order to be eligible to study at universities. Final examinations in non-regulated professions are generally not as well defined as in the regulated professions and the certificate awarded by the school does most often not confer the sole right to perform a certain occupation.

Many vocational qualifications give access rights to general education and training at upper-secondary level.

As can be seen in the table below, the percentage of students in vocational programmes is much lower than in the EU countries as a whole. The percentage of female students in VET is one of the lowest in Europe (just over 30%), whereas male VET students are just over 40% of the cohort.

The reasons for low interest in VET are many. To name a few:

- there is a great interest in university education, especially among girls who were in 2007 67.1% of university graduates (Source: *Hagstofa Íslands*, <http://hagstofa.is/Pages/95?NewsID=2467>). Girls do much better in schools, from the earliest classes in compulsory schools through upper secondary schools and therefore have greater possibilities for a university education;
- general education has a higher social esteem than VET;
- many of the traditional women's subjects (e.g. nursing and social care) have been moved from upper secondary to tertiary level, which means that they are no longer classified as VET.

COUNTRIES	TOTAL ISCED 3	VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ISCED 3		
		VOCATIONAL (%)	PRE-VOCATIONAL (%)	VOCATIONAL AND PRE-VOCATIONAL (%)
EU27	26 036 676	55.9	4.6	60.5
EU25	24 597 064	55.5	4.9	60.4
IS	22 603	35.2	1.6	36.8

Source: Eurostat, UOE data collection; Cited: 26/05/2008

0404 - APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

The definition of apprenticeship training is that students spend some part (usually 1/4 to 1/3 of total study time, depending on subjects) in work-place training. The age scope of students in apprenticeship training is wide, from 16 to over 40, where most students are between 20 and 25 when they graduate. Apprenticeship is a regulated part of certified training. The training ends with a skills demonstration test (the journeyman's exam).

As with any other upper secondary education, students must be at least 16 years old when they commence their studies. Almost all apprenticeship training takes 8 semesters but the Upper Secondary School Act from 2008 opens the possibilities of offering shorter programmes.

Students can choose to complete their studies with a Matriculation exam, granting access to university, as well as their journeyman's exam (which may take a slightly longer time). For those who do not take the Matriculation exam,

it is possible to take a bridging course which grants access to university. With the Upper Secondary School Act from 2008 the state aims at making VET students' access to university more on par with general students but it remains to be seen how this will work in reality (some of the universities have stated that they do not want students who have less general education than the present Matriculation exam guarantees).

According to the Upper Secondary School act 92/2008, the school is responsible for making a special on-the-job training contract for workplace instruction with work-places that have previously been certified by the school in question and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture or other bodies contracted to do so by the Ministry. In the contract, the rights and obligations of the work-place, the school and the student are stipulated, as well as the objective with the training, quality control and the handling of possible dispute. If needed, a specific contract is between the student and employer, stipulating the student's/employee's salaries (according to labour market agreements) (Source: Upper Secondary School Act 92/2008 article 28). A regulation, issued by the Minister for Education, Science and Culture, contains provisions concerning contracts for on-the-job training.

MAIN LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Studies in the Regulated Professions

Studies in regulated professions are completed with a journeyman's exam, which is the prerequisite for pursuing the trade in question. Apprentices who have completed the journeyman's examination can become master craftsmen after a year of working experience and advanced studies at a vocational school. They have the right to supervise work in their field. Students in vocational programmes have the possibility of doing additional studies in preparation for study at the higher education level and complete the matriculation examination. The school is responsible for basic education and the theoretical part of the course, whereas hands-on training takes place in the workplace. Regulated professions in Iceland are classified by groups, each regulated by a set of laws and regulations. The groups are:

- Building and constructions;
- Transport and vehicles;
- Food, catering and tourism;
- Metal, machinery and production;
- Information and media;
- Health and social services;
- Design and handicraft;
- Personal services (hair and beauty);
- Electrics and electronics;
- Maritime and navigation.

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Regulated professions are regulated through a wide set of rules and regulations. The most important acts are:

- The Industry Act (lönaðarlög) nr. 42/1978;
- The Act on crews of fishing ships, etc (Lög um áhafnir íslenskra fiskiskipa, varðskipa, skemmtibáta og annarra skipa) nr 30/2007;
- A set of laws on the training of professionals in the health care sector (they can all be found in Icelandic at http://www.heilbrigdisraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/log/nr/703/nr/703#Forvarnir_og_smitsjukdomarr);
- The Act on Aviation (Lög um loftferðir) on the crew of planes (<http://www.althingi.is/lagas/135b/1998060.html>).

A wide set of regulations accompanies each act, with changes and amendments which have been made through the years. The national curricula for each profession, passed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in cooperation with the Occupational Councils, have the status of regulations.

Study within the Health Care System

Health care studies vary considerably both in scope and structure as they are directed at conferring a variety of qualifications, such as assistant nurse, pharmacological technician, medical secretary and nursing reception secretary. Due to the nature of these studies, more emphasis is placed on general studies (e.g. chemistry, physics and health science) as the basis for specialised study than is the case in regulated professions. The balance between general and vocational subjects varies however as it does on regulated professions. Studies within the health care system provide qualifications after 1 – 3 years of study. Thereof, work-based training within the health care sector varies from 16 – 40 weeks.

Study within the Transport Sector

The structure and duration of studies for officers of air and sea transportation vehicles are variable. Most common of these studies are within the field of ship navigation and engineering. Each module of school based training (both theoretical and on simulators) plus additional sea/flying time gives certificates for different ship/plain types or sizes. Regarding ship engineering, the prerequisite of training is a 5-8 months time at sea. After that the principal is similar, each module of school plus sea training gives qualification for a certain size of engine.

Study for Law Enforcement

Vocational training 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.

OTHER LEARNING OUTCOMES

Studies in non-regulated professions end with a final examination, which does not give the monopoly to conduct certain jobs but make it easier for the holders to get such jobs. To take an example, there are many schools both private and public which offer some sort of computer diploma, after long or short studies. Companies needing computer people will often advertise for people with one of these diplomas, but if they do not apply, the companies can choose to hire someone without the diploma and then either train the person on sight or pay for his/her tuition somewhere else. As the companies usually prefer to hire someone who has already acquired the necessary knowledge, it can be said that at least some of the diplomas ease their holders' way into the labour market.

0405 - OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Fjölsmiðjan in Kópavogur (for the capital area) and *Akureyri* (for the northern Iceland) (<http://www.fjolsmidjan.is>) are work-centres for young people (the specific age is not defined but normally they are at least 16 years old) at cross-roads in their lives, often after dropping out from schools or giving up in the open labour market. Some of them have been drug-addicts and even petty criminals but they have to be 'clean' before being allowed into the programme.

Students do not obtain any formal qualifications but are given an opportunity to train for the labour market or to conduct further studies. They work for a small salary, get breakfast and lunch and the staff helps them to try to discover something they are good at (rather than what they cannot do). They are also given a lot of social support and encouragement. Many of them will move from *Fjölsmiðjan* to some sort of training jobs (from which they can return if it does not work out) and only gradually enter the labour market. A few choose to go back to school.

There are 7 departments:

- car cleaning;
- cooking (the food students make is sold at a low price at the *Fjölsmiðjan*'s location);
- general education;
- electric appliances (goods donated to the 'Good Sheppard' delivered at special places in Reykjavík are repaired and sold at specific stores);
- carpentry (repair and making of things like windows and doors);
- computing and printing (making of e.g. name cards or photocopies);
- design (making of small artefacts which are sold on the premises).

A fishing department it will put into operation later in 2008 (the school already has a boat).

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

Post-secondary education and training is still fairly limited, but growing. Different courses are offered at various institutions, all of which are public and vocational and provide certification for well-defined professions (see below). The age of students varies because many students have spent some years on the labour market before recommencing their studies.

A polytechnic institute will commence in the old NATO base in *Keflavík* and one of the main aims of the Technical School established in 2008 is to expand the possibilities of training at this level and the eventual possibility of a polytechnic institute in Reykjavík.

Main pathways are:

- certificates for a master of trade in regulated professions. Students must have completed the journeyman's exam and have worked as journeymen in their trades for at least a year. The studies are general and business oriented and the focus is on providing students with the knowledge needed to oversee large projects and operate businesses and to train apprentices. Studies are 2 terms at a school (both some comprehensive schools and industrial technical schools offer these) and complete with a master of trade exam which gives the graduate the right to train journeymen. Additional studies are necessary to be able to enter universities. The schools offering master of craft programmes specialise, e.g. one offering it within the building sector, another in cars and other vehicles and the third in electricity/electronic;
- assistance nurses for the elderly. Students must have completed the exam as assistance nurses and the matriculation exam. The programme is 2 semesters at a school (where subjects such as health science, biochemistry and psychology are taught) and some months in different institutions for the elderly. Final exams are taken at the end of each course, either at the school or a demonstration test at the training hospital. 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, where they learn both the more theoretical part of their profession and work with simulators 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. Final exams are taken at the end of each course, either at the school or a demonstration test on board a ship;
- tour guides. Students must be at least 21 years of age and have completed the matriculation exam and have an extensive knowledge of

at least one foreign language. Studies take two semesters at a school, where subjects as geology, flora, fauna, culture and communication are taught, with visits to e.g. museums and exercise trips in busses. Graduation certificate is necessary to become a certified tour guide. This does not give additional rights to commence tertiary education. Final exams are taken at the end of each course at the school;

- industrial technicians. Students must have completed at least half of an upper secondary education in science. Studies are two semesters at a special (private) technical school (now part of the University of Reykjavik). Industrial technicians can progress to university. Final exams are taken at the end of each course at the school;
- Some degrees in agriculture are also registered as post secondary education, even though the matriculation exam is not a prerequisite. Two agricultural schools, *Hólar University* and *Landbúnaðarháskóli Íslands* offer these programmes, which most often are 4 semesters plus several months' hands-on training at e.g. a farm. Final exams are taken at the end of each course at the school or at the training farm.

0407 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT TERTIARY LEVEL

Seven universities offer tertiary level education. Four of them are run by the state, the others by private companies with state support. Students are required to have passed the Icelandic matriculation examination, have finished other equivalent education or have, in the view of the university in question, acquired equivalent maturity and knowledge. Universities can if needed impose further admission requirements, including admission tests.

All Icelandic universities operate in line with the Bologna process. Degrees on offer are bachelor (2-3 years), master (additional 2 years) and doctorate (additional 2-3 years). Occupational access varies according to studies, e.g. doctors and engineers can be confident in getting a job in their fields whereas social scientists and linguistics have to compete in a much more open field. However, the demand for university degree for a wide variety of jobs is so great that unemployment between university professionals is almost unheard of.

Typical study time varies a lot and it is common that people (re)enter university after several years at the labour market.

Assessment is continuous through the studies but must students complete their degree with a thesis, which increases in importance with higher degrees. Each university awards its certificates but all universities follow the EU's Bologna procedure and award the Europass diploma supplement in line with most other countries in Europe.

Traditionally little or no distinction has been made between purely vocational and general studies at this level, although some programmes are obviously more work-related than others (e.g. doctors, nurses, teachers and engineers).

The general rule is that a matriculation exam is necessary in order to enter university. This means that journeymen and other VET students need additional studies to gain entry.

Universities have gradually taken over studies which used to be vocational at upper secondary level. Because of all these issues it is difficult, if not impossible, to assess the number of students in tertiary education which could be called vocational.

Almost all the study time is spent at the university in question. The big exception from this are all health related studies, 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

The main change in lifelong learning policy in recent year was the labour agreement in 2004 which stipulates that all employees pay 0.05% of their salaries and the employers 0.15% of the same amount into sector specific training funds. The main aims of the social partners' training funds are to increase the competences of people in the labour market in order to improve businesses' and institutions' success and to increase the wellbeing of employees. People have been granted fee towards acquiring new skills, updating already acquired skills and taking formal exams (e.g. a bigger driver's licence). Great emphasis has also been put on teaching the fast expanding group of foreign workers Icelandic.

The funds are however not only answering demands; they are also at the forefront of developing new learning material and courses at workplaces. Government policy has not changed recently, however a new legislation on adult education and training is under development in the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*menntamálaráðuneyti*). At the time of writing this input, no information about the proposal was available.

The access to lifelong learning has seen a colossal expansion in the past decades. Numerous private education and training institutions and non-profit institutions owned by social partners have been established, aiming specifically at adults. To name a few:

- Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins – The Education and Training Service Centre;
- Iðan fræðslusetur – The Vocational Education and Training Centre;
- Rafiðnaðarskólinn - Retraining and Technical Training Centre for Electric and Electronic Technicians.

Added to those are several privately owned schools which offer e.g. language tuition and IT training.

The state co-finances nine Regional Centres for Lifelong Learning, which offer a wide scope of training possibilities, such as Icelandic for foreigners, university degrees through distance studies in cooperation with universities and courses found relevant to their local communities (e.g. in tourism or fisheries). In many cases they e.g. offer the possibility of adding on to qualifications through distance learning and a combination of on campus and distance learning.

All of the universities also offer similar possibilities and use both e-learning and more traditional approaches.

Planning and forecasting mechanisms have been lacking, probably because of the great expanse in the sector in a short time. Mostly what is on offer depends on the need as it is seen at the current time, the availability of teachers and trainers and the possibilities of finding teaching locations.

0502 - PUBLICLY PROMOTED CVET FOR ALL

The nine Lifelong Learning Centres (*Símenntunarmiðstöðvar*) are the cornerstone of the government's continuous education and training programme. They are managed jointly by municipalities, upper secondary schools and social partners in each area. Although mostly publicly funded, participants also pay tuition fees, which vary according to the length of their studies, from a few thousand IKR for a short course up to several hundreds of thousands for a university degree. Courses are aimed at the unemployed people, immigrants and early school leavers and can be anything from adding on to previous studies, employment related courses and languages (e.g. Icelandic for immigrants) or taking a university degree through distance studies. The centre's goals are e.g. to encourage people to participate in lifelong learning, facilitate their access, and bring learning closer to home, as well as to lead and take initiative in learning and to provide counselling.

The variety of course on offer is great, offering both formal and informal degrees: e.g. Icelandic for foreigners, university degrees through distance studies in cooperation with universities and courses found relevant to their local communities (e.g. in tourism or fisheries).

There is no formal quality assurance mechanism in place for the Lifelong Learning Centres. However, because students pay a considerable amount for their studies, any dissatisfaction would quickly mirror in decreased demand.

There are also three schools for adults (*Námsflokkar*) run by the municipalities of *Reykjavík*, *Kópavogur* and *Hafnarfjörður* which offer courses at compulsory school level, preparatory courses for upper secondary schools in subjects such as languages, natural science and mathematics, job-related courses, e.g. IT, accounting and self-esteem building, courses in Icelandic for immigrants and leisure courses. Participants pay tuition fees, but the schools receive funding from the municipalities as well.

As with the Lifelong Learning Centres, there is no formal quality assurance mechanism in place for the. However, because students pay a considerable amount for their studies, any dissatisfaction would quickly mirror in decreased demand.

OTHER PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

A few other public institutions which offer CVET for the public, have certain target groups and specialised vocational schools. Some of these are:

- *Nýsköpunarmiðstöð Íslands* (the Icelandic Innovation centre), a public institution belonging to the Ministry of Trade and Industry offers

courses in issues such as project management or personal leadership. Students at these courses tend to be university graduates who feel the need of adding their degree. Students' age varies a lot, and is between 20 and 65;

- Special vocational schools are e.g.
- The National Police College (*Lögregluskólinn*) is an independent institution under the Minister of Justice, responsible for CVET for the police;
- The Iceland Fire Authority runs the Fire Service Technical College (*Brunamálaskólinn*), which is responsible for CVET for fire fighters;
- School for Air Traffic Controllers (*Þjálfunardeild Flugmálastjórnar*) is operated by the Icelandic Civil Aviation Administration;
- The Icelandic Flight Academy (*Flugskóli Íslands*) offers training for pilots whilst the airlines are responsible for the CVET; it follows the European standards (JAR);
- The Committee of Vocational Education in Fisheries (*Starfsfræðslunefnd fiskvinnslunnar*) is responsible for CVET in fish processing.

In 2007 two institutions owned by social partners (*Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins* – the Education and Training Service Centre (<http://frae.is>) and *Iðan fræðslusetur* – the Vocational Education and Training Centre (<http://idan.is>) were working with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*menntamálaráðuneyti*) in the establishment of quality assurance mechanism for all adult education and training, as a part of a contract involving also “real competence” assessments and training for people with little or no formal skills.

As can be seen in the table below, around 1/3rd of employees have participated in some form of training during the last 4 weeks before the survey was made. This is a very high number and indicates both the keen interest for such training and the availability of courses.

Table 1. Number and % of employees participating in any education and training in the last 4 weeks before each survey		
YEAR	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	PERCENTAGE
2004	43 800	28.1
2005	48 900	30.3
2006	54 400	32.1
2007	56 400	31.8

Source: *Hagstofa Íslands*

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

Because unemployment has been very low for a long time, there are not many possibilities of education and training for the unemployed that are not open to everyone else as well. Employment counsellors can advise an unemployed person to undergo training if they think that it will increase the unemployed person's likelihood of finding a job. These counsellors work for the local employment offices, under the responsibility of the Directorate for Labour. 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 the person can go for part time training but is then obliged to take any job (s)he is offered for the remaining part of the day;
- after 6 months the person can go for a 3 months full time training;
- after 12 months the person can undertake full time training for one semester (around 3 months) on full benefits and another semester on half.

In 2007 two institutions owned by social partners (*Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins* – the Education and Training Service Centre (<http://frae.is>) and *Iðan fræðslusetur* – the Vocational Education and Training Centre (<http://idan.is>) were working with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*menntamálaráðuneyti*) in the establishment of quality assurance mechanism for all adult education and training, as a part of a contract involving also “real competence” assessments and training for people with little or no formal skills.

As can be seen in the table below, the percentage of unemployed people participating in education and training seems to rising and has reached almost half of the group. This seems to indicate that people believe that education and training will increase their likelihood of getting a job.

YEAR	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	PERCENTAGE
2004	1 900	38.6
2005	1 800	40.9
2006	2 400	47.1
2007	1 900	45.4

Source: *Hagstofa Íslands*

0504 - CVET AT THE INITIATIVE OF ENTERPRISES OR SOCIAL PARTNERS

Neither government regulations for enterprise training exist nor is there any official administrative structure for it. The main framework can however be found in several labour agreements from 2000, where it was stipulated that all employees pay 0.05% of their salaries and the employers 0.15% of the same amount into sector specific training funds, see table below. The state also contributes to these funds through the Unemployment Security Fund (*Atvinnuleysistryggingarsjóður*). These funds' governing regulations vary from one fund to another. The most common form is however that employee can apply for funds to undertake some training which is relevant for their occupation after they have paid into the funds for at least six months. Employees can also apply for funds for holding courses for a group of staff. Each fund has its own board which decides who gets what and when.

Rules for taking time of work in order to study vary a lot. In some professions (e.g. people with university degrees working on the field of education and social services) it is seen as an indisputable right and people gradually earn study leaves. In other professions (e.g. low skilled workers), there are no such rights and it depends on the employer whether the employee gets leave at all and even more so, whether (s)he gets paid leave.

The main providers are private companies that sell their services to whom ever wants to pay. These providers are numerous but the biggest ones are:

- *Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins* – The Education and Training Service Centre;
- *Iðan fræðslusetur* – The Vocational Education and Training Centre;
- *Rafiðnaðarskólinn* - Retraining and Technical Training Centre for Electric and Electronic Technicians.

Added to those are several privately owned schools which offer e.g. language tuition and IT training.

In recent years, there has been a great emphasis on teaching Icelandic to immigrants and it has proven difficult to get enough teachers for the subject, especially because many of the immigrants speak no other language than their own.

The CVTS survey has not been carried out in Iceland.

Table 1. Overview of social partners' training funds			
NAME	FOR WHOM	ESTABLISHED IN	WEB ADDRESS
LANDSMENNT	Unskilled workers outside the capital area	2000	http://landsmennt.is
STARFSAFL	Unskilled workers in the capital area	2000	www.starfsafl.is
STARFSMENNTASJÖÐUR VERSLUNAR- OG SKRIFSTOFUFOLKS	Office and shop employees	2000	www.starfsmennt.is
STARFSMENNT FRÆDSLUSETUR	State employees in the capital area	2001	http://smennt.is/
SJOMENNT	Semen	2002	www.sjomennt.is
RIKISMENNT SGS	State employees outside the capital area	2005	www.rikismennt.is
SVEITAMENNT SGS OG LN	Municipalities' employees outside the capital area	2007	www.sveitamennt.is

0505 - CVET AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Training of any kind has been very popular in recent years. Even though specific information is not available for this completely unregulated field, it appears that the biggest group seeks general education rather than VET. Re-education courses at the universities expand rapidly and every type of language course seems to be very popular. The offer of vocational courses is much smaller and there the aim seems to be towards increased specialisation or re-training at special schools.

06 - TRAINING VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

0601 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN VET

According to the Act on education and training (pre-primary, compulsory, upper secondary and the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers) 87/2008, all teachers will be required to have a master's degree as either teachers or in a certified trade (article 5. Source: <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>). The Act is supposed to be fully implemented by 1 July 2011, but even after that, teachers who had already received an official recognition by the passing of the law (June 2008) will be able to continue teaching even though they normally only have a baccalaureate degree. Other teaching occupations are not regulated by law. In these cases, those teaching are referred to as instructors or trainers.

TYPE OF TEACHER/TRAINER	ROLES	SETTINGS
Practical subject teacher	Curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and general tuition in schools	Classrooms
Vocational theory subject teacher	Curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and hands-on tuition in schools	Workshops
General subject teacher (e.g. languages and social skills)	Curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and general tuition in schools	Classrooms
Work-place trainers	Hands-on tuition at a work-place	Work-places
Special education teachers	Curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and general tuition in schools	Classrooms
Special education trainers	Theoretical and hands-on tuition in schools	Classrooms and workshops
Teachers and trainers in the private sector	As this field is completely unregulated, detailed information on their roles do not exist but many of them would deal with curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and general tuition	Classrooms, workshops, work-places

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (menntamálaráðuneyti) is responsible for regulating teachers' education and training, bears the overall responsibility for the curricula of their studies and regularly assesses the quality and relevance of their education and training.

0602 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN IVET

The table below lists all types of teaching occupation within the Upper Secondary Level School System and their place of work:

Table 1. Types of teachers and trainers in IVET			
TYPE OF OCCUPATION	PLACE OF WORK	PRE-SERVICE TRAINING	IN SERVICE TRAINING
Practical subject teacher	Comprehensive schools and the technical school	General training in a particular subject and professional training in educational and instructional methodology at a university	No official demands for in-service training are made but there is both a great pressure from the teachers themselves and from the schools for frequent updating of skills. Training is available at universities in Iceland and abroad
Vocational theory subject teacher	Comprehensive schools and the technical school	Vocational qualifications in the field in question plus professional training in educational and instructional methodology at a university	No official demands for in-service training are made but there is both a great pressure from the teachers themselves and from the schools for frequent updating of skills. Training is available at specific institutions owned by the industry and abroad
General subject teacher	All upper secondary schools	Teachers' education from a university.	No official demands for in-service training are made but there is both a great pressure from the teachers themselves and from the schools for frequent updating of skills. Training is available at universities in Iceland and abroad
Work-place trainers	Enterprises	Masters of craft in their profession	No official demands are made but masters of trades need to keep abreast of new technology if not to go out of business. Training is available at specific institutions owned by the industry and abroad
Special education teachers	All upper secondary schools	Vocational qualifications in the field in question plus professional training in educational and instructional methodology at a university	No official demands for in-service training are made but there is both a great pressure from the teachers themselves and from the schools for frequent updating of skills. Training is available at universities in Iceland and abroad
Special education trainers	Comprehensive schools and industrial-vocational schools	Some vocational qualification in the field in question but no teachers' licence	No official demands for in-service training

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 by the social partners in each respective certified trade. The centres do not have any formal requirements for the employment of teaching staff, although professionals in the profession in question are the most usual staff. These training centres sometimes act as a part of the official vocational education system, for example when the training institute carries out all or part of the training and assessment for the master's certificate in a trade.

Table 1. Types of teachers and trainers in CVET			
	TYPES OF SCHOOLS OR INSTITUTIONS	PRE-SERVICE TRAINING	IN-SERVICE TRAINING
TEACHERS	Vocational schools 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 very individual

07 - SKILLS AND COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGY

0701 - MECHANISMS FOR THE ANTICIPATION OF SKILL NEEDS

As described under Theme 3, subtheme 2, the Occupational Councils (*starfsgreinaráð*) are the strongest link to the industry.

They try to forecast future need for training, both in general terms and in finer details. No summary of such forecasts is available.

There are two main methods used when anticipating skill needs:

- the formal approach which builds on interviews with selected people from the industry (employers and employees) on which the skills demands for each profession is later built. This is an approach which was developed through a Leonardo de Vinci project in 1998-2006 (see <http://www.amazon.com/Employability-Skills-Non-Professional-Occupations-Four-Country/dp/9979544422>);
- an informal approach where key people from the industry sit together and discuss trends and perspectives and likely scenarios.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*menntamálaráðuneyti*) uses both approaches in its work with the Occupational Councils (*starfsgreinaráð*) in formulating the National Curriculum Guide for each VET-programme.

Each VET school has full liberty in introducing new study material, which in many cases is developed by individual teachers in each profession as they see new need arise. The industry makes constantly new and changed demands for different knowledge as new material and new technique is developed locally or imported. In order to survive in the competition for students, the schools are obliged to follow suit.

0702 - BRIDGING PATHWAYS AND NEW EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

One of the main aims with the establishment of the comprehensive schools, which started in the 1970s, was to move VET and general education closer to each other. Before that, students had to choose at the age of 15-16 whether to get a vocational qualification (and even their specialisation within VET) or enrol into general education and it was difficult for them to change paths. With the comprehensive schools, which now educate the biggest groups of upper secondary school students, it became possible to combine general education and VET. Several VET subjects were also merged during the first semester of school so students did not have to make their final choice of destination until after that.

Both in schools which offer VET and some of those which only offer general education, modularised system has been in use for some 30 years, where students have both the flexibility of choosing some of the subjects they study,

their order, the speed through the schools and whether or not to combine VET or art subjects with their general education.

It has also become gradually 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 theoretical bridging course of subjects such as mathematics, Icelandic and foreign languages, of 2 semesters and enter university upon its completion.

0703 - RENEWAL OF CURRICULA

In regulated professions the curricula is developed by VET schools on the basis of guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*menntamálaráðuneyti*). These are in turn drawn up in cooperation between the above Ministry and the Occupational Councils (*starfsgreinaráð*), which are appointed by social partners and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. In unregulated professions, the Occupational Councils make curricula suggestions to the Ministry of Education which, if agreed, become part of the schools' curricula.

Demand for new elements in the curricula come both from the Occupational Councils and from the labour market at large. It would be fair to say that a school or training centre that did not offer tuition in the latest technology would quickly go out of business.

The clearest trends for upgrading skills are related to the use of IT, more or less necessary in all professions now. Students must learn the utilisation of constantly updated software related to their profession and former graduates who do not follow such trends gradually lose their place on the labour market.

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

08 - ACCUMULATING, TRANSFERRING AND VALIDATING LEARNING

0801 - ACCUMULATING, ACCREDITING AND VALIDATING FORMAL LEARNING

The vocational market is thoroughly regulated and formal vocational and professional qualifications are in very many cases designed to provide people with a monopoly of working as skilled personnel in certain professions. The building sector can be used as an example, where each type of work (such as building a house, installing electricity and plumbing) must be carried out under the responsibility of a master of trade at that particular profession. (S)he can employ unskilled people but this is usually only done when professionals are not available.

The journeyman's exam is the most common type of VET qualifications and is strictly regulated by law in terms of the knowledge students must acquire and the framework for their education and training.

Students can transfer knowledge in e.g. languages from one study to another (be it another VET or general education) and in many sectors the first semester at school is common for everybody in each sector. There are however very few partial qualifications and if students wish to change their field of study completely, they cannot move their specialised knowledge with them.

Journeymen who wish to study at a university must add on a year of studies to get admission rights.

Non-regulated professions offer a variety of qualifications. Study time varies as does the balance of vocational versus general subjects. Non-regulated professions are either offered at upper secondary schools or at private training centres (e.g. computer studies).

The 12 Occupational Councils nominated by social partners and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*menntamálaráðuneyti*), cooperate with the Ministry in setting the curricula and framework for each profession.

Formal learning is accredited by schools and workplaces where hands-on training takes place (for professions where this is the case). The journeyman's exams are conducted by special exams boards of masters in the trade. In non-regulated professions the schools bear the sole responsibility.

According to the Upper Secondary School Act 92/2008 'A student who moves between schools has the right to have his/her previously completed credits transferred into the new school, on the condition that these comply with the curricula of the school in question. A student who is enlisted into an upper secondary school has the right to having his/her real competences evaluated as part of the studies and credits, on the condition that his/her competences comply with the curricula (Article 31. Source:

<http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>). Since the law is new

at the time of writing this entry, it is not clear exactly how this evaluation will be carried out or by whom.

0802 - ACCUMULATING, ACCREDITING AND VALIDATING NON-FORMAL/INFORMAL LEARNING

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is in its initial stages and it is too early to tell where it will lead.

A Leonardo da Vinci pilot project was carried out in 2007, led by *Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins* (The Education and Training Service Centre) involving women working in the banking sector. They had worked as cashiers for some years and had never had the opportunity to get a promotion. Their tasks and knowledge were analyzed and they given further training which led to promotions. For further information, see <http://www.valueofwork.org/>.

In article 0801, the Upper Secondary School Act 92/2008 stipulates that 'A student who enrolled into an upper secondary school has the right to having his/her real competences evaluated as part of the studies and credits, on the condition that his/her competences comply with the curricula (article 31. Source <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>). Since the law is new at the time of writing this entry, it is not clear exactly how this evaluation will be carried out or by whom.

Previously two main ways to get validation for prior knowledge (however that may have been acquired) have existed:

- the so called 'rank tests' for languages, where anyone who wishes to see where (s)he stands in a certain language can sit for a test that automatically gives him/her a certain rank (e.g. that he or she has passed English 103 and can therefore commence his/her studies at English 203) ; and
- the 'real competence evaluation' carried out in e.g. transport, house-building and plumbing by *Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins* (the Education and Training Service Centre) and *Iðan fræðslusetur* (The Vocational Education and Training Centre), both owned and operated by social partners. The evaluation is built on self assessments and interviews with the candidates to validate whether they possess the necessary skills in order to get qualifications or whether they need to study further. They are then given the possibility of studying the remaining subjects together, in order to increase their self-confidence, offered guidance and moral support. Even though graduates have been few so far, the training centres agree on that they are only the first and more will follow.

0803 - IMPACT OF EU POLICY COOPERATION

The EU's 'Common principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning' have been translated into Icelandic and widely distributed and influence the Leonardo de Vinci pilot project Value of Work undertaken for the validation of non-formal and informal learning . The main objectives with the project were:

- to develop methods and tools to assist the process of validating competences in workplaces;
- to emphasize the transferability between sectors and the role of stakeholders in the process of validation;
- to identify and validate competences of people with little formal education;
- to make competences visible to employees and to all social partners.

The target groups were:

- people (employees) who have acquired competence through informal and/or non-formal learning and who have little formal (or higher formal) education;
- social partners (stakeholders);
- career and educational counsellors.

See <http://www.valueofwork.org/documents/N-103-3.pdf>

The Europass documents have also been translated into Icelandic as has Cedefop's Europass website. In 2007 a massive information campaign was carried out by the Icelandic Europass centre and the use of especially the Europass CV seems to be gradually increasing. Already all universities automatically issue the Diploma Supplement and the utilization of the Mobility Pass and the Certificate Supplement is slowly increasing.

Work, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, on the National Qualification framework is in the initial steps as is the work in the European Credit system for VET (ECVET). All relevant partners (e.g. schools, training centres and social partners) have been called in for an open method of consultation on these subjects and final outcomes of their debate will be presented at a conference in February 2009.

0804 - FACILITATING EU MOBILITY

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*menntamálaráðuneyti*) is in charge of validating most qualifications acquired abroad. People who have qualifications which are certified in Iceland can apply at the Ministry for

Icelandic recognition of those qualifications. They must show papers from their training institutions as to the content of their studies, duration, etc.

For further information in English see <http://menntagatt.is/default.aspx?pageid=377>

The Ministry of Health is responsible for similar validation of foreign health-workers credentials.

The biggest exception from this rule is that the Ministry of Health is responsible for such validation in the health sector.

If people have legitimate qualifications from other countries which resemble Icelandic qualifications, they get a formal validation of their papers.

Most immigrants work as unskilled labourers and obtaining a qualification in Iceland would be difficult because all education and training is carried out in Icelandic. The emphasis has been put on helping the children and young people (through massive Icelandic tuition in compulsory schools and the first classes of upper-secondary schools) but drop-out rates among them are much higher than among people born in Iceland. Anh-Dao Tran led a pilot project called *Framtíð í nýju landi* (Future in a new country) from 2004-2007 which involved special support to children of foreign decent who had difficulties at school. The youth in question were of Vietnamese decent and had in some cases lived in Iceland for years but had not been able to master enough Icelandic to be able to study in the language. *Anh-Dao Tran* found that what helped these young people more than anything else was getting an Icelandic mentor of their own age who helped them through their difficulties, whether at school or in social life. (The final report of the project, called *Framtíð í nýju landi 2004-2007*, is available in Icelandic at the Ministry of Social Services).

0901 - STRATEGY AND PROVISION

Educational and vocational guidance has developed rapidly over the last two decades. School counselling and guidance within the educational system has been the most dominant factor but vocational guidance within the Directorate of Labour (*Vinnumálastofnun*) for the unemployed and guidance within human resource departments of learning enterprises, has grown considerably. The importance of lifelong learning opportunities for all citizens has put new challenges for the guidance profession and this new situation has enforced guidance counsellors to look for solutions to update their resources, methods and ideology in order to serve their clients better and maintain professionalism.

According to the Compulsory School Act and the Upper Secondary School Acts (both from 2008), all students have the right to counselling by professional staff. It is however left up to the schools how exactly this is carried out but according to a survey among counsellors in 2007 (Source: *Kjarakönnun names- og starfsráðgjafa 2007*), most schools seem to offer a combination of group counselling and individual counselling. Group counselling can involve issues like teaching the students how to apply for a job or for further education (e.g. through the annual visits of compulsory school children to upper secondary schools of their interest) and how to live in the modern society in general. Individual counselling concentrates more on special issues each student wishes to raise and links to his/her families.

The Ministry of Social Services is responsible for providing information, guidance and counselling through this Directorate to all those who seek assistance, unemployed or otherwise in transition. The Directorate supervises and co-ordinates a network of nine Employment Services located in the main regions in Iceland.

Other actors who have influenced the development of guidance are:

- municipalities through increased emphasis on guidance in compulsory schools;
- experts in the field of guidance, by developing teaching material for the department of Social Sciences at the University of Iceland, which teaches counsellors and by holding several information meetings and conference on relevant topics every year;
- trade unions, by demanding guidance at work-places;
- employers, by establishing their own human resources / staff development departments and hiring people (in many cases trained counsellors) to lead this work; and

- the Icelandic Educational and Vocational Guidance Association (*Félag náms- og starfsráðgjafa* - <http://fns.is>) which has been in the forefront of the debate on the content and length of education and training for counsellors and keeps its members regularly informed about new trends in the field.

Two training centres owned and operated by social partners offer guidance how to get “real competences” evaluated and certified. Their work is closely followed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, which participated in setting up the original standards for the evaluation:

- The Education and Training Service Centre (Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins) – established in December 2002 -offers guidance at the workplace carried out by the Lifelong Learning centres in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. This evolved from a Leonardo da Vinci project called Workplace guidance and counselling. The main emphasis is on low skilled workers;
- The Education and Training Service Centre (Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins) and the Vocational Education and Training Centre (Iðan fræðslusetur) –established in 2006. Iðan puts more emphasis on assisting those who have completed parts of education for regulated professions but need additional (most often general) education in order to get their journeyman’s exam.

The division of guidance affairs is based upon different clients, different subjects, different settings and different ways of funding. No formal channels exist in the co-operation of all the actors responsible, but most innovations in the field of guidance have occurred when ministries, professionals and the social partners combine resources as can be seen in the example on real competence evaluation mentioned above.

The guidance services within the educational system and the Directorate of Labour are free and state funded. The education legislation provides everyone with free guidance through compulsory, upper secondary and higher education. Guidance and counselling in other settings is contracted, subsidised or free, apart from privately run profit organisations. Guidance counsellors work in all these environments but with different job titles at times.

0902 - TARGET GROUPS AND MODES OF DELIVERY

The main target groups for guidance are:

- students at primary, secondary and tertiary level. All schools offer guidance and according to a survey among counsellors in 2007 (Source: Kjarakönnun náms- og starfsráðgjafa 2007), they offer a combination of group counselling and individual counselling;
- people on the labour market. Guidance is offered at workplaces, at centres owned by social partners and at the Lifelong Learning Centres. The most common method used is individual counselling.

Specific groups have been given particular attention:

- the unemployed are offered counselling at local labour offices, by the Directorate of Labour. Both group and individual counselling is on offer;
- people with learning difficulties due to physical or mental disabilities have the right to counselling offered by the Ministry of Social Services. The Ministry employs specific agents for the handicapped who work in different corners of the country and to which people can turn to for advice and counselling. The Ministry also operates a number of specific workplaces for handicapped people.

0903 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PERSONNEL

According to the Compulsory School Act (Lög um grunnskóla) (91/2008) all compulsory school students have the right to educational and vocational counselling carried out by specialists in the field (article 13. Source <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>). In bigger schools (especially in the capital area) there tend to be formally qualified counsellors but in smaller schools in the country-side they can be teachers or other staff, who have in some cases received training in the field.

In the Upper Secondary School Act 92/2008 it is also stipulated that 'Students have the right to educational and vocational counselling carried out by specialists in the field' (article 37. Source <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>). In regulation 5/2001 it is stipulated that counsellors at upper secondary schools must have completed at least four years of university education, of which at least one year must be in educational and vocational counselling. The main tasks of the guidance counsellors is then described in seven categories and this kind of legal identity is believed to offer quality and necessary benchmarking for 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 one of the following:

- BA degree in education or psychology;
- B.Ed degree; or
- BA degree in other fields of studies and a teacher's certificate.

A five semester distance educational programme is offered to staff working within the employment sector in cooperation with the two above mentioned Ministries mainly in charge of the development of information, guidance and counselling and social partners.

In service training tends to be in the form of e.g. mobility grants abroad from e.g. Leonardo da Vinci, either to attend courses (the Academia programme) or through study visits (e.g. 'Building bridges').

10 - FINANCING - INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

1001 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRAINING

The funding structure for VET, as for other education and training, has not changed considerably 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 and is paid to the school according to the number of students who sit for an exam each term. Even private schools thus receive their funding in part from the state. School fees (varying from one school to the other) form the rest of their budget.

There are no laws regarding contribution of the social partners to VET but with growing demands for CVET, their contribution has multiplied in recent years through the labour market training funds (see 0502).

1002 - FUNDING FOR INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

TYPES OF IVET	INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR FUNDING	PAY FOR*
Regulated professions	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (<i>menntamálaráðuneyti</i>)	Education and training at schools
	Social Partners	Apprentices' salaries
	Individuals	School fees and study material
Health and welfare professionals	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	Education and training at schools
	Ministry of Health (<i>heilbrigðisráðuneyti</i>)	Salaries for trainees at hospitals
	Individuals	School fees and study material
Police officers	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs (<i>dóms- og kirkjumálaráðuneyti</i>)	Education and training at schools plus salaries of trainees
Pilots	Individuals	Pay all costs
Non-regulated professions	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 both that overall funding has increased rapidly and that individuals gradually pay more for their training than before because there are now more private institutions.

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 CVET and adult learning		
TYPES OF CVET	INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR FUNDING	PAY FOR*
Publicly provided CVET	Ministries of Education (<i>menntamálaráðuneyti</i>)	Education and training at schools. Contributes to vocational training funds operated by social partners (see 0502)
	Social Partners	Cost 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 of the unemployed is limited. The Directorate of Labour, which falls under the Ministry for Social Services, is responsible for providing some funds through the local unemployment offices, where counsellors value whether or not training may help a person to get a job. Usually such training is partly paid for by the unemployed 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 on a complete restructuring of education and training, from pre-primary through tertiary levels, commenced. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture tabled four different acts towards the end of 2007 which were all passed by parliament in the spring of 2008 for:

- pre-primary education;
- compulsory education;
- upper-secondary education; and
- education and training (pre-primary, compulsory, upper secondary and the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers).

The laws will have some effects on the funding of education and training. Two main issues will be closely monitored:

- teachers will gradually all obtain a master's certificate. It is likely that this will result in increased salary costs both for the state and the municipalities;
- compulsory school students will be able to take more courses at upper secondary level without paying anything either for school fees or learning material. This means increased expenditure by the state, which is responsible for upper secondary education. These students are not likely to be many so it will not mean a major increase in funds.

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 European Union many of the rules and regulations adopted by the EU have been made into laws. In education, the general policy of the EU has been taken into consideration and especially in general education, many of the general principles have been applied. In VET the link has been vaguer and even though principles such as lifelong learning, transparency and transnational accreditation of skills have been favourably viewed by the state. There are however some noteworthy examples of new initiatives which are a direct result of EU's policy:

- the Education and Training Service Centre (Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins) offers guidance at the workplace in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. This evolved from a Leonardo da Vinci project called Workplace guidance and counselling. The main emphasis is on low skilled workers;
- the Education and Training Service Centre (Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins) and the Vocational Education and Training Centre (Iðan fræðslusetur) also offer guidance on how to get 'real competences' evaluated and certified;
- the private sector has adopted the principle of lifelong learning, which is very popular in all sectors, especially after the establishment of several social partners' training funds, from which employees can seek funds toward training and employers can apply for funds toward training of specific groups at the workplace.

1102 - IMPACT OF EUROPEANISATION/INTERNATIONALISATION ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Tuition of foreign languages has for decades been a core element in all VET. This has been necessary, both because of foreign textbooks students must read and also because new trends etc. tend to come from abroad. Two foreign languages (English and a Nordic language – usually Danish) have 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 the case 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 goes extremely well down in a nation that praises

itself of owning most computers per capital in the world and have the best internet access.

1103 - AUTHORS, SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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