

# **EDUCATION FOR ALL**

**Declaration adopted by the World Education  
Forum in Dakar, 2000**

**Iceland  
Committee Report**

**Ministry of Education, Science and Culture  
2002**

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## Introduction

At the UNESCO World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000 the declaration *Education for All* was adopted. The goals of the declaration are formulated as six objectives and each UNESCO member state is to give an account of how they intend to achieve these objectives by the year 2015. The Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture directed this work and this report is the outcome. It defines how and to what extent these goals have been accomplished in Iceland and what remains to be done in the coming years in order to be able to state that the goals have been fully achieved.

A broad group of 22 men and women was summoned for this task, all of whom deal with educational affairs in their own work or organisations, have considerable knowledge of and insight in the field, and wish to advance the progress of educational affairs. The group was divided into smaller working groups, each of which dealt with specific goals of the Declaration. Discussion of these goals centred on the questions: What is the situation in Iceland? Have the objectives been achieved? What actions need to be taken?

A number of meetings were held in the smaller groups, together with three working meetings in the larger co-operation group. Work continued between the meetings. When the work had concluded, the reports were combined in a single document.

All the groups made proposals for actions aimed at moving closer towards the goals. The participants agreed on those aspects of the Icelandic educational system which needed to be reinforced in the coming years.

Most of the report deals with the situation in Iceland. But *Education for All* also involves a global view of education. Following a discussion of each goal and survey of actions towards achieving it, is a description of Iceland's developmental aid and the country's policy in this field for the coming years.

The actions which this report recommends be undertaken until 2015 have been presented to the Minister of Education, Science and Culture.

## The Situation in Iceland

The policy document *An Even Better School* of 1998, and the entry into force of new National Curriculum Guides for preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school in 1999, laid the basis for internal school work in preparing pupils to work in the global knowledge and technology society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Preschool Act was adopted in 1994, the Compulsory School Act in 1995 and the Upper Secondary School Act in 1996. A large number of implementing Regulations have been issued providing for various policy details.

The new school policy places special emphasis on new National Curriculum Guides for preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school, and on new study programmes for the knowledge and information technology age. The school system should be flexible in order to adapt to innovation and changing demands. Its principal obligation is to provide pupils with good, all-round education and strengthen individuals in general life skills, aimed at preparing them for life and work in a democratic society.

Compulsory schools are required to educate children effectively, according to the National Curriculum Guide for compulsory schools. The basic tenet of educational effort is equality in education, which involves, according to the Curriculum Guide, offering students suitable studies and instruction and giving them the opportunity to work on tasks of their own choosing. Schools are to emphasise supporting the development of each pupil as a balanced individual, with solid education and training enabling him/her to undertake further study, and preparing these pupils to take part in the labour market, family life and social life in a democratic society. School is compulsory for all children 6 to 16 years of age, thus ensuring access for all. Preschool is defined as the first stage of the school system, intended for children up to 6 years of age. Compulsory school is for children aged 6-16 years. Preschools and compulsory schools are operated by local authorities.

Pre-schools and compulsory schools must accept all children, regardless of their physical and mental capabilities, social and emotional situation or linguistic development, with or without handicap, whether of Icelandic or foreign origin.

The law does not prescribe when children are to begin attending preschool, but the Act on Social Services of Local Authorities states that local authorities shall endeavour to provide sufficient preschool places. Day minders, whose activities are subject to supervision by local authorities, play an important role.

A regulation stipulates that children who live in difficult circumstances, or are at a disadvantage in other respects, are to be given priority by preschools. This applies also to bilingual children. Local authorities are required by law to ensure that all children enjoy a healthy and educational environment, for example, by attending preschool.

Children of foreign origin are entitled to special instruction in Icelandic in compulsory school. They are given assistance as long as is felt necessary. Many of them lack sufficient knowledge of Icelandic to feel capable of studying at upper secondary level.

The Handicapped Affairs Act removes any doubt as to the equal rights of the handicapped to education. Access by the physically handicapped still needs improvement, however, and this group does not receive sufficient support or the specialised equipment required to avail itself of education and school facilities.

Icelandic (language arts) and mathematics are defined as the core subjects in compulsory school and together account for 36% of the total instructional hours at compulsory level. Life skills are defined as a special subject in compulsory school from grades 4 to 10, and are a mandatory subject in upper secondary school. The society's ethical values are to be reflected in all school activities. Discussion of such values and the premises for them should be part of all subjects.

According to the Upper Secondary School Act of 1996, anyone who has completed compulsory school or received an equivalent basic education shall be entitled to commence study in upper secondary school.

The objective is inclusive schooling. Currently 0.4% of compulsory school pupils attend special schools and 0.4% special school sections. Most upper secondary schools have special sections for handicapped pupils who are unable to follow other study programmes. Study in a special section takes four years.

Adults are offered a variety of upper secondary studies, as well as in-service training and continuing education. There is, however, a fairly large group of adults who lack motivation or are not in a position to avail themselves of this study, e.g. due to reading disability or financial or social circumstances. It is urgent to provide appropriate solutions for this group.

Literacy varies greatly and according to the PISA survey, can be divided into six different levels. Following these divisions, an estimated 15,000 Icelanders aged 15-65 years have very extensive or substantial reading difficulties. In addition, around 20,000 have some difficulty in their work, in undertaking continuing education, or maintaining normal mobility in the labour market due to limited literacy. They are unlikely to make use of written media to take part in general public debate. The great majority of Icelanders are clearly literate.

To judge by the experience in other countries of adult literacy among immigrants, the literacy problem in this group is likely as great in Iceland as elsewhere. Literacy among adult immigrants is determined by the circumstances they lived in before moving to Iceland. The fact that most of the immigrants living in Iceland have come from countries in Eastern Europe raises the literacy proportion, since most of them have received basic education.

Handicapped adults are offered the same opportunities as others, but can take advantage of them to a varying extent. The educational level of the disabled is considerably below average. Some 56% of disabled persons have completed only compulsory education, while the national figure is 34%. Educational possibilities for the handicapped appear relatively limited as far as their future in the labour market is concerned, and unemployment is high among the handicapped.

Preschools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools in Iceland could be said to be inclusive and to fulfil the goals set in Dakar, to judge by the laws and regulation. An attempt will be made here, however, to analyze whether this has been fully achieved and what challenges are still to be resolved in the Icelandic school system in the coming years.

## Goal 1

***Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.***

The Preschool Act ensures access to preschools for all children from the age of three years. Care of younger children, who do not attend preschools, is provided by day minders, if the parents so desire. Day minders' activities are subject to supervision by local authorities. About 90% of children 3-5 years of age attend preschools, and 21% of children younger than this. The average number of children in Icelandic families is among the highest in Europe.

A regulation stipulates that children who live in difficult circumstances, or are at a disadvantage in other respects, are to be given priority by preschools. This applies also to bilingual children. Local authorities are required by law to ensure that all children enjoy a healthy and educational environment, for example, by attending preschool.

Chronically ill children need to be given special attention and it is urgent to seek school co-operation in meeting their needs.

All too often, children of foreign origin do not continue on to further study following compulsory school. Many of them lack a sufficient foundation in Icelandic to feel capable of studying at upper secondary level. Their Icelandic instruction needs to be reinforced from a very young age.

## Goal 2

***Ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality***

Compulsory schools operate on an inclusive basis, meeting the special needs of students to their best ability. Special sections do, however, exist in compulsory schools and there are also special schools at this level. The service provided by local authorities varies, as their circumstances and capacities may differ considerably.

Compulsory education is free and all children are entitled to study materials without charge. Local authorities are responsible for getting children to school if they live far from a school or have impaired mobility.

Basic education is one of the main pillars of active social participation and the foundation of general welfare and culture. Basic education in compulsory school is to strengthen the individual's critical and independent thinking, together with the ability to respond in a new situation. It should encourage tolerance, respect for others and for the environment.

The National Curriculum Guide emphasises having schools prepare both genders for participation in the labour market, family life and society.

The law obliges local authorities to always safeguard the children's interests and welfare in their co-operative efforts with households and other parties. This applies not least to support offered to children in risk groups, which means that local authorities are to provide effective preventive activities and leisure alternatives in co-operation with households and schools.

The objective of the Child Protection Act is to ensure that children who live in unsatisfactory conditions, or children putting their health and development at risk, will receive the necessary assistance. This is to be done primarily by supporting families in fulfilling their educational role better.

It has become evident that the country's compulsory schools vary greatly with regard to whether or how systematically they diagnose pupils' reading difficulties. What remedies pupils are offered also varies greatly. These issues are being examined especially by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Children of foreign origin are entitled to special instruction in Icelandic in compulsory school. They are given assistance at compulsory school level as long as is felt necessary. The country's largest municipalities have formulated a policy in immigrant affairs, however, this issue is relatively new in Icelandic society. At upper secondary level special courses have been created in Icelandic for students of foreign origin and in some schools they receive special support.

Children of foreign origin are much more unlikely to study at upper secondary level, which is regarded as a serious problem.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture will make an effort to have Icelandic instruction for children of foreign origin in upper secondary school increased and improved. Furthermore, effort should be made to assist these



pupils in their studies, so that they will more easily adapt to Icelandic society.

Children of asylum seekers need to be ensured access to preschool and compulsory school while awaiting a ruling on residence.

The drop-out rate in upper secondary school is considerable; an estimated 65% of pupils complete their studies in upper secondary school in the prescribed four years. The drop-out rate for pupils of foreign extraction is much higher and is unacceptable.

## Goal 3

***Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes***

This goal has been partially achieved. The law ensures everyone the right to attend school and instruction is free to pupils, although pupils at upper secondary level pay an enrolment fee and pay for their books and materials. The needs of various marginal groups, however, are still not met fully to enable them to take advantage of the study offered.

### ***1. Young people's study***

- *Services for children resident in Iceland who come from other linguistic and cultural environments need to be increased. More emphasis needs to be placed on language arts and reading for this target group to facilitate these pupils in making their own way in a new cultural environment. These children's parents need more support to have successful relations with schools. It would be desirable for the children to have an opportunity to study their own language to encourage their linguistic development. In addition, children with a non-Icelandic cultural background need extra instruction in life skills.*

*Research is needed on the question of why so many pupils of foreign origin fail to attend upper secondary school and complete a programme of study at this school level.*

*Young, handicapped people, i.e.. mentally retarded/slow learners, mentally and physically handicapped, i.e. with motor or visual impairment. Better follow-up on the implementation of laws and regulations in force on access and equipment is needed. Access for all according to their needs has to be ensured. In addition, increased support and access to necessary specialised equipment needs to be ensured for part of this group, so that they can take as much advantage as possible of normal school services, instruction and facilities.*

*The supply of suitable course materials needs to be increased. Assistance with study outside of school needs to be increased and further instruction in life-skills provided. Closer links between school study and the labour market, both during and after school study, need to be ensured. Study and job counselling need to be increased and improved.*

*Young people with specific study problems, attention deficit disorder (ADD), emotional or social difficulties. The comprehensive upper secondary school system provides possibilities for meeting the needs of this group. The diversity of study programmes is, however, insufficient and, in addition, support, diagnosis and expert counselling for this group need to be increased and improved.*

Special solutions need to be found for others who cannot avail themselves of general school options or are past the normal age for upper secondary school. This applies especially to persons who have dropped out of school or pursued only very limited study after

completing compulsory school. It is important to ensure this group access to suitable study to facilitate access to the labour market.

Services for students who cannot attend school, e.g. due to illness, need to be increased and steps taken to ensure that poor social and financial circumstance do not prevent young people from pursuing study.

A special bridge needs to be built, linking compulsory and upper secondary school, with the aim of:

increasing knowledge in upper secondary school of the pupils it is intended to serve, so that the school can combat the drop-out rate which appears to occur at the first level of study;

offering students in upper secondary school individually-centred study to an increasing extent and study support in accordance with their own abilities and interests.

## **2. Adult education**

A fairly large group of adults can only take advantage to a limited extent of the varied selection of continuing education and re-training courses offered, e.g. due to reading difficulties, handicap or financial or other social circumstances.

This could be addressed with a temporary campaign supported by the national government and employers' and employees' associations. This group needs to be ensured access to study, especially those individuals who are not otherwise entitled to such study.

- *Literacy problems of adults who come from other linguistic and cultural environments.* To improve this situation the diagnosis, solutions and instruction offered by evening schools of local authorities and continuing education providers need to be improved.
- *General life-skills for adults* Instruction provided to adults from other cultural environments on their new society and its culture needs to be increased.
- *Handicapped adults*  
Better follow-up is needed on the implementation of laws and regulations in force on access and equipment. Increased support needs to be ensured for handicapped persons, together with access to the specialised equipment necessary so that they can take as much advantage as possible of normal services, instruction and facilities, e.g. computer and Internet services. Access to interpreter and speech training services needs to be improved.

The supply of instructional materials suited to handicapped adults needs to be increased, more study and job counselling is needed as well as life-skills instruction for those who require it.

- *People who have not been able to take proper advantage of the school system.* The needs of this group could be addressed with a temporary campaign supported by the national government, employers and employees' associations. This group needs to be ensured access to study, especially

those individuals who are not entitled to such from an employer who finances in-service training for employees. Steps also should be taken to ensure that poor social or financial circumstances do not prevent adults from studying.

## Goal 4

***Achieve a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.***

### *Adult literacy*

New studies by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture indicate that illiteracy or reading difficulties among adults in Iceland are greater than was previously realised. The size of this group has not been fully mapped out, nor has a satisfactory picture been given of the impact which limited literacy has on people's daily lives and their possibilities to study and adapt to changes in their work environment and daily lives. Experts feel it is urgent to assess the extent of the problem and seek ways to improve the situation. Various options can be considered. Diagnostic work needs to be increased, together with counselling, instruction and the preparation of teaching materials. Public institutions need to join up with the social partners to seek ways of improving matters. The educational authorities, schools, primary health care centres, social services, employment agencies, businesses, employees' organisations and institutions all need to be involved. Efforts already underway can serve as the basis for further effort, for instance, in the school system, continuing education centres, evening schools of local authorities, etc. to put the experience available to good use.

## Goal 5

***Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.***

The legal framework for compulsory and upper secondary school ensures pupils' equal access to study.

At compulsory school level however, a clear difference is visible in the achievement of boys and girls in standardised exploratory examinations in Grades 4 and 7. Girls perform on the average better than boys in all subjects. The same is true of their performance on standardised examinations in Grade 10.

Boys are plagued by various problems in greater numbers than girls, e.g. hyperactivity and dyslexia, and they receive a substantial portion of the schools' special education quota. Girls facing problems are considered less likely to receive assistance than boys. In some instances as many as twice as many boys as girls receive special education.

A study in 1997 on the attitudes of students in Grades 8 to 10 revealed a gender-based difference in attitudes towards school: 5% of boys regarded their study as pointless while only 2% of girls expressed this opinion.

The expected average school attendance of 5-year-old girls in Iceland is until 18.6 years of age but only to 17.3 years for boys.

Boys and girls have the same right to be admitted to secondary school, but the girls' participation rate is slightly higher than that of boys. The study programmes chosen by girls and boys differ somewhat. Girls are in the overwhelming majority in language, fine arts, social science and health care programmes. Boys, however, are in the majority in the certified trades and technology programmes. The proportions of males and females graduating from upper secondary school in the 1999-2000 school year was almost equal. Girls, however, comprise just over 60% of pupils completing the university entrance examination.

A study of one year class in Iceland revealed that on the average women have lower self-esteem than men, and that this was related to their educational level. There are indications that study, especially completing a matriculation examination, strengthens women's self-esteem.

The government's revised action plan 2002-2004 for gender equality specifies quite a number of projects which the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture will pursue in the coming years. These include equal rights instruction in schools, efforts to combat gender-specific division of labour, increased support for research, etc. The simple existence of the action plan is an indication that work remains to be done in this area in Iceland.

Women comprise the great majority of compulsory school teachers, i.e. around 75%. Men are, however, the majority of upper secondary school teachers, or around 55%. Men form a sizeable majority of compulsory school

administrators, or 60-70%, and 70-80% of upper secondary school administrators.

At compulsory and upper secondary school levels there are no legal or formal restrictions on access to or participation in study which are gender-based. To create a school community which meets the needs of both genders, all school personnel must be conscious of the different needs of boys and girls, and the school must respond to this. Equal rights questions cannot be resolved by merely complying with the legal framework, but rather these views need to be considered at all levels and in all aspects of school efforts. Integration of equal rights perspectives into schools implies, for instance, that the school structure and instruction be examined with regard to what impact it has on the genders.

Among those factors needing action/changes in Iceland are e.g. gender differences in selection of study programmes, curriculum guides, instructional methods, instructional materials and school structure with regard to the differing needs and situation of both genders.

- *Research and studies* Various studies have been carried out in recent years on school work, relatively few of which have examined in particular the status of the genders in Icelandic schools. The following are examples of research/studies which need to be done:

Is there gender discrimination in schools? Do instructional materials reflect the world and the interests of both genders?

Examine the self-image of children and youth and their ideas, both concerning their own gender and the opposite gender. What ideas does the school present them with concerning masculinity and femininity?

Does the fact that women form the large majority of compulsory school teachers have an effect on school work?

Is it desirable to offer gender disaggregation, e.g. in some subjects?

Does the school structure and utilisation of time in school affect the well-being and achievement of boys, on the one hand, as compared to girls, on the other?

Do schools work on gender equality?

- More effective supervision of equal rights efforts in schools is needed.
- All schools comply with mandatory provisions on equal rights of both genders.
- Emphasis needs to be placed on instruction in the spirit of equal rights ideas in teacher training. Care should be taken to ensure that in-service education for teachers includes courses on gender equality in school. Other school personnel need instruction in equal rights affairs.
- Girls' self-confidence needs to be strengthened, not least to encourage a wider choice of study and employment.
- Curriculum guides and instructional materials need to be examined with regard to their impact on the study choices of girls and boys in upper secondary school.

- The national government each year awards grants in support of projects/developmental work in schools, which should be preferably partly devoted to gender equality. Such projects need to be followed up well and their conclusions presented publicly.
- *Impact of change* Changes in society, e.g. the advent of information technology (IT), need to be responded to. Furthermore, the schools' role needs to be examined in combating the negative impact of uncritical popular culture, presenting children and youth not least with a flood of violence and sex.



## Goal 6

***Improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure excellence so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and life-skills.***

According to recent results of the OECD PISA study on achievement of 15-year-old pupils in reading, mathematics and natural science, the reading achievement of Icelanders was significantly above the average for students in OECD countries. The same applies to achievement in mathematics, while in natural science there was no significant difference between the achievement of Icelandic pupils and the mean of pupils in all participating countries. It is clear, however, from comparison with those countries with the highest achievement, that there is room for substantial improvement in all the subjects included in the study. A preliminary examination of the results indicates that in Icelandic schools there is a relatively large group of pupils who are not given sufficiently demanding tasks or who do not make full use of their capacity in compulsory school.

In recent years there has been extensive discussion of specific reading difficulties and their impact on pupils' educational progress. There has been a lack of screening, diagnosis and effective training. This problem is being addressed and work on improvements is underway.

Life-skills is a relatively new subject in the school system and various actions have been taken to secure its position. Teaching life-skills in a broader sense has been supported in compulsory school, e.g. with various preventive projects aimed at making compulsory school free of drugs and alcohol and preventive measures in upper secondary schools, clearer provisions on school rules and discipline and handling these issues, actions to prevent mobbing and improve school atmosphere in general and projects aimed at increasing democratic working methods and discussion of society's ethical values. Research indicates that many pupils do not enjoy a sense of well being in their schools, cf. a recent study on how children feel at school in Reykjavík done in 2002. Co-operation between home and school needs to be strengthened in as many areas as possible and further work done on alcohol and drug prevention, for instance, by providing varied and interesting options for children and youths in social, sports and youth activities through broad-based co-operation.

Much work remains to be done in meeting the needs of pupils of foreign origin, both in gaining a good command of Icelandic and in adapting to an inclusive Icelandic society. Children need to be encouraged to show respect and tolerance for other cultures.

In the wake of the new National Curriculum Guides for preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school, increased funding was provided for study materials, not least in new fields, such as life-skills and information technology education. Funding has been provided from the developmental funds for preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school for developmental work. In recent years prioritised projects have included life-skills, reading instruction and reading difficulties, instruction of pupils whose mother tongue is not Icelandic and flexible methods of instruction at lower secondary level. The number of

hours of instruction in mathematics in compulsory school has been increased and study materials reviewed. Funds for in-service training have been used to support a great number of in-service courses for teachers emphasising the new National Curriculum Guide. Since 1999, conferences have been held each year on the use of computers and IT in schools. Since 1997 annual seminars have been arranged on development and innovation at all school levels. The school year at compulsory level has been extended from 170 to 180 days. Most compulsory schools operate only a single shift, the achievement of which has been the largest single undertaking in educational affairs in Iceland during the past decade. The number of hours of instruction weekly in compulsory school has also been increased in recent years in accordance with the Compulsory School Act of 1995, a development which has now been fully implemented.

The objective of having only qualified teachers in Icelandic schools has not been achieved. There are a considerable number of non-qualified instructors in compulsory and upper secondary schools and a large number of non-skilled workers in preschools. Effective action is needed in response to the shortage of teachers.

### **Conclusion**

The framework and organisation of schooling in Iceland does not need to be changed to achieve the objectives of the Dakar Declaration on quality in education. It is possible to make the necessary improvements under the present legislation, regulations and National Curriculum Guides. On the other hand, emphasis needs to be placed on working practices and instructional methods and various aspects of schooling arrangements; increased co-operation and more efficient working practices within schools, should be encouraged, together with improved support and specialist services for pupils, teachers and parents; and co-ordinated efforts made to improve school achievement in all areas and improve pupils' well-being. Special attention needs to be given to various handicapped groups in the school system, to bilingual students of foreign origin and to students at risk of dropping out of upper secondary school, not least boys.

In the years to come the most pressing focus is **on internal school activities at all levels**, e.g. working practices, instructional methods, atmosphere in school and study content, with the aim of increasing the quality of education both study and teaching, and not less with regard to general life-skills and pupils' well-being. Effective specialised services should be available to schools and co-operation with various parties active in sports, leisure and youth activities. Co-operation between home and school needs to be increased, from preschool right through upper secondary school. Schools should take the initiative in welcoming parental co-operation. The following is a list of individual aspects which need attention for optimal achievement of the objective of increased quality of education for all.

**Among the actions needed to increase quality of education in the coming years are the following:**

- **An inclusive school community - equal rights to education**
  - equal rights regardless of mental and physical capacity;
  - define the right of children to attend preschool;

- consider ways of offering preschool in part free of charge to parents, starting with 5-year-old children.
- **Increased links between schools and school levels**
  - provide continuity between school levels, from the beginning of preschool to the conclusion of upper secondary school;
  - increase opportunities for distance education;
  - facilitate pupils undertaking study concurrently at compulsory school and upper secondary school level;
  - reach agreement between school and home on mutual obligations and responsibility.
- **Increased participation of parents and teachers in school activities**
  - schools take the initiative in inviting parental co-operation;
  - ensure that parents are always as well informed as possible on their children's educational progress and offered information on various aspects of school activities;
  - enable parents to influence school policy formulation and the preparation of school curricula;
  - support the activities of local parents' organisations and national associations;
  - increase sharing of responsibility between home and school in the broadest sense.
- **Individually oriented and flexible instructional methods**
  - increased service and support to those who require it and also to students who excel in their studies; preparation of individual curricula for both groups;
  - more support is needed for supervisory teachers to increase co-operation among teachers.
- **Democratic working practices in schools, emphasis on democratic values**
  - increased emphasis should be given to democratic values in all school activities;
  - increase pupils' civic consciousness and emphasise obligations and responsibility in a democratic society.
- **Life-skills in school activities - compulsory and upper secondary schools free of drugs and alcohol**
  - produce educational materials and increase teacher education;
  - an overall assessment is needed of how well the introduction of life-skills has been accomplished and further development planned in response;
  - schools develop methods to assess pupils' achievement in life-skills;
  - discussion of life-skills needs to be integrated into all subjects and all teachers need to become life-skills teachers;
  - parents need to be involved in instructing their children in life-skills.
- **Co-ordinated activities of schools and all other parties in arranging sports, leisure and youth activities**

- the aim should be to increase co-ordination of compulsory study and youth activities to form a continuous programme;
  - the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture should formulate official policy in this area.
- **Language arts and mathematics should continue to be defined as core subjects in compulsory school.**
  - emphasis should be placed on providing study materials for language arts and mathematics, development work, in-service training for teachers and development of evaluation methods;
  - instruction in language arts needs to be increased and the instructional hours used for various aspects of literacy; training in reading needs to be part of all subjects;
  - support for parents of children with reading difficulties needs to be increased.
- **Specialised services and counselling**
  - specialised services and counselling needs to be increased and better co-ordinated;
  - emphasis should be placed on developing assessment and diagnostic tools;
  - co-operation between the state and local authorities in the fields of education, health and social affairs needs to be increased;
  - the right of individuals to specialised services due to handicap or learning difficulties, e.g. dyslexia, needs to be defined.
- **Dropping-out of upper secondary school pupils**
  - the drop-out rate needs to be reduced, especially among boys and pupils of foreign origin;
  - study and job counselling for pupils at all levels needs to be increased and co-operation with parents emphasised;
  - the work of supervisory teachers in upper secondary schools needs strengthening and contact with parents increased until pupils reach the age of 18 years.
- **Strengthening teacher education and increasing the number of qualified teachers in schools**
  - the aim should be to raise the proportion of qualified teachers in preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school;
  - teacher education should be strengthened, not least distance education, for instructors lacking qualifications currently employed in schools;
  - teachers should be offered in-service training and continuing education as well as further educational options;
  - the proportion of male teachers in compulsory schools needs to be increased.
- **Pupils of foreign origin**
  - a special action plan is needed to encourage the best possible education of bilingual pupils, not least in Icelandic, in order for them to be able to study in this country and stand on equal footing with other pupils;

- the action plan needs to include work in preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school, together with participation in sports, leisure and youth activities;
  - ways should be sought to provide pupils with the opportunity to develop their own mother tongue and culture;
  - work is needed to combat prejudice.
- **Assessment and evaluation of quality in education**
    - an assessment needs to be made of how successful the implementation of school policy and introduction of the 1999 National Curriculum Guides for preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school has been;
    - the results should be responded to in a suitable manner to improve internal school activities;
    - the conclusions should also form the basis for review of school policy and the National Curriculum Guides;
    - local authorities should emphasise assessment of individual aspects of school activities at preschool and compulsory school levels.

# **Icelandic Efforts in Instruction and Educational Affairs in Developing Countries**

Iceland's official bilateral development co-operation is administered by the Icelandic International Development Agency, ICEIDA. Assistance is currently directed towards four African countries, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Uganda.

The Agency's co-operative projects in the above-mentioned countries are in the areas of education, fisheries, health care and social services. The Agency's contribution is greatest in the field of education, amounting to 30% of the total assistance. The major portion of this goes to the Namibian Maritime and Fisheries Institute, in Walvis Bay, Namibia, to the Marine Training College in Monkey Bay, Malawi, and to support the Bunda College of Agriculture in Malawi.

Community projects amount to around 8%, primarily support for adult education and primary schools. Support for instruction and educational affairs in the co-operating countries totals almost 40% of Iceland's total contribution to bilateral development aid.

## **Projects in gender equality and social affairs**

It is ICEIDA's objective to make gender equality a key aspect of its projects and encourage, for instance, increasing education of women equally to men.

With regard to the objective of "literacy for all" and basic education, ICEIDA has directed its efforts to the area of adult education. Furthermore, it states that care should be taken to treat all social groups on an equitable basis.

The Agency supports projects in all these co-operating countries aimed at improving the lot of the poor, especially women and children. Adult education projects are underway in Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Uganda with the objective of increasing adult literacy, while at the same time offering instruction in the official languages of each country. Life-skills are also part of the curriculum, in the form of instruction in health care issues, social skills, law, accounting and business.

ICEIDA has built up a primary school in co-operation with the educational authorities in Malawi.

In Mozambique the Agency provides support to the Ministry for Women's and Social Affairs in developing services for the poorest groups; this service also includes instruction in reading and life-skills.

## **Co-operative projects**

ICEIDA co-operates with the governments in the four countries, their social authorities, local authorities and in some instances NGOs. The governments of the co-operating countries have agreed to work in accordance with a Poverty Reduction Strategy, where education is one of the priority tasks. The ICEIDA co-operation projects are all in accordance with official policy in each country.

In Iceland ICEIDA also co-operates with NGOs active in the field of adult and continuing education. The Icelandic Federation of Labour (ASÍ) and ICEIDA signed an agreement last September whereby ASÍ is obliged to pay 0.7% of the Federation's annual member contributions towards development aid. ASÍ will assist in projects in the area of adult education, security and occupational welfare for the working class in ICEIDA's co-operating countries.

### **Iceland's multilateral development aid in education**

The UN University operates a number of educational institutions and offers courses, often in co-operation with other universities and institutions. Two of its schools are located in Iceland, financed primarily by contributions from the Icelandic government to development co-operation. These are the UN Geothermal Training Programme, which was founded in 1975 and operated in co-operation with the National Energy Authority (*Orkustofnun*), and the UN Fisheries Training Programme, which was established in 1998 and operated in co-operation with the Icelandic Marine Research Institute. The Geothermal Training Programme has been in operation for 22 years and its graduates number over two hundred in total. The Fisheries Training Programme has been in operation for almost 5 years and 46 students have graduated from it. The great majority of these students come from countries classified as developing countries. These activities have been highly successful and their activities are expected to continue.

The policy of the Icelandic International Development Agency will continue to be to provide support for well defined projects with specific goals. Iceland's contribution to its co-operating countries is important and allocations to bilateral development assistance should be increased to enable these activities to grow and develop.