

Report of the  
Committee on Lifelong Learning

# **LIFELONG LEARNING**

*Force for a New Century*

**Ministry of Education, Science and Culture**  
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## **SUMMARY**

Proposals to increase and improve lifelong learning  
in Icelandic society

### **New attitudes towards education**

Study is a lifetime task that does not end when traditional school attendance ends but is a process lasting all one's life. It is important to emphasise this attitude in Icelandic schools. In addition, parties in the labour market can disseminate such an attitude to workplaces and employees.

### **The responsibility is everyone's**

Strengthening lifelong learning is everyone's business, and in this regard, everyone is responsible – government, parties in the labour market, organisations, companies and individuals. The main rule for lifelong learning shall be that those enjoining it pay for it. The interests of different parties, however, more often than not coincide, and then consideration shall be given to joint responsibility.

### **Clear role for the government**

The overall supervision of lifelong learning shall fall under the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture though other ministries continue to supervise lifelong learning pertaining to them. The responsibility of government in lifelong learning entails, for the most part, ensuring a good educational foundation. Other government support should especially aim at supporting those pursuing lifelong learning.

### **Five-year campaign to strengthen lifelong learning**

Over the next five years, the government shall emphasise increasing lifelong learning with a campaign aimed at increasing the offering, demand for and quality of lifelong learning.

### **Joint focus of parties in the labour market**

It is important for parties in the labour market to formulate a joint focus on matters of concern in lifelong learning and make agreements concerning rights and obligations of employees to pursue education and training. Given the joint campaign of these parties, one may expect that the competence and knowledge in the labour market will increase, and lifelong learning will become better established.

## **Initiative of companies and organisations**

Investment in education will, in the coming years, have greater impact on the performance and competitiveness of companies and their investment in equipment and technology. Changes in the labour market will demand increased emphasis on lifelong learning, and it is important that Icelandic companies take initiative in this development and thus ensure that it will be best utilised in the economy.

## **Increased responsibility of individuals**

With changes in the educational system and the labour market, individuals' responsibility increases for their own education. An increase in part-time jobs, temporary or project-related hirings, more self-employed people and fewer jobs not demanding special education as well as modern technology result in a work force that is much more mobile than before. This entails new opportunities for individuals, and the key to utilising this development is continuous education and training.

## **Second chance for study**

Adults must be offered another chance to resume studies or improve their previous education. For those not having completed studies, open, co-ordinated examinations could facilitate access to such studies and further education. Adult education departments in other secondary schools and universities must make greater provision for the requirements for lifelong learning and the needs of adults.

## **Improved access to information and counselling**

Good access to information and professional counselling for individuals and companies are necessary pre-requisites to increase lifelong learning. Information about lifelong learning must be available, and being able to obtain such information easily is important. This makes all counselling more purposeful and facilitates companies and individuals in formulating plans concerning lifelong learning.

## **Diverse offering of studies**

A diverse offering of lifelong learning studies, both within the school system and in the general market, must be available so that as many as possible can find appropriate courses for themselves. This is important, both for companies and individuals. If things are handled properly, a dynamic line of work, building on the dissemination of knowledge and training, will develop in Iceland.

## **Collaboration of business community and schools**

It is necessary for education in the school system to fulfil the requirements for employees in the labour market. Consultation and collaboration is therefore necessary between schools and the business community concerning the emphases in lifelong learning. Such collaboration is to the advantage of both parties since good education pays off in more competent employees in the labour market, and better utilisation of the business community's knowledge can support more purposeful education.

### **From courses to self-study programs**

Modern study requirements call for changes in the arrangement of studies that has prevailed till now. The emphasis will be on more specialised paths in lifelong learning, where consumers mould study programmes in greater measure to their own wishes and needs. Self-study and distance learning will be added to traditional courses, and this will create new opportunities for individuals and companies in lifelong learning.

### **Better foundations for lifelong learning plans**

Individuals and companies will increasingly make their own lifelong learning plans for the future. Such plans are in the spirit of lifelong learning where studies are pursued in many places and over a long period. The best results will come when small and medium-sized companies unite concerning training efforts and thus build a network of contacts between themselves and within certain occupational fields.

### **Quality requirements**

The evaluation of quality should be an integral part of training. In lifelong learning, there must be assurance of minimal consumer protection. This is best accomplished in the general market and in collaboration with the parties most involved in lifelong learning since government supervision could dampen initiative and hinder progress and innovation.

### **Utilisation of information technology**

With the advent of information technology, new opportunities in lifelong learning are opening up. Access to information improves; exchange of information will become easier, and programmes in self-study and distance learning will increase in number. This technology must be utilised to the utmost to strengthen lifelong learning in Iceland, but for this to be possible, the computer literacy of those least able to utilise this technology must be beefed up.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, the concept of lifelong learning has continually assumed greater importance in discussions of educational affairs. This report formulates the concept of lifelong learning as a lifetime effort. The individual acquires knowledge and competence in his younger years and pursues studies within the school system in compulsory education, upper secondary school and university. He can do this continuously or with breaks, work, go to school again or pursue studies while working. A large part of lifelong learning is any kind of continuing education in shorter or longer courses, many kinds of additional education and leisure studies.

Thus, lifelong learning entails a new attitude toward education, where individuals no longer aim at completing their studies once and for all, but rather plan for education to be a process lasting throughout life – from the cradle to the grave. Lifelong learning, more than anything else, refers to this new reality and thus changes our former understanding of the importance of education and entails new ways to constantly renew previous knowledge and acquire new knowledge. This new vision of education was described by the UNESCO Committee on Education in the 21st Century:

In this future vision, there is no room for traditional answers to educational requirements, i.e., answers primarily referring to the quantity and accumulation of knowledge. It is not sufficient to prepare each child early in life with a fund of knowledge that will then nourish the child from then on. Each and every one must be made capable of utilising opportunities for lifelong learning, both to strengthen his or her own knowledge and competence and add to this for adapting to a changeable and complex world, where everything depends on something else. (UNESCO, 1996: 1)

Great changes have occurred in recent decades that are related, among other things, to the internationalisation of the economy, developments in science and technology, the changed age distribution of the population, increased mobility of the work force and new opportunities entailed in the information and knowledge society. Because of this, there is a continual renewal of knowledge and training necessary for everyone wanting to ensure a place for themselves in modern society. This pertains equally to individuals, work places and societies. We can expect that individuals with more education will have increased opportunities for better paid jobs and will cope less with unemployment; workplaces ministering to the lifelong learning of employees and managers will be more competitive, and societies emphasising good education will create better living standards and prosperity.

A study of the National Economic Institute (1997) points out that if the average school attendance of the labour force rises by 1%, this will most likely result in 0.3% economic growth in a specific year, other things being equal. Research in the United States indicates that if the education of employees in a workplace increases by 10%, then productivity increases by up to 3-4%, for not only the workers involved but also their closest co-workers. In addition, recent studies by the OECD have indicated that at the same time as people on the job market increase by only 2% per year, the need for knowledge of these people increases many times more quickly, or by 7%, which shows the importance of individuals' continually increasing their knowledge and training (Soete, 1997). Because of this, lifelong learning is a force that could ensure increased prosperity for individuals, companies and societies.

The Minister of Education, Science and Culture appointed a Committee on Lifelong learning on 7 April 1997. According to the committee's letter of appointment, its function is to outline a comprehensive policy on lifelong learning matters, covering the following points, among others:

1. Definition of responsibility and functions and the division of tasks between the government and parties in the labour market.
2. How the efforts of various parties in society may be co-ordinated so that financing, teaching efforts, educational materials and facilities are best utilised.
3. How a professional and financial support system shall be built up in the Icelandic business community to assist companies, especially small and medium-sized companies, in evaluating their needs for knowledge and competency regarding employees, the building up of studies offered and ensuring access to lifelong learning.

The committee's first meeting was held on 17 April 1997. Through the spring, the committee met every two weeks, but then the committee was split into two workgroups that worked through the fall. One of the groups dealt with job-related lifelong learning, while the other group dealt with general lifelong learning. On 19 August, the entire committee met together, and both work groups then presented their proposals for further committee work. Since last fall, the committee has held meetings once a week, on average, for one and half hours each time. A break was taken from the committee work from 18 December to 19 January, at which time a draft of the committee's report became available. There were altogether 36 meetings.

The Committee on Lifelong learning consisted of the following parties:

Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir, political scientist, chairman.

Ásta Thórarinsdóttir, economist with Bank Supervision, Central Bank of Iceland, representative for the Ministry of Finance.

Elna Katrín Jónsdóttir, Chairman of The Icelandic Teachers' Union, representative of the Confederation of University Graduates.

Gerður G. Óskarsdóttir, Superintendent of Schools in Reykjavík, representative for the Union of Local Authorities in Iceland.

Gudni Níels Adalsteinsson, economist, representative for the Confederation of Icelandic Employers. Jónína Gissurardóttir replaced him on 14 October 1997.

Gudný Helgadóttir, department head, representative for the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Gudrún Eyjólfsdóttir, specialist, representative for the Ministry of Fisheries.

Gylfi Kristinsson, department head, representative for the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Hákon Sigurgrímsson, department head, representative for the Ministry of Agriculture.

Ingi Bogi Bogason, representative for training affairs and public relations at the Federation of Icelandic Industries, representative for the federation.

Jóhann Geirdal, Chairman of the Sudurnes Office and Store Workers' Union, representative for the Icelandic Federation of Labour.

Jón Júlíusson, Chairman of the Personnel Department of Kópavogur Town, representative for the Federation of State and Municipal Employees.

Jón Sigurdsson, Managing Director, representative of the Association of Co-operative Employers.

Jóhanna Rósa Arnardóttir, sociologist and specialist at the University of Iceland's Social Sciences Institute, worked as an employee of the committee.



## **1. STATUS OF LIFELONG LEARNING IN ICELAND**

The status of lifelong learning in Iceland is evaluated here on the basis of available information and data about lifelong learning and the studies that have been done on lifelong learning in Iceland in previous years. Information has also been gathered through direct studies or by processing information from the findings of other studies. It should be stated that the lack of such information somewhat hampers a summary of this kind. No comprehensive evaluation has been done of the status of lifelong learning in Iceland; in addition, few studies have been done on what is offered in the field of lifelong learning or the demand for it by companies or individuals.

### **1.1 Government and labour market parties**

As an area of concern, lifelong learning does not belong under any single ministry. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has overall supervision of educational affairs. Job education in the business community falls under the Ministry of Social Affairs, job training in fish processing under the Ministry of Fisheries according to the Act on job education in the business community, no. 19/1992, and agricultural education falls under the Ministry of Agriculture. Other ministries are involved in lifelong learning in their areas of concern, either through the continuing education of employees or through the organisations pertaining to them. These are the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health and Social Security, the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

The Minister of Education, Science and Culture has overall supervision of the public education system and general adult education. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has supervision of adult education departments in upper secondary schools under Act no. 80/1996 on upper secondary schools. In addition, it is therein decided which other studies shall be evaluated as study units in the general school system. Job-related lifelong learning falls under the Ministry of the Education, Science and Culture regarding work studies at the upper secondary school level and job-related continuing education courses organised by upper secondary schools or universities. The operation of compulsory schools has been transferred to local governments, but the Minister of Education, Science and Culture issues the main curriculum for compulsory schools, regulations on schooling and a reference timetable of the division of classes into subject areas and is responsible for the publication of educational materials and the implementation of co-ordinated examinations.

According to Act no. 80/1996 on upper secondary schools and the regulations on adult education and continuing education no. 279/1997, upper secondary schools may, upon obtaining approval from the Minister of Education, Science and Culture, organise continuing education courses or other kinds of courses in collaboration with professional societies or unions, employers or other special interest and interest groups. The cost of such studies shall be segregated from other school activities, and they shall be fully paid for by the parties organising the courses with the schools or with participation fees. According to the law, with the consent of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, schools may also establish adult education centres in co-operation with local authorities, professional societies, unions, employers or other

special interest and interest groups. The centres are intended to organise and operate training and information services for adults. One adult training centre has been founded, the Sudurnes Centre for Lifelong learning.

Financial support by the government of lifelong learning in the labour market has been moulded, for the most part, by the Act on job education in the business community of 1992. According to the act, the government's function, among other things, is to encourage increased job education in the business community, support organised job education, preparation, the production of course and teaching materials, teaching and job training. The Ministry of Social Affairs should also collect information about job-related lifelong learning. In addition, under further provisions in the regulation, it is supposed to publicise and provide information about the job education being offered and the study and teaching materials that it has at its disposal.

The Job Education Council is responsible for implementation of the Act on job education in the business community. Its function, among others, is to allocate grants from the Job Education Fund and advise the government on policy formulation and procedures in the field of job-related lifelong learning. The council consists of seven representatives: one from the Ministry of Social Affairs, three from employer associations (two from the Confederation of Icelandic Employers and one from the Association of Co-operative Employers), three from wage earner associations (two from the Icelandic Federation of Labour and one from the Federation of State and Municipal Employees), one observer from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and one from the Directorate of Labour.

In addition to having seats in the Job Education Council, labour market representatives have seats in various councils and committees involved in issue areas of lifelong learning in the forum of school and employment affairs. Through agreements concerning wages and terms on the employment market, these associations also influence the rights of individuals to pursue lifelong learning. Most larger employer and wage earner associations have formulated their own educational policy where their emphases in areas of concern in lifelong learning are set out.

## **1.2 The school system and lifelong learning**

In the 1995-1996 school year, there were 197 general compulsory schools operating in Iceland in addition to seven special schools for students with special needs. In 1997 there were 36 upper secondary schools in Iceland, of which nine were upper secondary grammar schools, 15 upper secondary comprehensive schools, two trade schools, two vocational schools and eight special schools (the University of Iceland Research Service, 1997a). Ten schools offer studies at the university level, and the number of them decreased from the previous year since the Icelandic College for School Teachers, the Icelandic Training College of Physical Education, the Iceland Teachers' Training College and the Icelandic School for Educators of the Mentally Retarded formed the Icelandic University of Education. According to Act no. 78/1994 on preschools, preschools are the first level in the school system and are intended for children below the age for compulsory schooling. This report addresses issues of concern to preschools, and it can be said that the foundation for lifelong learning of individuals is laid immediately at this first level of schooling.

In the Icelandic school system, there are, on average, about 4000 students in each year group. In the fall semester 1996, there were about 42,000 students in compulsory schools, about 17,700 in upper secondary schools (day schools) and nearly 7900 in schools at the university level (Statistical Bureau of Iceland, 1997a). In 1995-1996, there were nearly 2000 individuals studying abroad, mainly in Europe and North America. Approximately 90% of a year group attend upper secondary schools; of this, the largest part are in general studies, but about 25-30% are in vocational studies (University of Iceland Research Service, 1997a).

There are about 3000 students per semester in the adult education departments of upper secondary schools. In a survey done by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (1996b) on participation in adult education departments, it surfaces that about 70% of the students were under 30. Under the present arrangement, people can get credit for their job experience, including housework, for up to 16 units. Placement examinations are offered in English, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, German, Italian, Spanish, French, mathematics (the two first courses) and computer science. As can be seen in Figure 1, the number of students, aged 35 or older, engaged in studies within the school system tripled since 1980 (OECD, 1997a; Statistical Bureau of Iceland, 1996; Jón Torfi Jónasson, 1994).

(Text for Figure 1):

(legend for graph): 35-39; 40-49; 50 and older; everyone 35 and older

(caption): Figure 1. School attendance of students, aged 35 and older. (Statistical Bureau of Iceland, 1996)

The educational level of Icelanders is rising since more people complete their studies now than several years ago. In 1996, 50% of a year group graduated from upper secondary schools (as a percentage of the number of people aged 20). This proportion was 37% in 1986 (Statistical Bureau of Iceland, 1997a). In an OECD summary (1997a), it surfaces that the educational level of the nation is increasing since proportionally fewer Icelanders, aged 16-74, had only a compulsory school education in 1995 (43%), while in 1991 this figure was 50%. During the same period, the number of those finishing upper secondary school studies and university studies increased.

However, the dropout rate from the Icelandic school system seems to be considerable. An OECD summary (1997a) shows that the dropout rate in Iceland is about 30-35% of a year group (under 25 years of age). On the basis of these figures, it can be estimated that about 65-70% complete diplomas at the upper secondary school level. Of these, about 50% of a year group graduate with advanced level examinations, while about 15-20% complete vocational training. On the basis of the OECD summary (1997a), in Iceland about 10% fewer students graduate from upper secondary schools than in the average OECD state, which is about 80% of students. In addition, the division between academic and vocational studies is different in Iceland than in OECD states, where 37% graduate from general upper secondary schools and 42% from vocational studies.

A study on the educational level of a year group born in 1969 (done when the participants were 24-25 years old) showed that these people seemed to take a long time to complete upper secondary schooling, and that it was common to take a temporary break from studies (Gerdur G. Óskarsdóttir, 1965). Approximately 45% of the year group had completed studies six years after compulsory schooling was completed, while 58% of the year group did so eight years after the completion of compulsory schooling. Despite these explanations, the dropout rate is high since 42% of the year group had not completed studies eight years after completing compulsory schooling. If this finding is compared with the OECD summary (1997a), there seems, on the other hand, to be some reduction in the dropout rate from upper secondary school curricula in Iceland over the last several years.

The dropout rate of students in adult education departments is also considerable since only about half of those registering for studies complete courses with an examination (survey of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 1996b). There also seems to be a high dropout rate from universities since about 50% of those beginning courses of study finish an approved curriculum (OECD, 1997a).

As surfaces in Table 1, the dropout rate appears to be higher in rural areas than in the capital city area (Gerdur G. Óskarsdóttir, 1995). On the other hand, one must note that there is a difference in the dropout rates from courses depending on the school in the countryside involved.

**Table 1. School attendance in the capital city area compared with rural areas at age 24-25.**

	Capital city area %	Rural areas %
Not continuing into upper secondary school	6.3	13.9
Upper secondary school not completed	29.4	36.9
Two years of upper secondary school completed	1.4	3.5
Trade school or vocational school completed	12.4	14.5
Diploma received from upper secondary school	40.3	22.1
Specialised training completed at university level	1.4	4.1
University degree completed	8.9	5.0
Total number	429	317

(Source: Gerdur G. Óskarsdóttir, 1995)

In the fall semester of 1995 there were about 46% in the 20-year-old age group registered for studies in Reykjavik, but 33% in the West Fjords, 34% in the N-Iceland (West) and 37% in S-Iceland (Statistical Bureau of Iceland, 1996).

In a curriculum process survey of a year group born in 1969, the people who had not completed an approved upper secondary school curriculum were asked why they had not continued studies. About 38% said they had quit for lack of interest, about 18% because of lack of funds, about 12% because they found school boring. On the other hand, when people were asked whether they were interested in further studies, over 80% said they were (Jón Torfi Jónasson and Gudbjörg Andrea Jónsdóttir, 1992).

### **1.3 Education parties and offering of studies**

Studies on lifelong learning outside the public school system agree that, on the whole, the offering of studies in Iceland is large (University of Iceland Research Service, 1997a and 1997b; Kristján Bragason, 1996; Stefán Baldursson and Börkur Hansen, 1992). Many parties involved in education, such as schools, associations, unions and companies offer education and training intended to meet the needs of the market for lifelong learning.

Sammennt and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers sponsored a survey on the scope of lifelong learning in Icelandic companies in 1995. The survey included 527 companies within the Confederation of Icelandic Employers with 10 employees or more in addition to the largest companies in the Iceland Chamber of Commerce. Answers were obtained from a total of 374 companies. Among other things, it surfaced in the survey that in 27% of cases, employees attended courses given by private parties; in 22% of cases, their companies organised the courses; in 9% of cases, employees attended courses given by the industry's training organisations, and 1% of courses were held in upper secondary schools.

The offering of studies outside the school system may be divided into several main categories, depending on their intended target group. For example, there are courses for university-educated people, courses for people with specialised education at the upper secondary school level, courses that confer specific job rights and courses for specified occupational groups to increase their competence on the job without, however, conferring any special rights. In addition, there are many general courses being offered that are open to all those interested in attending them. Here various courses for hobbies, computers, languages, management and operations can be mentioned. In workplaces, courses are held for recruits, among others, and there are courses related to new technology and changed work procedures. In many larger companies, such activities are the responsibility of a director of training, and the number of these courses has increased in the last several years (Sammennt and CIE, 1996). In addition, unemployed people have been offered various courses to improve their general educational foundation or to strengthen their position in the labour market.

It has become more common for continuing education in certain trades to be conducted in the upper secondary schools seeing to the basic education in that trade. In this regard, the continuing education of paramedics in the Ármúli Upper Secondary Comprehensive School, continuing education in the automotive trades that is conducted in the Automotive Trade Training Centre in Borgarholtsskóli and continuing education in shipmaster and marine engineer studies held in the College of Navigation and Marine Engineering may be mentioned. Continuing education in agriculture is conducted in schools of agricultural science. Various upper secondary schools in the countryside have offered continuing education and leisure courses in the field of tour guiding. There are six schools for tour guiding: the Tour Guiding School of the West Fjords, the Tour Guiding School of N-Iceland (West), the Thingeyjar Tour Guiding School, the Tour Guiding School of E-Iceland and the Tour Guiding School of S-Iceland.

It is more common than before for parties involved in instruction to collaborate amongst themselves concerning lifelong learning. The latest collaborative efforts in this area are centres for lifelong learning, which were mentioned previously. This builds on the provisions of Article 35 of the Act on upper secondary schools. One such centre is beginning operations in Sudurnes and is operated as a private institution. Its primary intended purpose is to provide services falling outside of traditional upper secondary school tasks. In addition, it is a part of strengthening collaboration between the business community and schools and strengthening relations between basic and continuing education. In several trades, several training centres are also operating, such as The Electrical, Electronic and Telecommunications Training Centre, National Centre for Construction Education, Automotive Trade Training Centre, Icelandic National Council for Education in the Metal Industries, Graphic Arts Institute and Educational Council for Hotels, Food and Catering. Various parties in industry collaborate on lifelong learning, and the Community and Industrial Teaching Centre is a facility for the holding of various courses that, among other things, are aimed at strengthening smaller trades, co-ordinating the holding of courses and thus reducing costs.

The Workers Educational Association (WEA) is the teaching organisation of the Icelandic Federation of Labour. Under the auspices of the WEA, the Workers Social School and Mímir-Hobbies School operate. The Workers Social School organises instruction and social affairs and general education for members of the IFL and Federation of State and Municipal Employees under the act on the school. The Mímir-Hobbies School is operated as an independent company, and the school is open to everyone. The school has independent finances. Under the auspices of the WEA, job education is conducted for unskilled workers. In addition, there are diverse courses held in co-operation with various unions, associations, companies in organisations.

The Technological Institute of Iceland has a special department for the Icelandic business community, and about 16% of the organisation's operating costs go for lifelong learning (University of Iceland Research Service, 1997b). Various courses have been offered there, for both skilled and unskilled industrial workers. In addition, training materials have been prepared there.

Access to work-related lifelong learning for various trades and workgroups seems to vary. Four national federations within the IFL and Sókn, Union of Assistants in Hospitals, etc., have made a study among their unions on job education in the business community for wage earners outside certified trades. There, among other things, it surfaced that the offering of courses is small, and that it is therefore hardly possible to speak of job-related lifelong learning (Kristján Bragason, 1996). The offering of courses for people having little basic education also seems to be less than for those having more education, which could partially explain the smaller attendance at courses for this group (Jón Torfi Jónasson, 1992b).

The Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Iceland and the Iceland University of Education have seen to continuing education for university-educated people. Several university associations, the Technological Institute of Iceland and the University of Iceland organise the Institute of Continuing Education. There, studies open to people who are not university-educated have also been offered.

In the general market, there are a great number of companies seeing to studies and the holding of courses, such as computer schools, business and administration schools, tourism schools and language schools. As previously mentioned, there are also examples of companies and organisations seeing to the instruction of their own employees, such as local governments, banks, insurance companies, the police and various larger companies.

## 1.4 Participants in the labour market

There are about 150,000 people in the Icelandic labour market. The division of the workforce by education is seen in Table 2. According to a labour market survey by the Statistical Bureau of Iceland (1997b), about one-third of the Icelandic labour force has only compulsory-school education, about 39% have a secondary school education, and less than 15% specialised education and under 14% a university education. Unemployment in Iceland was about 3.8% in November 1997, highest among those having only completed compulsory schooling, or about 6.5%, but less among those with more education.

Table 2. Work force, participation in labour market and unemployment by education.

	Work force	Percentage	Participation in labour market	Unemployment
Compulsory schooling	49,000	32.6	74.7	6.5
Upper secondary schooling	58,700	39.1	82.1	3.2
Specialised schooling	22,000	14.6	90.6	2.0
University education	20,500	13.6	94.1	1.2
Total	150,300	100.0	82.0	3.8

(Reference: Labour Market Survey, Statistical Bureau of Iceland, 1997b)

Figure 2 shows the part of the labour force having only a compulsory school education, broken down by age. Proportionally, most are in the youngest age group, i.e., 20-24 years old, and about 44% of this group have only a compulsory school education. This is explained by the fact that people take a long time to complete upper secondary schooling. For example, the average age of those completing trade school is about 25. In the age groups of 25-29, 30-39 and 40-49, there are about 21-25% with only a compulsory school education. About 28% of those aged 50-59 and less than 38% of the work force aged 60 and older have only a compulsory school education.

(Caption text)

Figure 2. Proportion of labour force with compulsory school education by age, 1997.

(Source: Statistical Bureau of Iceland, labour market surveys)

When people's participation in lifelong learning is studied, it is important to examine certain factors, such as education, status in the labour market, gender, age, residence and how long since someone was on school. In the previously mentioned survey of

Sammennt and the CIE (1996), a high correlation surfaced between education and participation in job training courses. The survey's findings indicate that about 79% of university-educated people take advantage of such courses; 49% of employees with an upper secondary school diploma or some other upper secondary school certificate, 31% of employees with a trade school or technical education, but only 22% of employees that have only completed compulsory schooling (see Table 3). This finding is in accordance with a survey that was done, Participation of Employees in the Job-related Lifelong learning in 1990 (Stefán Baldursson and Börkur Hansen, 1992).

Table 3. Participation of employees in lifelong learning in companies belonging to the CIE and the Iceland Chamber Of Commerce 1995, by education level.

	Proportion of employees attending courses
Compulsory schooling	22%
Trade school or technical education	31%
Upper secondary school graduate, other upper secondary school certificate	49%
University education	79%

The largest part of courses in the survey by Sammennt and CIE (1996) was intended for specialists (72%), middle management (52%), technical people (50%), office workers (50%) and managers (47%), but general employees attended courses less often (24%). This same tendency can be seen in most of Iceland's neighbouring countries (European Commission, 1997; OECD, 1997b; Davies, N., 1996; Gerður G. Óskarsdóttir, 1995).

No gender difference in lifelong learning appears in Iceland. Proportionally, equally many men and women seem to attend courses (Sammennt and CIE, 1996; Stefán Baldursson and Börkur Hansen, 1992). On the other hand, a gender difference surfaces in the kind of studies people enrol in. Women prefer to attend studies in business, communications and upbringing, while men prefer to attend courses related to technical subjects. This gender division between subject areas seems to apply equally outside and inside the school system. Men, on the other hand, seem to attend courses more often during working hours than women (Stefán Baldursson and Börkur Hansen, 1992).

In a report from the University of Iceland Research Service (1997a), an attempt was made to evaluate the status of job-related lifelong learning in Iceland. It surfaced there that what appeared to be most determinative of who attended courses and who did not was technical change, increased competition between companies and innovations in work procedures. This was also seen in the survey of Sammennt and CIE (1996), where companies thought the greatest need was for quality management courses (26%) and professional courses (25%), and employees most commonly attended



professional courses (32%), courses on office technology (21%), communications/service (20%) and quality management (14%).

In surveys done by the Agricultural College of Hvanneyri and the Electricians' Union of Iceland, it surfaced that those who are younger and have recently completed studies are the most diligent in seeking job-related lifelong learning in their occupations (Kristjana Haflidadóttir, Gudbjörg Einarsdóttir, Svandís Edda Ragnarsdóttir and Oddný Kristín Gudmundsdóttir, 1997; Agricultural College of Hvanneyri, 1996). It also seems that wealthier farmers are more interested in continuing education than those who are less well off (Agricultural College of Hvanneyri, 1996). On the other hand, there seems to be no difference between the participation of people in such studies with regard to residence, i.e., the capital city area work versus the countryside (Jón Torfi Jónasson, 1992a; Stefán Baldursson and Börkur Hansen, 1992).

A study was done on the participation of people in leisure time courses in 1992. According to the survey, about 16% of respondents attended some course over the 12 months prior to the survey, and about 70% of them had attended one course. About 75% of respondents paid the course fee themselves. Only leisure time courses were involved in 35% of instances; in 50% of instances, people attended language courses, 14% job-related courses and 11% of courses were related to accident prevention and first-aid (Jón Torfi Jónasson, 1992). When participation in courses was compared with people's education, it came to light that 20% had earned an academic diploma in upper secondary schools or a university degree, while only 12% of participants had completed compulsory schooling or less. It is also noteworthy that wage payers seemed more likely to pay for courses attended by university-educated people (30%) than for other groups (10%). Women (82%) were also more likely to pay the cost for courses than men (65%).

The survey of Sammennt and CIE (1996) indicates that about 18% of women and 19% of men attend job training courses during the year. This corresponds to about 26,000 individuals having attended some such course in 1995. According to a survey of the University of Iceland Social Sciences Institute in December 1987, 23% of those asked had attended at least one course during working hours, and about 15% had been to at least one course outside working hours (Jón Torfi Jónasson, 1988). There are no comparable surveys from other periods, and it is therefore difficult to assess whether course attendance has increased, stayed about the same or even decreased. On the other hand, a comparison for a five-year period should that 17% more companies organised job-related lifelong learning in 1995 than in 1990 (Sammennt and CIE 1996).

As previously mentioned, lifelong learning of employees can also occur inside workplaces. About 50% of employees, aged 24-25, report having got job training on their first day of work (Gerdur G. Óskarsdóttir, 1995). Special attention was paid to the group of people not receiving training to assess whether previous studies had affected training in the workplace. Of those having completed some upper secondary school studies, 29% had not got job training on the first day of work. On the other hand, about 50% of those not having completed any defined upper secondary school

studies did not receive such training. This indicates that people who have completed some upper secondary school studies are more likely to get job training on their first day of work than those who have not completed such studies.

A report of the University of Iceland Research Service (1997a) collected information about the number of participants in job-related lifelong learning and the number of such courses in 1995 at the main professional associations, research organisations and other government organisations. No information was available on how many courses each participant attended; thus, if one individual attended 10 courses, he was counted as 10 participants. Also, there was no information about participation and education parties in the general market. The main findings were that, overall, about 15,000 participants attended 935 courses at these training organisations in 1995. Under the auspices of professional associations and other associations in the business community, such as trade training centres, unions and various associations, there were nearly 9000 participants at 620 courses. Under the auspices of the Technological Institute of Iceland and the Icelandic Fisheries Laboratories, there were 1640 participants at 106 courses. At the courses held by government organisations, such as the State Police College, School of the Iceland Fire Authority, the Reykjavik Municipal Evening School and the State Customs Officers School, there were about 3900 participants at 209 courses (University of Iceland Research Service, 1997a).

It can be difficult to evaluate precisely the difference in total participation in job-related lifelong learning between countries since comparable courses or studies are not always involved. It is also clear that in many countries it is difficult to distinguish between people's participation in on-the-job training and job-related lifelong learning. On the other hand, it appears that the participation of employees in Iceland in job-related lifelong learning is among the lowest anywhere. For example, figures from five OECD states indicate that participation in job-related lifelong learning for people aged 25-64 during a 12-month period was least in Canada, or about 28%, and greatest in Finland, or about 45%. The participation in Germany, Switzerland and the United States was in the range of 33% to 35% (OECD, 1997b).

## **1.5 Size of companies and lifelong learning**

There are proportionally more small companies on the Icelandic labour market than in many other places in Europe. This is seen, for example, in the fact that the average number of employees at companies in EU states is 6.4 versus 3.5 in Iceland. If Icelandic companies are categorised by the European standard into small (1-9 employees), little (10-49 employees), medium-large (50-249 employees) and large (250 employees or more), then only about 13% of the Icelandic labour force works in large companies (see Figure 3).

(Text around pie chart):

Icelandic	English
Smá	small

Lítill	little
Meðalstór	medium-large
Stór	large

Figure 3. Proportion of labour force by size of company.  
(Source: University of Iceland Research Service, 1997b)

Findings of the studies show that job-related lifelong learning is more common in large companies than in small ones (European Commission, 1997; IKEI, 1997). This is in agreement with the findings of the Sammennt and CIE survey (1996), which investigated participation in job training courses by companies' size and type of operations and confirmed that little companies minister to lifelong learning less than big ones. On the other hand, there are small companies, for example, in software and industry, with good job training (University of Iceland Research Service, 1997b). It seems to be rarest for companies in construction, fishing and the fishing industry to attend to lifelong learning. It is commonest for people at financial and insurance companies to attend job training courses.

Table 4. Participation in job training courses by size of company within the CIE and the Iceland Chamber of Commerce in 1995

	Participation	No participation
10-15 employees	48%	52%
16-20 employees	40%	61%
21-30 employees	70%	30%
31-50 employees	69%	31%
51-100 employees	79%	21%
More than 100 employees	90%	10%
Total	67%	33%

(Source : Sammennt and CIE, 1996)

A recent European survey on the participation of small, little and medium-large companies in lifelong learning, on the other hand, indicates that this is relatively well ministered to in Iceland (IKEI, 1997). There were altogether 840 industrial companies from 11 European countries in the IKEI survey. In Iceland, this survey covered 78 industrial companies, of which 25 were small companies, 26 little companies and 27 medium-large companies. The findings indicate that in Iceland, 77% of the companies have ministered to lifelong learning. By comparison, it appeared that about 69% of the Norwegian companies attend to lifelong learning, 65% of French companies, but only 32% of Portuguese companies. Another noteworthy thing about the IKEI survey (1997) is that about 32% of medium-large companies say that they make training plans for employees, about 12% of little companies but under 2% of small companies. On the other hand, in Iceland only 9% of the companies made training plans for their employees.

The main reasons given for the low rate of employee participation in small and little companies (50 employees or fewer) are, on the one hand, that it is difficult to send people during working hours since no one can fill in for the employees attending courses and, on the other, cost. It also appeared that the offering of courses did not coincide with the needs of little and medium-large companies (IKEI, 1997). More factors are believed to hinder lifelong learning, such as little time to devote to it, shortages of professional people or low interest among employees or management (Sammennt and CIE, 1996).

## 1.6 Cost

Government expenditures for educational affairs in 1996 were ISK 25.9 billion, or 5.34% of domestic production. Of this amount, about ISK 13.2 billion went to compulsory schools (51%), about 7.1 billion to the upper secondary school level (27%) and about 3.1 billion to the university level (12%). The administrative costs and loans for studies were about ISK 2.5 billion (10%) (National Economic Institute, 1997). Government expenditures in 1996 on education were considerably greater than in the last several years (see Table 5).

If the expenditures of the government on compulsory schools, upper secondary schools and universities are compared with the average in OECD states and the Nordic countries, it is seen that the average expenditure of OECD states was 4.9% of domestic production in 1993, 6.7% in Nordic countries and 5.1% in Iceland. It thus seems that expenditures for education in Iceland are similar to the average amount spent in OECD states.

Table 5. Expenditures of the government and homes for education 1990-1996, as a proportion of GNP.

	Government expenditures	Home expenditures	Total expenditures for education	% of homes of total expenditures
1996	5.34	0.78	6.12	12.68
1995	4.88	0.76	5.65	13.47
1994	4.88	0.78	5.66	13.75
1993	5.04	0.78	5.82	13.42
1992	5.20	0.71	5.91	11.93
1991	5.09	0.71	5.80	12.26
1990	4.88	0.69	5.57	12.38

(Source: National Economic Institute, 1997)

The total cost for courses and the holding of courses outside the school system is not available. The budget act for the current year states the direct contribution of the State for lifelong learning to various parties outside the school system. On the other hand, this information is not exhaustive, and it is not clear how large a share goes directly to lifelong learning. About ISK 200 million will be allocated from the unemployment insurance fund for the holding of courses, intensive campaigns and other solutions for the unemployed under the Budget Act of 1998. In addition, about ISK 50 million is earmarked for job education in the business community under the previously

mentioned act. The government also grants funds directly to certain education parties, such as the Workers' School of Social Affairs, which gets nearly ISK 21 million in direct support in addition to other contributions for the holding of courses. Others receiving direct grants under the budget act for lifelong learning are the School of the Iceland Fire Authority (nearly ISK 9 million), the Iceland School of Aviation (ISK 9.7 million), Maritime Safety and Survival Training Centre (36.2 million) and the Unemployed Youths' Job Training Programme (ISK 10 million). In addition, various ministries have supported lifelong learning in the occupations related to their purview. Thus, the Productivity Fund supports lifelong learning in agriculture with ISK 18-20 million each year (Productivity Fund of Agriculture, 1996), and the Ministry of Fisheries Job Education Committee in Fish Processing with about ISK 10 million annually. In addition to this, the government as employers contributes funds to lifelong learning of various kinds, such as continuing education at the Iceland University of Education (ISK 20.7 million) and continuing education in upper secondary schools (ISK 28.2 million) (Budget Act, 1998). One can suppose that government support for lifelong learning is considerably more since the support coming from local governments all over Iceland is not counted here. For example, the City of Reykjavik supported the Reykjavik Municipal Evening School with ISK 50 million in 1998, and the Town of Kópavogur supported the Kópavogur Evening School with ISK 6 million in 1997 (Reykjavik Education Centre, 1997; oral source: Guðrún Einarsdóttir, Chief Accountant of the Town of Kópavogur).

The total cost for companies because of lifelong learning is also unclear. It is estimated that a company with 10 employees or more pays about ISK 800 million per year because of job training courses for its employees (University of Iceland Research Service, 1997b). In 1995, the outlay of companies in the CIE and the Iceland Chamber of Commerce having 10 or more employees was, on average, ISK 123,000, or 0.18% of turnover for the year (Sammennt and CIE, 1996). In 1990, the average cost of job-related lifelong learning was estimated to be 0.27% of companies' turnover in Iceland (Stefán Baldursson and Børkur Hansen, 1992).

As appears above in Table 5, the fees paid for education by homes (such as for courses, music schools, dance schools, registration fees, fees for material) was about ISK 3.8 billion, or 0.78% of domestic production. The combined expenditures for the government and homes are thus more than 6.1% of domestic production, which corresponds to a total per capita expenditure for education in Iceland of about ISK 110,235 (National Economic Institute, 1997). The payments by homes in Iceland to government educational organisations is about 1% of the GNP, which is similar to the average figure of the OECD, but more than the expenditure in our neighbouring Nordic countries (National Economic Institute, 1997). According to the Statistical Bureau of Iceland (1997c), families in Iceland allocated, on average, ISK 7000 per year to courses for hobbies, music and language learning outside the school system, which corresponds to ISK 665 million, including the cost for participation of children in courses.

## **2. PROPOSALS FOR A GOVERNMENT POLICY AND FIVE-YEAR INTENSIVE CAMPAIGN**

The scope of lifelong learning is growing continuously in the Icelandic community. To meet this development halfway, the committee believes it to be important for the government to formulate a clearer policy than there has been in areas of concern to lifelong learning. This policy ought to entail a future vision and main points of emphasis that primarily have the purpose of creating a frame for the environment that is necessary to strengthen lifelong learning. On the other hand, lifelong learning will primarily be developed and strengthened through the efforts of individuals, education parties and the business community since this way is most likely to ensure dynamic lifelong learning.

The committee proposes that overall supervision of lifelong learning repose in the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Such an arrangement entails that the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture be responsible for the area of concern with regard to overall policy formulation, collection and recording of information and monitoring. The fact that no single ministry has been responsible for lifelong learning has hampered comprehensive overview and policy formulation in the issue area. Overall supervision of educational affairs in Iceland reposes in the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and the committee therefore believes it is natural that lifelong learning be within the ministry's purview. Such an arrangement is important, both to strengthen collaboration of those involved in lifelong learning and to ensure that information and overview are in the hands of one party. Thus, the number of opportunities will increase for purposeful joint utilisation of teaching efforts, housing, teaching materials and other expertise.

At the same time as the committee proposes that the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture become responsible for the issue area, the committee deems it important that specific ministries continue to have supervision of the lifelong learning under them. In this regard, it is specifically stated that the committee believes that the implementation of the Act on job education in the business community and the Job Education Council shall continue to be the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The committee proposes that government, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, keep the following factors in mind in all policy formulation regarding lifelong learning and the role of government:

- Consultation and collaboration within the government system must be increased between organisations and parties related to lifelong learning.
- Co-operation and consultation between government organisations and the business community must be increased in order to strengthen lifelong learning in the labour market and ensure that measures of the government in that field are in harmony with the needs of the business community.
- The greatest duty of the government in lifelong learning is to ensure for all opportunities for good, general compulsory education that bears comparison with

the best that is done in neighbouring countries. Above all, the priorities in the educational system shall use this as a criterion.

- In organising studies and study paths, the attitudes entailed in lifelong learning shall be kept in mind in greater measure, i.e., that study is a process lasting all one's life. It is important for the school system to disseminate these attitudes to students.
- Other government support of lifelong learning shall especially aim at reducing obstacles for certain groups in their pursuit of lifelong learning, such as those having little basic education who have been chronically unemployed.
- General conditions must be insured for the business community that encourage investment in lifelong learning. Such is best done through an advantageous economic environment, commercial freedom and a simple legal and regulatory framework.
- Increased demands regarding the quality of lifelong learning must be made on education parties to ensure consumers and purchasers of services a certain minimum quality.

Regarding a comprehensive policy in the areas of concern in lifelong learning, the committee deems it important for the government to set out goals to strengthen general education in Iceland. The correlation between basic education and whether individuals pursue lifelong learning later in life is clear. If there is to be success in strengthening lifelong learning, the main point is to ensure individuals such a foundation. This will only be done by increasing general education in Iceland.

The committee proposes that the government set the following goals that aim at bringing Iceland to an equal level with neighbouring countries regarding the general education of Icelanders:

- In 2010, at least 85% of a year group shall complete upper secondary school studies, whether this involves longer or shorter programmes of studying.
- In 2010, no more than 15% of the work force shall have completed only compulsory schooling.

### **Five-year intensive campaign to strengthen lifelong learning**

The committee proposes that the government begin an intensive five-year campaign aimed at increasing the offering, demand for and quality of lifelong learning in Iceland. Such a campaign should reflect government policy on areas of concern in lifelong learning and put this policy into a certain channel for a specified period. A five-year campaign should ensure that lifelong learning will be especially ministered to in the coming years and call attention to the issue area. Attitudes towards lifelong learning must change if the bolstering of education as a lifelong process is to succeed. With a five-year campaign, the government can influence and advance the message that lifelong learning is a necessary part of individuals' lives and the operations of

companies. Such a campaign must be launched in close collaboration with the parties most involved in lifelong learning.

The committee therefore proposes that a task force for the campaign be established. In the task force shall be representatives of parties in the labour market, ministries, school affairs as well as representatives of education parties in the general market. The task force shall operate under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and the Minister of Education, Science and Culture shall be responsible for implementation of the campaign.

The committee proposes that the task force, in its efforts, consider ways to strengthen lifelong learning, and in this regard, that special emphasis be laid on the following six points:

- Prioritisation for the benefit of education
- Another opportunity for adults to study
- Access to counselling and information
- Opportunities of the business community to increase knowledge and training
- Working conditions in the general educational market
- Lifelong learning Day

### **Prioritisation for the benefit of education**

The committee believes that the biggest obligation of the government in lifelong learning is to ensure as many people as possible access to a good education at all levels of schooling. The school system must take into account the requirements of lifelong learning, and increased flexibility and greater selection should provide individuals with opportunities to pursue studies throughout life. The independence and responsibility of schools at all levels of schooling must be increased, and requirements for quality and results in schooling must be introduced in greater measure. Requirements concerning goals and the treatment of studies must however be co-ordinated and clear, and the government must monitor the following of these emphases. The goal shall be that the education offered in Iceland shall be competitive with the best that is provided in its neighbouring countries, since the quality of education is growing continually in importance when the status of countries is evaluated.

In order for it to be possible to strengthen lifelong learning, the government must set a higher priority on education in the coming years. Prioritisation on behalf of education means, however, not only that education has priority in the decisions pertaining to state finance, but also that what shall have priority in the educational system itself must be decided. The committee believes that this will become even more urgent with increased participation in lifelong learning. The committee proposes that such prioritisation lay main emphasis on basic education at the compulsory school and the upper secondary school levels. On the other hand, the committee regards it as natural for adult individuals to participate in the cost of lifelong learning at the upper secondary school and university levels, which are specially organised for adults, since such education will benefit individuals through increased opportunities in the labour market and in general.



## **Second chance for adults to study**

The committee believes that the diversity and selection in adult education must be increased and thus create a second opportunity for adults to begin studies or improve previous education. Those who have not completed compulsory schooling must be given a chance to take co-ordinated examinations since such an opportunity may be assumed to strengthen their foundation for further study.

On the upper secondary school level, the build-up of adult education departments shall be continued and shall be further tailored to the needs of adults and those in the labour market. Special emphasis must be laid in upper secondary schools on offering adults counselling, which entails an evaluation of their academic status as well as advice concerning paths of study. The possibility of further evaluating the knowledge and competence that adults have acquired outside the school system and on the job must be examined to shorten the time required for study. Such evaluation, however, may not in any way decrease the skills that the student is to have learned at the conclusion of studies according to the curriculum. The committee believes that in adult education at the upper secondary school level, the premises for beginning special preparatory courses should be considered, where people are provided the chance to strengthen their prerequisites for resuming studies. In such courses, emphasis shall be placed on study technique, status evaluation, introduction to computers as well as other assistance that is important to strengthening adults' prerequisites for attending school again, such as for those having little basic education or those who are unemployed or those who have been away from studies for a long time.

Flexible opportunities regarding study paths and the arrangement of studies are important for adult students. In this regard, information technology shall be utilised to the utmost. This development has already begun in the upper secondary schools, but it must be beefed up in studies at the university level. It is important for adults to be offered university studies while working. Distance learning and self-study can be utilised well in university courses. In addition, opportunities for study outside of traditional school hours must be available. If increased service for flexibility in studies means increased costs for the schools, it is natural for the consumer to participate in this cost.

## **Access to information and counselling**

Good information and purposeful counselling matter greatly in lifelong learning. This pertains equally to individuals, companies and organisations. There will be increased emphasis on plans for lifelong learning aimed at individuals and workplaces, and it is therefore necessary to have access to dynamic counselling and information.

Over the next several years, the committee deems it important to place special emphasis on supporting the founding of lifelong learning centres. The committee

regards it as natural that the initiative in founding such centres come from schools, local governments, parties in the labour market, companies and individuals in each place. Centres for lifelong learning can facilitate the access of companies and individuals to information about lifelong learning. In addition, they are ideal forums for providing counselling regarding studies and lifelong learning plans. Through them, opportunities will also be created for certain joint utilisation regarding teaching, educational materials and facilities. Centres for lifelong learning can especially benefit individuals having little education but wishing to increase it in the general market or in the school system. The same can be said of small companies; centres for lifelong learning can assist them with instruction within the company. In addition, opportunities are thereby created to strengthen collaboration between small companies and various education parties concerning educational efforts. Centres for lifelong learning are important in sparsely populated areas of Iceland since it will become possible to organise dynamic education efforts and ensure access to them for the greatest number of people along with diversity of education.

### **Opportunities for business community to increase knowledge and training**

The committee believes that the government should continue to support lifelong learning in the business community, taking into account the Act on job education in the business community, no. 19/1992. The committee also discussed other ideas concerning government support to strengthen lifelong learning in the business community, especially tax reductions for companies investing in lifelong learning. The conclusion of the committee was that such measures are not necessary since they involve complex implementation that does not entail assurance of increased lifelong learning in the labour market. The committee believes that with the above-mentioned Act on job education in the business community along with tax law currently in force ensuring that companies cannot pay tax on the cost of education related to their operations, that the government satisfactorily supports companies' educational efforts.

On the other hand, the committee proposes certain changes in emphasis for the Job Education Council over the next five years. These proposals aim at heavier emphasis on as broad a group of applicants as possible benefiting from these grants for job education. The committee therefore directs a proposal to the council that over the next five years, it places special emphasis on introducing the job education fund to small and medium-sized companies so that they will utilise opportunities provided by the job education fund for lifelong learning more frequently. The committee also proposes to the Job Education Council that, at the beginning of an allocation period, it determine a prioritisation of projects, and divide funds between the various project categories.

The committee proposes that the Job Education Council examine the option of awarding companies receiving grants recognition if the project's goals are achieved. The committee also proposes that ways other countries employ in supporting lifelong learning in the business community be examined. In this regard, the committee

believes that it is important that the programme that Britain calls "Investment in People" be examined since the committee believes that this campaign has been well utilised for building up lifelong learning in the business community.

## **Job conditions on the general education market**

In Iceland it is important for a dynamic education market to get a foothold. A diverse offering of lifelong learning already exists, but it can be supposed that over the next several years, this market will grow further, and that a new occupation will develop where various kinds of studies and training are bought and sold. As many schools and education parties as possible must operate in such a market since this is the basic premise for the fulfilment of consumer demand for diverse lifelong learning.

Hand-in-hand with this development, the need grows for co-ordinated quality criteria or quality assurance, where consumers are assured of certain minimum information about the studies offered in this market. The committee proposes that ways for establishing this arrangement be studied. However, the committee does not think that the government should take on such quality monitoring. It will be much more desirable for the project to be the responsibility of others although the government can assist in the collaboration, consultation and conformation of the parties involved. The government should also ensure that all studies enjoying government support, or to which government parties refer people, fulfil certain requirements for information about the arrangement and goals of the studies.

The committee proposes that the government, in consultation with parties in the labour market and education parties in the general market, consider adopting the use of a lifelong learning passport. Such passports contain records of all studies individuals have engaged in. This would be a great convenience, not only for those holding lifelong learning passports but also for employers and counsellors who can then have a summary of a relevant person's confirmed lifelong learning.

## **Lifelong learning Day**

It is proposed that the government organise a Lifelong learning Day once a year for five years in collaboration with the parties most involved in lifelong learning. The purpose is to draw attention to the importance of education throughout life, promote discussion of lifelong learning and encourage companies and individuals to take measures in this field. The committee proposes that the task force consider ways to draw attention to this day that would be dedicated to lifelong learning, e.g., by a co-ordinated campaign of the parties engaged in lifelong learning. This could be done with a symposium, conference, exhibition or in some other way that seems appropriate. In addition, the committee proposes that Lifelong learning Day be an occasion each year for a special award to the company, association, organisation or other party that seems to have done the best job in increasing lifelong learning in their field.

### **3. *LIFELONG LEARNING - FORCE FOR A NEW CENTURY***

#### **GENERAL PROPOSALS TO INCREASE LIFELONG LEARNING**

This section contains the committee's proposals to strengthen lifelong learning generally. The discussion is divided into eight subsections, and each of them discusses topics that the committee deems especially important for strengthening lifelong learning. The first section discusses the importance of the attitude in Iceland toward learning throughout life. The second section discusses the responsibility and division of efforts in lifelong learning between the government, parties in the labour market, workplaces and individuals. The third section deals with the importance of basic education for lifelong learning and changed emphases in compulsory and upper secondary schools. The fourth section discusses adult education, especially in upper secondary schools and universities. The fifth section deals with lifelong learning as a ripe opportunity for employees and companies, and the sixth section discusses the premises in Iceland for establishing a diverse education market. The seventh section discusses the accessibility to information and counselling, and the eighth and last section discusses dynamic lifelong learning through information technology.

#### **3.1 *Learning throughout life***

The prevailing attitude has long been that studies are finished when the individual finishes traditional schooling, and this education is utilised throughout life. New times demand new attitudes and new emphases. It is likely that in the future it will be nearly impossible to acquire knowledge for any job that will last throughout life. Rapid changes in technology, work environments and lifestyles generally call for individuals to always add to their knowledge and training. Education is thus a resource and investment in the future that can improve the performance of individuals, companies and society as a whole.

Lifelong learning must be strengthened in Icelandic society. This will not be done unless attitudes, not least those of the business community and individuals, change. Knowledge and training that measure up to contemporary demands can ensure individuals the opportunities that are necessary to increase their chances generally in the labour market. The school system must inculcate this attitude in students. It is also important for parties in the labour market to inform their principals of the value of lifelong learning in the modern business community. Lifelong learning not only increases the competence of managers and employees to cope with their jobs but can also increase productivity, flexibility and efficiency in the workplace. Thus, it promotes greater life quality for individuals and society as a whole. Most things point to the fact that investment in the knowledge and training of employees will be as important to company operations as investment in other factors in ensuring profitable operations. Last but not least, dynamic lifelong learning can produce increased economic growth for communities and have an impact on their competitiveness.

## **Emphases:**

- Icelanders shall adopt the attitude that education is a lifelong task and process.
- Understanding of the importance of lifelong learning shall increase generally -- especially in the business community and for individuals.

## **Proposals:**

- It is important to lay a reliable foundation for lifelong learning in Iceland's schools. It is recommended that schools assume in their work that studies are never complete, and that school studies are a part of lifelong learning. There must be efforts to promote students' adoption of such attitudes immediately at the first levels of schooling.
- In all schooling, emphasis must be placed on students' learning independence and initiative in studies. Students must also acquire skills in gathering information and processing it. Such emphases encourage increased acquisition of knowledge.
- In lifelong learning, the consumer should have more influence than the provider. Their needs and requirements as service consumers should be most determinative. The general school system and other education parties must take these attitudes into account.
- With increased lifelong learning, the division between formal and informal education will decrease. The arrangement of studies, study programs and the evaluation of studies must increasingly take this into account.
- It is important for employer associations and wage earner associations to emphasise informing their principals purposefully of the importance of continual lifelong learning in the labour market.
- Through a special, intensive campaign to strengthen lifelong learning, opportunities are provided to the government, in consultation with education parties, parties in the labour market and others to increase the understanding of the importance of lifelong learning.

### **3.2 *Everyone is responsible for lifelong learning***

Modern times make greater demands regarding the education of people than before. Increased international relations, rapid technological change and changed work practices call for this. Therefore, no one who wants to be an active participant in modern society can shirk the responsibility of participating in lifelong learning. It is not possible to say that one party bears more responsibility for lifelong learning than others in society. It is everyone's concern to strengthen lifelong learning, and everyone bears the responsibility for doing so – the government, parties in the labour market, organisations, companies and, not least, individuals themselves.

Lifelong learning can be both general and job-related. To simplify, it can be said that lifelong learning is divided into four main categories:

- a) lifelong learning occurring within the traditional school system,
- b) lifelong learning related to training in a specific job at a specific workplace,
- c) lifelong learning preparing individuals for different jobs,
- d) lifelong learning that individuals engage in for enjoyment and a general increase in knowledge.

The lifelong learning occurring within the school system is, for the most part, the responsibility of the government, although more parties can and should provide such education; the education utilised only for the benefit of a particular workplace is the responsibility of the employer; and the education that individuals pursue to improve their status in the labour market generally or for their own pleasure is the responsibility of the individual. However, this does not change the fact that the interests of these parties overlap and, more often than not, go together. The responsibility for lifelong learning is therefore collective.

### **Emphases:**

- All shall accept the responsibility for lifelong learning, i.e., the government, parties in the labour market, occupational organisations, workplaces and individuals.
- The State, local governments, educational organisations, parties in the labour market and others involved in lifelong learning shall collaborate with and consult one another.
- The division of labour between those engaged in lifelong learning shall be clear.
- Parties in the labour market shall specially negotiate rights and obligations regarding lifelong learning in the labour market.

## Proposals:

- It is necessary that responsibility for lifelong learning be clear within the administrative system. It is therefore proposed that the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture have overall supervision in matters concerning lifelong learning and bear the responsibility for the issue area regarding overall policy formulation, collection and recording of information and monitoring. Individual ministries shall continue to have supervision over the lifelong learning pertaining to them.
- A recommendation is made that the main rule in lifelong learning be that those benefiting from it shall pay for it. However, the interests of different parties can converge, and it is then necessary to consider mutual responsibility.
- The greatest function of the government in lifelong learning is to ensure good general education although more parties than the government can and should be involved in such operations.
- It is important for the government to encourage growth in the offering of and participation in lifelong learning. This can be done through the school system but also with a special emphasis on the issue areas and the groups that seem to pursue lifelong learning the least. The responsibility of the government, however, does not entail ensuring everyone access to diverse lifelong learning, since a great part of it takes place in the general market and at workplaces.
- It is recommended that the government promote more collaboration between different parties involved in lifelong learning, i.e., parties in the labour market, schools, local governments, companies, etc. This is important so that lifelong learning becomes established in as many places as possible, but also so that housing, teaching efforts and educational materials are utilised purposefully.
- The State's responsibility is the same as that of other employers regarding lifelong learning of employees working for it.
- It is necessary for more detailed information to be available about the funding that the government contributes to lifelong learning.
- It is proposed that parties in the labour market formulate a joint educational policy wherein emphases for the future and the goals of employers and wage earners are presented. A clear policy formulation in educational matters on behalf of the umbrella associations negotiating wages and work conditions in the labour market will facilitate all build-up of information in the field of lifelong learning and strengthen the pillars on which individuals and companies can build.

- Parties in the labour market are involved in agreements on wages and work conditions in the labour market, and in this forum, the most natural thing is to negotiate the rights and obligations of wage earners and/or companies for education and training in the labour market.
- It is proposed that parties in the labour market examine the option that a certain amount be taken as a percentage of wages and put into lifelong learning funds that wage earners and companies can apply for. It is also proposed that parties in the labour market examine in their agreements the special rights of employees to engage in lifelong learning. Such rights could, for example, be tied to a certain number of hours that employees have a right to spend acquiring lifelong learning each year.
- It is important that employer associations further inform the owners and managers of companies about the importance of lifelong learning and thus encourage increased investment in education and training.
- It is important that wage earner associations inform their principals about their rights and obligations regarding lifelong learning and encourage employees to acquire education and training.
- The goal shall be that companies' independence and initiative in educational efforts increase. Individual workplaces bear the responsibility for educating and training their employees in accordance with operational needs. When specialised education is involved or education that benefits employees only in a certain job at a certain employer, it is the responsibility of the relevant workplace to provide the education under its own auspices or in collaboration with others.
- It is important for employees to utilise their rights and possibilities for lifelong learning in as well as outside of the workplace. Employees must also encourage employers and managers to beef up lifelong learning if there is a need for it, so that employees can do their jobs better and adopt innovations in their fields.
- Lifelong learning provides individuals with more opportunities to shape their own study programs at the same time as it increases their responsibility for their own education. Individuals should utilise these opportunities and steadily improve their knowledge in the field of their choice and under the conditions suiting them best.



### **3.3 Good general education is a prerequisite for lifelong learning**

A good preparatory education ensures dynamic lifelong learning. Various studies indicate that the more education individuals have, the more likely it is that lifelong learning will be integrated into their lives and work. Measures in most neighbouring nations for strengthening lifelong learning aim at increasing the educational level of the nation and strengthening general preparatory education.

The Icelandic school system must be competitive with the best systems known. The goal should be that, proportionally, as many graduate in Iceland from upper secondary schools as do in those nations rated highest in this regard. To make this possible, increased education must be given greater priority, and it must be ensured that the studies available are in accordance with the requirements and needs of the consumer. In a recent discussion by the OECD (1997a), it surfaces that within the Icelandic school system there is almost no competition; the offering of studies is not sufficient, and more efficiency is required. It is also asserted therein that it is important to provide the public with better information about the results of schooling, strengthen the collaboration between the business community and schools and increase respect for job education. These are all factors that the Icelandic school system must take into consideration.

To strengthen lifelong learning, more emphasis must be placed on flexibility and diversity in studies and teaching methods. The responsibility and independence of schools must be increased, however, without deviating from defined goals and requirements at each level of schooling. More stringent requirements on results in schooling must be made, for both those providing the service and those accepting it. It is especially important to increase the number of options for study in job education and especially in short, job-related courses. Collaboration between the business community and schools must also be strengthened to ensure that the course of study meets the requirements of the business community as well as possible. Students must see a benefit for themselves in continually increasing their education. An important aspect of this is that credit for education be given on the job market.

#### **Emphases:**

- More people shall finish upper secondary school studies. The goal shall be that in 2010 Iceland will have achieved the ratio that about 85% of the year group shall finish studies at the upper secondary school level, whether for shorter or longer courses of study.
- Increase diversity of choice in studies and study arrangements at the upper secondary school level.
- Strengthen collaboration between the business community and schools concerning the treatment of studies and job training.
- The school system shall further mould itself to the demands of lifelong learning.

## Proposals:

- It is important to relate compulsory schooling as much as possible to the common environment of students. Studies must be a normal and natural part of an individual's life from the beginning. One can suppose that such will quickly strengthen the foundations of lifelong learning.
- It is desirable in compulsory schooling that emphasis be placed immediately on relating education to jobs in the labour market. This can be done, for example, by further connection between studies and educational material with the business community, along with organised education and publicity in all fields of the business community.
- It is important that the independence and responsibility of schools on all levels of schooling increase without deviating from the requirements for schools concerning the quality of the preparatory education that they provide. In parallel with schools operated by the State and local governments, it is important that private parties and associations operate educational organisations since such can ensure further diversity and competition in the school system.
- An attempt shall be made to ensure the greatest degree of continuity in the organisation of studies so that the separation between schooling levels will be as little as possible. This can for example be done with clear goals in curricula, where it is made clear to all what the goals are, and what requirements are made at each level of schooling.
- Ways must be sought to ensure that as many as possible find appropriate studies within the school system. The number of study courses must be increased along with the selection, especially regarding vocational training, if the goals to increase the number of people concluding studies at the upper secondary school level is to be achieved.
- The arrangement of studies at the upper secondary school level must be flexible and take increased account of the requirements of lifelong learning.
- It is desirable to shorten the length of time taken to complete a matriculation examination without deviating from the requirements made for students completing their courses of study. A longer school year can ensure better continuity in schooling. Thus, the number of years for study could be decreased while ensuring better utilisation of the time spent studying.

- It is necessary to strengthen collaboration and consultation between the business community and schools. It is possible to do this through dynamic exchanges of information and opinions and thus promote better results, greater efficiency and productivity in the labour market and in the school system.
- It is important for the business community to have greater influence on education and schooling generally so that courses of study conform as much as possible to the trend in the labour market. A collaboration committee on vocational training at the upper secondary school level is a forum for such collaboration. It is important that the lines of communication between the business community and the school system are clear and ensure a simple and speedy pathway for information in both directions. Through occupational councils, the business community can dynamically presents its focus for preparatory education and lifelong learning.
- It is necessary for the business community to show its determination to increase the link between the business community and schools by giving credit for education in the labour market. Greater education must benefit people in some fashion with an improved position in the labour market so that individuals value education as a realistic and profitable course.

### ***3.4 Dynamic adult education and schools – a second chance***

Adult education in the schooling system plays an important role in lifelong learning. The law stipulates that everyone shall have access to compulsory and upper secondary schooling. This right of individuals should not be lost with age. It is one of the biggest responsibilities of government, in the field of lifelong learning, to provide individuals not concluding such studies when younger a second opportunity to do so later in their lives, if they choose. A second chance for adults to study is not only important for the individuals themselves, but dynamic adult education can also entail increased opportunities for the business community and society as a whole.

It is important for people to be able to have the knowledge and skills that they have acquired through job experience, self-study, courses or social activities evaluated to shorten their period of study in upper secondary schools. However, there will be no deviation from the fundamental rule that such assessment shall not reduce the knowledge required when studies are completed. In adult education departments in upper secondary schools, in addition to traditional studies, studies tailored to the needs of older students could be offered since their needs are different from those of students engaging in studies in day school. It is important to strengthen studies in adult education departments in rural areas.

If Iceland intends to be competitive with other nations, the ratio of those completing university studies must increase. More flexible opportunities for people in the labour market to engage in university studies while working could ensure such a development. In recent years, with the advent of distance learning, new opportunities

have developed for people in the labour market to engage in studies at the university level outside of traditional working hours. This is an innovation in Iceland, and it can be expected within the next several years that still further opportunities in this field will open up.

### **Emphases:**

- Individuals who have not completed compulsory schooling shall be offered a second opportunity to do so.
- Adults shall have access to diverse studies, regardless of residence.
- The studies and teaching of adults shall take into account their needs and requirements.
- Dynamic and purposeful counselling in adult education shall be available, and access to information about the studies offered and courses of study shall be improved.
- Adults' knowledge and work experience shall be evaluated if pertinent to shortening the period of studies in upper secondary schools without reducing curriculum requirements.
- Studies at the university level shall take into account the needs and circumstances of people in the labour market.

### **Proposals:**

- It is important for adults who have not completed compulsory education to be able to do so if they so choose. It is recommended that co-ordinated examinations be available from the educational materials of compulsory schools that will give adults the option of finishing. Individuals could engage in self-study to prepare themselves for examinations or seek assistance from courses. In this way, more opportunities could open up for adults in lifelong learning in upper secondary schools and in the general market.
- The diversity of studies offered in adult education departments must be increased. It is especially important for the selection of vocational training to be increased, e.g., in the form of shorter vocational training where one could suppose that such would suit many adults wishing to strengthen their position in the labour market.
- It is necessary for the arrangement of studies in adult education to be flexible. The number of hours taught and the speed of instruction must take into account the

different needs and situations of individuals attending classes in adult education departments since they have often completed different amounts of education.

- It is proposed that adult education departments in upper secondary schools offer adults a special course of preparation for further study in the school system or outside it. Basic points in educational technique and the use of computers shall be taught; information about lifelong learning will be provided; in addition, status evaluation and academic counselling will be offered.
- Academic and vocational counselling must be strengthened for adults in schools, adult education centres and employment agencies. In individual counselling that is provided by professional parties, emphasis shall be laid on evaluating people's existing knowledge so that more suitable courses of study can be chosen.
- In order for more people to complete upper secondary school studies, it is necessary to bolster status evaluation in schools. The knowledge and skills that adults have acquired in working, at courses and through self-study must be evaluated with status evaluation examinations to shorten the period of study. The shortening of study based on an evaluation of previous studies or job experience may not however result in a reduction in any way of the knowledge and skills that a student should have acquired upon the completion of studies according to a curriculum.
- Job training in a school workshop or in the business community is part of the studies of most vocational training courses. It is important that students in vocational training courses with a great deal of job experience in a relevant field get their job training time shortened. They therefore must have the opportunity for a status evaluation of their vocational skills in order to shorten the job training period.
- It is proposed that a work group be charged with implementing proposals on a future arrangement for an evaluation system in upper secondary schools. The group shall take into account the experience of neighbouring nations in this field.
- It is important to increase the offering of adult education in upper secondary schools in rural areas and stimulate the founding there of lifelong learning centres.
- It is proposed that in curricula for teachers, special emphasis be laid on training for the instruction of adult students.
- It is important to emphasise, both in upper secondary schools and at the university level, the facilitation of study attendance in schools for adults at the times that are most convenient, whether this is during the day or in the evening.
- If more flexibility and choice for students entails additional costs for the schools, it is natural that those benefiting from the service participate in these costs.
- It is important for upper secondary schools and universities to become "more open" than is currently the case in order to measure up to the requirements of

lifelong learning. Collaboration between schools may increase so that individuals have the chance to engage in studies in different schools even though graduating from one school.

- The goal shall be to make studies at the university level more accessible to people in the labour market. In this regard, it is important to increase the number of courses at the university level, especially shorter courses. In addition, adults must have the option of attending university studies outside of traditional teaching hours.
- Information technology creates new opportunities for lifelong learning. It is necessary for the school system to adopt this technology in greater measure and ensure that the opportunities entailed in information technology regarding education are utilised by both younger and older students.

### ***3.5 Lifelong learning – a ripe opportunity for employees and companies***

Most of Iceland's neighbouring countries place greatly increased emphasis on strengthening lifelong learning in the labour market. Studies show that the same emphasis is needed in Iceland. In a summary by the World Economic Forum (1996), it surfaces that Iceland is 44<sup>th</sup> out of 49 nations on a scale measuring the extent of job-related lifelong learning in companies. Although other studies may not show such a poor status, they give every indication that measures are needed to improve education in the Icelandic business community. This can however prove more complicated in Iceland than in many other places. In comparison with neighbouring countries, Icelandic companies are, for example, extremely small, and studies show that smaller companies minister less to lifelong learning than larger companies. In addition, the business community in Iceland is, in many respects, less varied than in its neighbouring countries. Such an economic structure, where a large part of employees work in primary and manufacturing sectors, seems to call less for a continual renewal of knowledge and training. This characteristic of the Icelandic economy can explain in part the insufficient emphasis on lifelong learning in the labour market. However, this in no way changes the fact that improvements are necessary if Iceland intends to be competitive with its goods and services in international markets.

In 1992 an Act on vocational education in the business community was enacted. Since then, the allocation of government grants to lifelong learning in the labour market has been the responsibility of a Vocational Education Council, which has operated under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance. The current year's Budget Act provides for the Vocational Education Fund to allocate ISK 50 million. Those having the right to apply for these grants are employer associations, wage earner associations, individual companies, private parties and the government parties organising vocational education in the business community, vocational education councils in particular occupations and collaborative projects having two or more of the above-mentioned parties. During the five years that the Act on vocational education in the business community has been in force, a very large part of the funding has been allocated to employer and wage earner associations, vocational educational councils in particular occupations or education parties that have organised vocational training in the business community.

Real results in increasing lifelong learning in the labour market depend on the incentive to invest in education and training being as close as possible to the consumers, i.e., companies, organisations and employees. For this reason, it is the committee's recommendation that the flexibility in the Act on vocational education in the business community be utilised to the fullest, and that an attempt be made to increase applications coming from companies. With increased support directed toward companies, the emphasis on lifelong learning will become more in the spirit of the changes that will probably come in lifelong learning in future years, where traditional courses outside workplaces will be replaced in greater measure by workplace-oriented studies with the assistance of distance learning and self-teaching. Lifelong learning in the business community will thus occur in greater measure at the workplaces themselves, and attendance at traditional courses will decrease. This will ensure increased efficiency and a closer connection of studies and training with the circumstances in each place. One can suppose that these changes will further increase opportunities in workplaces to offer their employees lifelong learning. The government must encourage such development, and this can be done through vocational education councils with an equal degree of emphasis on support directed to particular companies or groups of companies and education parties or unions. Special emphasis must also be placed on support for occupations least pursuing lifelong learning.

It is primarily for the business community itself to strengthen the participation of companies and employees in lifelong learning. Lifelong learning will not become an important part of the Icelandic business community unless companies and employees see a direct benefit for themselves in contributing money and time for such endeavours. It will not work for companies to send their employees for studies that parties other than the companies and employees themselves have directly asked for. It is necessary to look for new ways to encourage companies to invest in the education of employees. This encouragement should not only come from the government. It is much more important for it to come from the business community itself.

### **Emphases:**

- The competitiveness of the Icelandic economy shall be bolstered with dynamic lifelong learning that builds on sound basic education and training in the labour market.
- The government support of lifelong learning shall become clearer and more purposeful and have as its main goal that it benefit companies and employees directly.
- Vocational training councils shall specially emphasise encouraging small and medium-sized companies to further build up lifelong learning.

- Vocational training councils shall place special emphasis on strengthening lifelong learning in trades and occupations that seem to seek increased education least.
- Companies and organisations shall mould their own lifelong learning policy in greater measure.
- Employees shall utilise opportunities in greater measure for lifelong learning in the labour market.

### **Proposals:**

- Support shall continue to be given to lifelong learning in the labour market in accordance with the Act on vocational education in the business community, no. 19/1992. It is necessary to place greater emphasis on publicising the work done in accordance with the act since this government support does not seem to be clear to all parties in the labour market.
- It is proposed that vocational education councils change certain emphases in their work. The goal shall be that the broadest group of applicants receive grants from the fund, but for this to be possible, an attempt must be made to increase the number of applications coming directly from companies and organisations.
- Companies, organisations, occupations or education parties applying for grants to a vocational education council shall continue to present applications supported by logic, where the goals of the project are described and an exposition of the results to be achieved at the conclusion of the project is included. The main rule in allocating grants is that there shall continue to be contributions from the applicants, where the vocational education council makes a contribution matching these amounts.
- It is recommended that over the next five years vocational education councils specially emphasise support for small and medium-sized companies since lifelong learning and training are most needed there. Support available for organising educational effort must be publicised to these companies, and they must be encouraged to formulate their own education policy and initiate measures in this field.
- It is proposed that over the next five years, special emphasis be placed on support for occupational groups and/or occupations that seem to participate least in lifelong learning. For example, these occupations in industry are the building trades, the fisheries industry, commerce, food manufacturing and general service



jobs. It is also clear that occupational groups demanding little preparatory education are worse off than others, and that these groups must be considered specially.

- Consideration must be given to providing the companies being granted funds through a vocational education council special recognition/certification when they achieve planned results. This assumes that clear goals for the outcome are stated in the grant application, and that information reporting that these goals have been achieved is available. Such certification entails a declaration that the company involved ministers satisfactorily to the lifelong learning of its employees.
- It is proposed that programmes of Iceland's chief neighbouring countries be examined to strengthen lifelong learning in the business community. In this regard, for example, a programme that the British call "Investment in People" is cited. There has been great success there encouraging companies to make greater investment in the education of their employees. The main advantage of this programme is that it promotes the freedom of companies to formulate their own educational policies while at the same time demanding responsibility and commitment from them. In addition, it also seems to have been successful in meeting the needs of medium-sized and smaller companies.
- It is proposed that the government support being provided for studies and to education parties in the labour market be examined purposefully with the aim of investigating whether this support can be utilised. Various education parties receive regular support for education and the holding of courses. Such support of particular education parties can entail an unequal competitive status in the general market, and government support must be evaluated in light of this. By follow-up, it must also be ensured that the government support provided for lifelong learning in the labour market is utilised as well as possible by employees, companies and the community.
- Lifelong learning among the unemployed must be strengthened. Emphasis is placed on efforts being co-ordinated with the amendments contemplated in the Act on unemployment insurance, no. 12/1997, and the Act on labour market measures, no. 13/1997. It may be anticipated that those remedies will entail increased freedom for the unemployed to choose studies in accordance with their own plans and needs. At the same time, the responsibility of the unemployed will increase since provision is made for each individual to set his or her own job search plans, based on studies. These changes were timely. Clearly, the former remedies, mainly in the form of courses that the unemployed were obligated to attend to keep their rights to compensation, did not produce the intended results.
- It is important for parties in the labour market, certain occupations and occupational groups to encourage companies, organisations and employees to

ensure the competitiveness of the Icelandic business community through increased emphasis on education and training.

- Until now, the measures companies have taken to strengthen their competitiveness and productivity have been based especially on investment to increase efficiency and technology. Now companies must consider measures in more fields. In this regard, lifelong learning and the training of management and employees is extremely important.
- It is proposed that companies in the general market state in their annual financial reports the amount contributed to lifelong learning in the company. This innovation will provide investors, customers and others a clearer picture of the company's status and its emphases for the future.
- An important part of companies' educational efforts is to give special consideration to recruits and provide those starting work appropriate job training at the beginning of their employment period.
- It is necessary to consult with employees on the build-up of educational efforts and formulation of the company's educational policy. Such co-operation between management and employees ensures participation by the greatest number in the workplace and is more likely to produce results.
- Small and medium-sized workplaces that do not have the resources to minister to lifelong learning by themselves should initiate educational collaboration. Such a collaborative network of companies could produce good results for the companies working in similar areas or the same area that want to beef up the lifelong learning of their employees. The organisation of such work can go on in the companies themselves, but also with the assistance of education councils within occupations, occupational groups, employer associations and other educational organisations.
- The option of designating one key employee for matters involving lifelong learning should be called to the attention of small and medium-sized workplaces finding it difficult to send their employees away during working hours. This employee could acquire special education, either through self-study or from education parties and disseminate this knowledge to other employees in the workplace.
- It is desirable to encourage employees in workplaces to ensure their own lifelong learning in work even though it is not offered by the company or the organisation for which the employee involved works. Employees' rights and obligations regarding lifelong learning shall depend on agreements between wage earners and employers.

- On Lifelong learning Day each year for five years an award shall be given for lifelong learning in the labour market. This recognition shall be awarded to a company, association, organisation or another party involved in strengthening education and training in the labour market.

### ***Diverse offering of studies to ensure choice in lifelong learning***

- It is important that the offering of studies and education be diverse and good. Dynamic lifelong learning builds on as many parties as possible offering such studies. Schools, associations, workplaces and individuals must be involved in this. Lifelong learning outside the public school system should thus, above all, develop and become stronger in the general market where the needs of the consumer shape demand and supply.
- Various factors determine access to lifelong learning. One factor is a good offering of studies and training; another is that people have information about what is offered, and the third is that people have the opportunity to participate. Here in Iceland, a rather large market has developed around programmes of study of various kinds. It can be assumed that in the very next few years, this education market will grow still further, and a robust branch of the economy will come into existence, consisting of education parties offering individuals and companies studies and training. With this development, the stream of information about study offerings will increase, ensuring consumers clearer knowledge about what is offered.
- It is important to ensure a normal competitive status between education parties in the general market. This market should be allowed to flourish without interference by the government. On the other hand, it is necessary to consider whether some sort of quality monitoring should be established to ensure that the education parties and the studies offered meet minimum requirements to ensure a certain amount of consumer protection. With increased demand for lifelong learning, the quality of what is offered must be assured. Government certification or quality monitoring of studies in the general market, on the other hand, is not an ideal solution since such could reduce initiative and hinder necessary progress and innovation. Conformation and co-ordination of as many relevant parties as possible is necessary in this regard.
- Those involved in education in the general market must utilise modern technology fully. Changes will probably occur in the form that has prevailed in lifelong learning since the emphasis will shift from traditional courses to more specialised paths in lifelong learning, for both individuals and companies. In this regard, information technology will be a key factor.

## **Emphases:**

- That the offering of life lifelong learning in the general market should be good and diverse.
- A certain knowledge about the quality of the studies in the general market shall be ensured for consumers.
- An overview of lifelong learning for individuals shall be accessible.

## **Proposals:**

- The prerequisite for the flourishing of a dynamic branch of the economy that builds on the offering of lifelong learning is that education parties in the general market have similar operating conditions. The government should not have such a strong position in this market that it hinders normal development and competition since the growth of a robust education market depends on this.
- Supervision of new projects in the field of lifelong learning outside the school system is best placed in the hands of individuals, companies or social organisations.
- It is necessary to ensure a certain amount of consumer protection regarding lifelong learning through quality monitoring or quality guidelines. Such quality monitoring entails a requirement that certain information about relevant education and/or educational association be available, or that it is possible to obtain it. Rules must be set about the minimum information that education parties must provide regarding studies and courses. Such information must include a description of the teaching arrangement, cost, instruction, education of the teachers, and the benefits of the course for participants. The goal shall be that such quality monitoring shall be the responsibility of relevant parties in the general market, rather than that government parties see to such monitoring.
- The government can assist quality monitoring through certain measures. First, by beefing up the evaluation system of upper secondary schools so that only studies meeting certain requirements are evaluated for the purpose of shortening studies. Second, by not providing government funding for courses or education parties unless minimum information about the arrangement of the studies and their quality is available. Third, in the same way, parties providing counselling like schools and employment agencies do not recommend certain studies or education parties unless the same kind of minimum information is available.

- It is recommended that the advantage of a special lifelong learning passport for individuals be considered. Information about studies and courses that individuals have attended are recorded in such a passport. The lifelong learning passport can assist people in keeping track of the education and training that they have got and can be an aid for planning further studies. In addition, such a lifelong learning passport will facilitate all counselling regarding lifelong learning and ensure employers quick access to confirmed information about studies that a prospective or permanent employee has attended.
- The education parties in the general market shall consider changes in lifelong learning in the coming years where the emphasis will shift in greater measure away from traditional courses towards self-study or distance learning. The offering of lifelong learning must take this into account.

### **3.7 Access to information and counselling**

One of the main prerequisites for increase in participation in lifelong learning is good access to information about the studies offered and counselling concerning the selection of studies. Information and counselling go together since information is the key to the ability to provide companies and individuals with counselling tailored to the needs of each and every one. Dynamic counselling concerning jobs and studies that is provided by professional parties is a necessary part of this, where the status and educational needs of people and companies are evaluated at the same time as possible ways to improve or maintain one's education are pointed out. There is a considerable lack of this in Iceland.

Until now, academic and job counselling have been almost entirely oriented toward students in the school system. Purposeful counselling in this field has not been offered to people in the labour market. This must be improved. Dynamic counselling for companies and organisations must also be available. In the future, one can expect that lifelong learning of employees will be a large factor in companies' investment. It is therefore necessary for workplaces to employ counselling to evaluate what kind of education suits them best and obtain assistance in setting up a future plan for lifelong learning.

Many parties can assist individuals and companies in preparing future plans for lifelong learning or organising educational efforts between companies with similar operations. In this regard, education parties, education centres, parties in the labour market and counsellors in the general market can be mentioned. One can assume that in the future, academic and vocational counselling will be transferred in greater measure to specialised companies and individuals in this field. With growing understanding of the importance of education for the business community and the general community, a work foundation will develop for companies specialising in providing individuals and workplaces with instruction and counselling on lifelong learning and assisting in planning in this field.

### **Emphases:**

- Counselling on the choice of studies, choice of job and possibilities for lifelong learning of individuals and companies shall be increased.
- Government shall support the founding of centres of lifelong learning.
- Special emphasis shall be placed on information and counselling for those who have little preparatory education and those needing to strengthen their position in the labour market.
- Information technology shall be utilised to disseminate information about studies.

### **Proposals:**

- It is important for the government to support the establishment of centres for lifelong learning by facilitating upper secondary schools' becoming participants in these efforts. Government financial support is, however, not required in the Act on upper secondary schools since it can be supposed that centres for lifelong learning can stand on their own financially.
- It is necessary that the initiative for founding centres for lifelong learning comes from the local people in each location. This is the best way to ensure that the operations will be in accordance with the needs and requirements of the residents and business community in the area involved.
- Upper secondary schools in each location can strengthen their ties with the business community and other education parties by organising collaboration on the founding of centres for lifelong learning.
- The establishment of centres for lifelong learning in rural areas must be encouraged. One can suppose that such centres can substantially strengthen educational efforts in distant settled areas and ensure residents and employers there a diverse selection of studies and training.
- It is important for centres of lifelong learning to be collaborative projects of schools, the business community and local governments in the areas where they are to be established. In this way, a forum will be established for these parties to unite concerning the gathering of information and counselling. In addition, new opportunities will be created to link together existing activities and jointly utilise educational materials, study facilities and teaching efforts.

- Companies and organisations must increase counselling to evaluate what education and training for employees can be of greatest benefit to operations in the workplace. Centres for lifelong learning, associations of parties in the labour market and companies in the general market can offer such services. One may suppose that improved access to information and counselling on lifelong learning will encourage workplaces to set up their own plans for lifelong learning.
- It is proposed that individuals have an opportunity for academic and vocational counselling within the school system, in education centres for certain occupations, employment agencies, centres for lifelong learning and specialised companies and individuals in the general market.
- It is proposed that a detailed survey be done to investigate the main weaknesses and strengths of the lifelong learning system; information about the status of lifelong learning in Iceland is deficient. Such information can be utilised especially well in counselling and in all preparation of plans to strengthen the status of lifelong learning in the country.
- Private parties and/or relevant parties are encouraged to set up databases with information about lifelong learning for individuals and companies. Such databases are of benefit to everyone involved in lifelong learning and facilitate access to important information about the offering of studies and courses. The government is urged to put information about education within the school system into such databases.

### **3.8 *New opportunities through the agency of new technology***

Through the agency of new technology, previously unknown opportunities are created to improve the accessibility of lifelong learning. With information technology, those providing lifelong learning are given the opportunity to utilise facilities, money and teaching efforts better than is now possible. Information technology can also entail a great many opportunities for education parties, the business community and individuals to tailor studies even more to the needs of each and every one.

By beefing up distance learning and self-study, the use of information technology carves a more secure niche for itself and facilitates people's access to lifelong learning, especially the group that would otherwise find it more difficult, e.g., because of work, residence, conditions at home or handicaps. Extensive efforts in Iceland have already begun in this field, such as in the Iceland University of Education and the Akureyri Higher Secondary Vocational School, and Icelanders have gone farther than their neighbouring countries in various fields of distance learning (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 1996a). Information technology also creates a great

many opportunities for companies and the business community since access to information and knowledge in specialised fields will become better than before.

A large proportion of Icelanders already have access to the Internet, and one can expect that it will cover most homes at the beginning of the next century. Still more opportunities will then open up for disseminating information. At the same time, this technology demands that people learn to use it. General computer literacy is a prerequisite for the greatest number of people to be able to enjoy the increased opportunities for education entailed therein. In this regard, lifelong learning can have decisive influence.

### **Emphases:**

- To strengthen computer literacy, especially among adult individuals.
- To utilise the advantages of information technology in all fields of lifelong learning.

### **Proposals:**

- It is necessary to train students in the use of information technology at all schooling levels to prepare individuals for the future and the reality that is already looming.
- It is proposed that special thought be given to the needs of the individuals engaged in studies in adult education departments, and that bolstering computer literacy among adults be emphasised.
- It is important that access to computers be good, so that as many as possible who cannot utilise this technology at their own workplaces or homes have the opportunity elsewhere. Schools must have powerful computer equipment and offer students access to computers, both in their studies and for general gathering of information and data.
- Public libraries should fulfil the function of knowledge centres for the public. It is important for them to provide the public with access to computers.
- It is important for education parties in the school system and the general market to consider the opportunities entailed in computer technology. This technology can facilitate the public's access to lifelong learning and can entail advantageousness



ensuring opportunities to acquire education for more people. Such advantageousness is not only entailed in expanded possibilities to engage in studies at the times and in facilities suitable for each and every one, but one can also suppose that the cost of lifelong learning will decrease through the agency of information technology and thus ensure that more people will find it within their means to pursue education throughout life.

- It is proposed that work places specially examine the advantages of information technology regarding lifelong learning for employees. Previously unknown opportunities to transfer education and training into workplaces will open up through the agency of this new technology, and one can suppose that the cost and difficulties associated with lifelong learning of employees will decrease.
- Distance teaching and the dissemination of educational material, e.g., through mass media, is an option to reach people unable to engage in studies because of residence, work, age, handicaps or for other reasons.

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## **USE OF CONCEPTS**

### ***Parties on the labour market***

Associations of employers and wage earners on the labour market.

### ***Business community***

This means those with input in the organisation of the labour market that are involved in business operations, i.e., associations of employers and wage earners, companies and institutions.

### ***Formal studies***

Studies pursued within the school system.

### ***Distance learning***

Learning that can proceed without meetings between teacher and student, e.g., so that information (text, audio and visual materials) are received by mail, telephone, fax, computer network, radio, television, etc.

### ***Education parties***

Those offering studies or courses whether within or outside the government school system. Thus, educational institutions are deemed to be education parties as well as schools, workplaces organising training for employees and individuals holding courses.

### ***Education plans***

Plans aimed at future organisation of lifelong learning within companies or plans of individuals concerning lifelong learning.

### ***Education market***

Term to define all lifelong learning that is offered outside the school system as an occupation.

### ***Education policy of companies***

The policy on lifelong learning formulated by a company to increase its employees' knowledge and the company's competitiveness with lifelong learning.

### ***Informal studies***

Studies engaged in outside the school system.

### ***Lifelong learning***

Lifelong learning is a comprehensive term for all the education pursued by individuals throughout their lives, and it indicates that education is never finished but is a process lasting throughout one's life. Individuals acquire knowledge and skills during their younger years, pursuing studies within the school system at the compulsory, upper secondary and university levels. They can do this continuously or with breaks, engage in work, return to studies or engage in studies while working. A large part of lifelong learning is any kind of continuing education for shorter or longer studies, many kinds

of supplementary education and leisure studies. Individuals engage in lifelong learning, learn throughout their lives, in schools and in the labour market.

### ***Lifelong learning in the business community***

All the education, continuing education or job training pursued by individuals to increase their competence and knowledge in the labour market or for a specific job.

### ***Lifelong learning passport***

A lifelong learning passport is a certificate owned by individuals, where information is recorded about studies and courses that they have attended.

### ***Self-study***

Studies that individuals organise and pursue on their own.

### ***School system***

School system means compulsory schools, upper secondary schools and universities operated by the State and local governments. The preschool level is the first school level discussed in this report.

### ***Job education***

Education and training for a job or jobs in a certain field, whether occurring in schools, courses or the workplace.

### ***Job education in the business community***

See "Lifelong learning in the business community".

### ***Job-related lifelong learning***

See "Lifelong learning in the business community".

### ***Computer literacy***

Having some idea of how computers work, having a command of some vocabulary about data processing and being able to use computers for one's own benefit. Computer literacy need not entail a knowledge of programming or of the internal structure of the computer.

### ***Information technology***

The employment of appropriate technology for information processing. By technology is meant computer technology, telecommunications technology and electronics.

### ***Internet***

A logical network covering the entire world that is connected to innumerable smaller networks. The Internet uses the TCP/IP communication protocols, and with their help, it is possible to establish communications with all the computers connected to the Internet.

***Workplace-focused study plans***

Such plans are aimed at lifelong learning's being transferred in greater measure to workplaces through the agency of new technology. Thus, education parties can count on more distance learning and self-study.

***Adult education department***

In this report, adult education department refers, on the one hand, to studies at the upper secondary school level intended specifically for adults and, on the other, to studies at the university level that are taught outside of traditional school hours and intended for people on the labour market.