

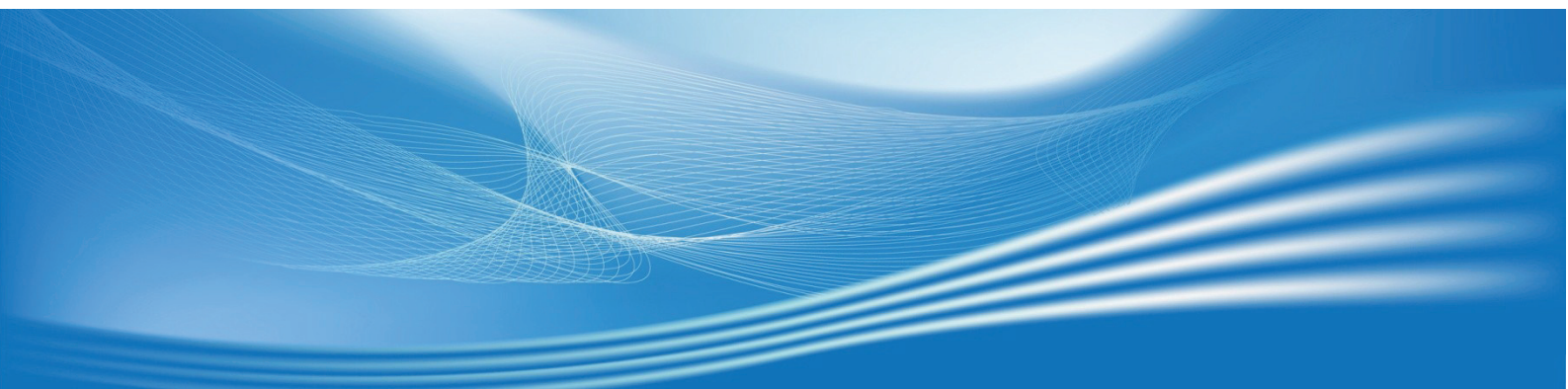


OECD-ICELAND IMPROVING SCHOOLS REVIEW

TOWARDS A STRATEGY TO PREVENT DROPOUT IN ICELAND

**RESULT OF THE OECD-ICELAND WORKSHOP *PREVENTING
DROPOUT IN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ICELAND*
(REYKJAVIK, ICELAND, NOVEMBER 2011)**

January 2012



SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND POLICY CONCLUSIONS TO PREVENT DROPOUT FROM UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION IN ICELAND

Strengths

- S1.** Icelandic students are performing above the OECD average in reading and mathematics
- S2.** Iceland invests in its education system
- S3.** Iceland emphasises equal access for all students at all levels
- S4.** Lifelong learning is a reality from early childhood to adulthood
- S5.** Recent policy reforms are aimed to raise the quality of education
- S6.** Decentralised governance aims to help local authorities, including schools, to make better decisions

Challenges

Schools	C1. High dropout rates from upper secondary suggest challenges in the structure
	C2. The quality of VET can also play a factor
Teachers	C3. Icelandic teachers are faced with obstacles to quality teaching
Students	C4. Their characteristics can increase their risk of dropout
Labour market	C5. Incentivises students into the workforce and away from education
System	C6. Decentralised governance arrangements do not provide enough support to schools

Policy conclusions

Schools	P1. Evaluate the current structure of upper secondary education
	P2. Ensure that vocational education is relevant to labour market needs
Teachers	P3. Support teaching quality
Students	P4. Improve support practices across schools to assess students' needs and provide guidance
Labour market	P5. Explore the effect of incentives in the labour market
System	P6. Promote a governance system focused on support and capacity building for schools

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of an education system today can help greatly shape what a country will be like tomorrow. This is why the OECD is working to support countries in the improvement of their education systems by providing comparative analysis, contextualised tailored recommendations and capacity building for key actors on policy design and implementation. With the *OECD-Iceland Improving Schools review*, the OECD is supporting Iceland in its efforts to implement policies to reduce dropout from upper secondary education.

To this end, the OECD-Iceland Workshop on Preventing Dropout in Upper Secondary Schools took place in Reykjavik on 22 November 2011. The workshop followed the methodology of the OECD Improving Schools Reviews, developed to support the design and implementation of specific education policy reforms in countries. 110 participants ranging from ministry officials, academia, parliamentarians, and representatives from school associations, occupational councils, municipalities, teacher unions, head teachers, parents and students contributed actively to discuss and come up with suggestions on reforms. More specifically, participants:

1. **Analysed** international successful practices with OECD experts that address upper secondary student dropout across different OECD countries (e.g. Finland, Norway and the United States).
2. **Discussed** the key issues, strengths and challenges facing the Icelandic upper secondary education system, based on the preliminary analysis presented by the OECD.
3. **Explored** strategies that could help address these issues to improve education attainment.

This report has been prepared by the OECD Improving Schools Team (Beatriz Pont, Diana Toledo Figueroa and Juliana Zapata, Education Policy Advice and Implementation Division). It presents the key conclusions from the OECD analysis and discussions held during the OECD-Iceland Workshop with OECD officials and international experts (Nancy Hoffman, Jobs for the Future, United States; Pasi Sahlberg, CIMO, Finland; and Petter Skarheim, Delegation of Norway to OECD) and presents specific proposals to tackle student dropout in upper secondary education.

- **Section 2** presents an overview of the Icelandic upper secondary education system as it relates to reducing dropout.
- **Section 3** presents a set of strengths and challenges to address dropout from upper secondary. It is based on preliminary analyses by the OECD on Icelandic education policies and international evidence on policies that address dropout as well as background information from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Iceland.
- **Section 4** presents a set of policy conclusions based on the OECD assessment and workshop discussions. These policy conclusions review key issues and elements that could be proposed for a strategy to address student dropout in Iceland.

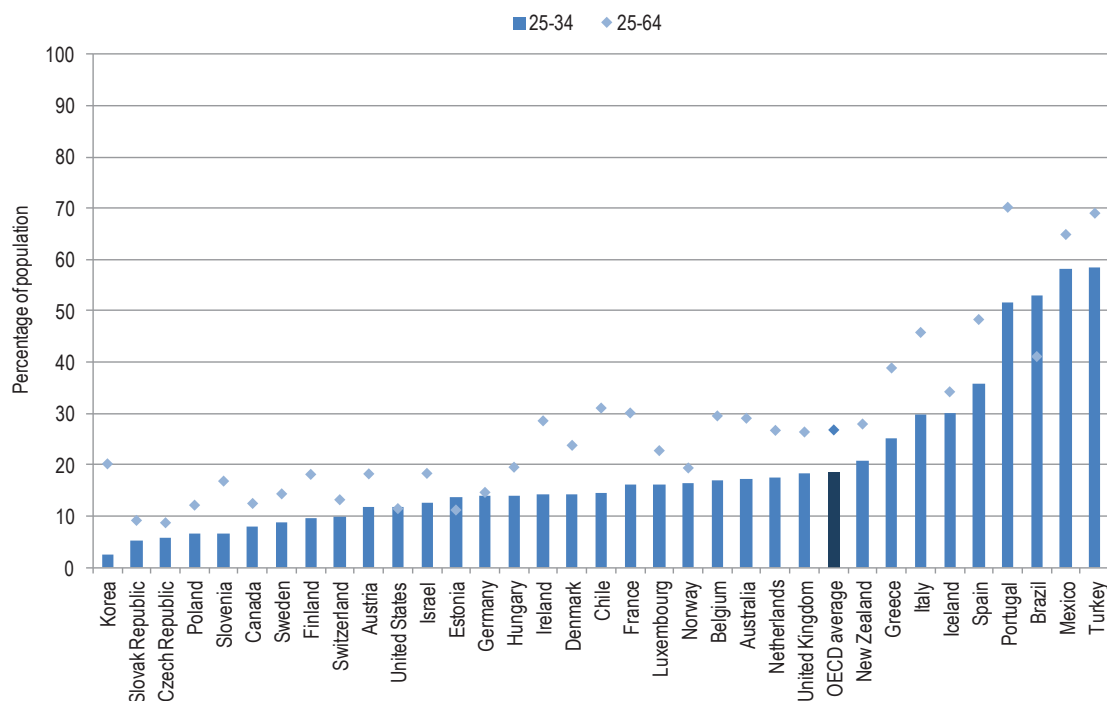
2. WHY FOCUS ON UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION IN ICELAND?

Education is a priority in Iceland. It is one of the OECD countries which invests most in its education system and emphasises equity and inclusion for all of its students. Icelandic students reach upper secondary education with high level skills, as measured by PISA. Yet, while Iceland has achieved progress, the country is currently facing challenges:

- There has been a decrease in the attainment of upper secondary education amongst youth and a high dropout rate. Successful completion of upper secondary education within four years is 45% while the OECD average is 68%. Some recover with adult learning opportunities but there may be a loss of opportunities.
- Evidence suggests that Icelandic students have the motivation to continue schooling, but there are different factors that may be hampering completion: the structure or quality of upper secondary education, the availability of lifelong learning for completion, and rich employment opportunities for youth can increase their risk of leaving school before obtaining at least an upper secondary certificate.

Individuals who have not attained at least upper secondary education across OECD countries

Proportion of 25-34 and 25-64 years-old who have not completed upper secondary education (2009)



Source: OECD (2011), *Education at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris

Addressing dropout has been high on the agenda of the Icelandic government for several years, and its importance has increased in the context of the financial crisis. It is seen by Iceland as a way to tackle increasing unemployment and for restructuring its economy and society for a sustainable future (Background report, 2011).

To tackle the high dropout rate and its consequences, the Icelandic government has taken measures with recent reforms throughout the education system. These include reforms in teacher education, compulsory and upper secondary education (2008) and the development of a new national curriculum and a national qualifications framework. Yet, Iceland needs to work on the implementation of these reforms and continue to strengthen upper secondary education in addition to improving and investing in pre-primary and compulsory education to increase its education attainment.

Preventing dropout and encouraging successful upper secondary completion can enhance Iceland's economic growth and social development. Building on the foundations from compulsory schooling, upper secondary education consolidates basic skills for the transition into higher education or the labour market. It can ensure that students graduate with at least the minimum qualifications required for employability or for further education and training.

This report analyses strengths and challenges and proposes a set of policy conclusions in relation to schools, the labour market, students, teachers and the governance system. It is important to keep in mind some points towards implementation:

- The recently approved educational policy reforms can be effective to reduce drop out. However, Iceland would need to ensure financial support to underpin these reforms in the current economic context. Given the numerous reforms and the constraints of the financial crisis, there should be a prioritization of the areas that need to be tackled and of the reforms that should be implemented.
- The size of the upper secondary education system (35 schools) can facilitate more effective coordination when setting targets, as well as formulating and implementing improvement strategies.

3. STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS DROPOUT IN UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION IN ICELAND

The strengths of the Icelandic education system can raise its capacity to prevent dropout

Understanding the strengths of an education system is important, as any strategy to reduce student dropout must build on the foundations of the system. Iceland has many strengths to build on:

1. ***Icelandic students are performing above the OECD average in reading and mathematics.*** PISA 2009 results show that most Icelandic students have good foundation skills at the end of compulsory education to successfully continue into upper secondary education.
2. ***Iceland invests in its education system.*** Iceland's public expenditure on education as a percentage of its GDP is one of the highest amongst OECD countries. Moreover, Iceland targets educational investment in early years, which can increase equity and produce a more efficient investment.
3. ***Equal access for all students at all levels of education.*** One of the most important strengths is that Iceland is characterised by an inclusive education system which aims to meet the needs of all its students. In principle, all in Iceland have the opportunity to begin school and graduate from upper secondary education regardless of their background or need. Iceland has a comprehensive education system until the end of compulsory education, which keeps students together while meeting students' different needs. Still, some equity issues remain as "some students are still more equal than others".
4. The Icelandic education system ***ensures lifelong learning from early childhood to adulthood.*** Adult students have access to different educational opportunities in upper secondary education and tertiary education through general and vocational education schools, lifelong learning centers and second chance opportunities.
5. ***Recent policy reforms aim to raise the quality of its education.*** The 2008 reforms in pre-school, compulsory, upper secondary, teachers and adult education aim to improve the quality of education at all levels. Upper secondary education reforms aim to increase the ability of schools to address the challenge of students who dropout.
6. ***Decentralised governance aims to help local authorities, including schools, to make better decisions*** to meet the needs of their students and implement strategies which improve student outcomes.

Despite strengths, important challenges exist in upper secondary education

The analysis and discussion of the structure and outcomes of upper secondary shows that there are important challenges to students' completion of upper secondary in terms of the quality of schools and the teaching, of the structure of education, of the incentives from the labour market and the governance of the system.

SCHOOLS

1. **High dropout rates from upper secondary education suggest challenges in the organisation and structure of this level of education in addressing students' needs.** Among the possible education system factors that could lead to student dropout are the duration of studies, lack of relevant curricula, or a system that is not addressing well enough the students' needs of choice of studies and guidance at the upper secondary level. For example, learning gaps left in the transitions between different academic levels, along with a lack of quality diagnosis, guidance and career advice for students, or even their great ease of transfer between upper secondary programs and schools, can lead in students to a sense of confusion and irrelevance in the education received.
2. **The quality of vocational education and training (VET) can also play a factor in a number of students dropping out.** There seems to be a lack of attractiveness to vocational education as a suitable alternative to general academic education as well as disillusionment if expectations are not met. In Iceland, the quality of VET education and access to resources, such as teaching aids, textbooks and equipment, poses a challenge (Eurydice, 2010). Although efforts are being made to form school and business partnerships to alleviate this challenge, the link to workplace learning might pose a further challenge.

TEACHERS

3. **Icelandic teachers can make a difference but are faced with obstacles.** Under recent reforms, teacher quality has been addressed by requiring all teachers to earn a minimum of a master degree. TALIS results point to some additional factors that could pose a challenge in the teaching profession, such as: a low percentage of teaching time, low starting salaries, high absenteeism and low participation in professional development. Additionally, teachers in upper secondary school receive an initial education that focuses less on pedagogical training than for teachers at other levels. Also, in-service teacher training seems to be *ad hoc* and not systemically planned, which could be critical challenges, especially as the teaching profession is growing older.

STUDENTS

4. **Student characteristics can increase their risk of dropping out, despite equity efforts at the national level.** Students' socioeconomic background has less of an effect on their academic achievement compared to other OECD countries, but social factors can still lead to dropout. Some factors of dropout include low motivation towards school, gender, immigrant status, or special needs.

THE LABOUR MARKET

5. ***The labour market incentivises students into the workforce and away from the education system.*** Although the financial crisis has demonstrated the vulnerabilities of low-skilled workers, conditions in Iceland still incentivise students to dropout and enter the labour market. The economic situation of student and family, the high employment rates, the small differences between low and high skilled wages and the possible high opportunity cost and duration of staying in school can increase the risk of a student leaving school.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

6. ***A decentralised governance system is not providing support or accountability for schools.*** There seems to be a lack of redistribution strategies within and between schools, and a weaker capacity to hold actors accountable. This could pose a challenge to meeting the needs of students and providing equal access.

From this set of issues, the organisation and structure of upper secondary education and the quality of VET (Challenge 1) appeared as the most important challenges for workshop participants. In addition, supporting teaching quality can be an important lever for improvement. Responding to a model of decentralised governance (Challenge 6) appears as both a strength and a challenge. Decentralisation can help local authorities and schools to make better decisions that meet students' needs for better school outcomes. However, to succeed, decentralisation needs to give actors the right tools to act, such as: support systems for principals and teachers, but also capacity building across schools (through school based training courses embedded in the schools' activities) to help them carry out more efficiently the tasks conferred to them.

4: PRELIMINARY POLICY CONCLUSIONS TO ADDRESS DROPOUT IN UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION IN ICELAND

Drawing from the preliminary analysis of strengths and challenges for the upper secondary education system in Iceland, this section presents a set of policy conclusions and some elements to consider in implementation, based on discussions with Icelandic stakeholders.

SCHOOLS

P1. Evaluate the organisation and structure of upper secondary education to explore its attractiveness, efficacy and capacity to balance student guidance and choice.

Suggested points for analysis include: a) the capacity to assess students' needs and learning gaps once they reach upper secondary (and prevent them); b) the broad variety of programmes available; c) whether the ease of exiting and re-entering the education system through education and adult learning can actually challenge completion of upper secondary education.

Key issues:

- **Upper secondary education needs to be perceived as relevant to students' needs.** At 20 years old, Iceland has the highest student age for completing upper secondary studies (OECD, 2011). The choice of studies available for students, the differences between types of upper secondary schools, but also the number of years in education for a student can be important factors that determine if a student stays in education. In the same way, methods, contents and materials seem dominated by tradition.
- **Optimising transitions to and from upper secondary:** The Ministry of Education is in charge of the upper secondary level, while compulsory education is the responsibility of municipalities. These bodies need to work more closely together to prevent possible learning gaps from students progressing to and from upper secondary education.
- **There are many different programmes in upper secondary education** and further variety has been encouraged with new reforms in upper secondary. This can result in lack of coherence in provision as well as difficulty in the availability of clear information. Students and tertiary education institutions, as well as employers, need to understand the content and value of these programmes.

How to evaluate the organisation and structure of upper secondary education

- To achieve a coherent structure in upper secondary education, Iceland needs to analyse what is already in place and how it aligns to objectives before planning any new reform. This is particularly important considering the multiple reforms currently being implemented in the aftermath of 2008. Changes in structure and instruction should be seen as complementary. If the key objective is addressing student dropout, is the current organisation and structure conducive to completion? Are

there guidelines as to how the different reforms come together to help meet this end? Which ones do not contribute or hinder the system to achieve this objective? How can these be dropped or redirected so these resources can be optimised?

- Smooth transitions into upper secondary. This can be done through vertical teaming, where educators from different levels ensure that curriculum across levels does not have overlaps or gaps. This coordination can also help know better what each grade should prioritise to strengthen the learning needs that the student will have when moving on further in the education system (OECD, Improving Schools Norway). For example, if an extra year is added, the rest of the curriculum needs to be adapted accordingly.
- Strengthen guidance and counselling and provide more information to students from lower secondary education to help them make the right career choices can help reduce the high cost of dropout for the education system. This investment at previous levels can prevent students' change of their education pathway or not completing it.
- A need to modernise schools: The capacity of innovation at the school level needs to be explored. This will also help adapt learning further to specific students' needs. This will make learning more attractive, modifying how students relate to schools and the role of their teachers. Students today may become teachers tomorrow. The structure of upper secondary education should be thought of in a way that makes students to want to come and teach. The use of technology should also be explored: how is it developed and used at different levels?
- The size of the Icelandic education system is an advantage. It could be analysed how best to promote innovation at the local level and across schools since the Ministry can have a more direct relationship with schools than most ministries.

P2. Ensure that vocational education is relevant to labour market needs to improve the quality of VET and its attractiveness for students and for employers. Further work to ensure links to work and value in the labour market is required, as well as possible partnerships to ensure better learning conditions at schools.

Key issues:

- **VET is perceived as uneven in quality** despite high completion rates compared to general programmes. Some programmes (perhaps the old trades for which there are qualifications /certifications) are seen as stronger than others. The teachers, resources and materials available to VET programs might be uneven as well.
- The **VET system is perceived as outdated in general** and needing modernisation. Innovation should be guided by labour market needs.
- **VET in Iceland is largely school based** and many think that more work-based education would make it stronger. There also seem to be weak links in many VET programmes to the labour market and weak cooperation (if any) between education, welfare, and labour at the national/ministerial level.

- **VET appears to be seen as of lower status** than the academic track. Lower achieving students would tend to select VET, leading to low status.
- **Rural students may face greater challenges** when going to school, specifically to a VET program because of factors such as: the cost for the programme, materials and the moving cost due to the limited options in the Icelandic rural areas.

How to ensure that vocational education is relevant to labour market needs

- Iceland should stress the government/educators role to promote a work-based system. This will help keep VET learning broad enough so students "own" their skills and can transfer them across different contexts. Students in a system based on company training may be less likely to develop skills that are transferable in future job experiences.
- Social partners (employers and unions) should see schools as partners. They need to send a common message to students that education is important. Employers in particular need to be encouraged to train students rather than hiring dropouts and training them themselves.
 - Employers may need financial incentives to take on students as interns and apprentices; such incentives can be adjusted to attract students into particular labour market areas where there is demand and good wages.
 - While not only a VET issue, dropout can be stemmed as in other countries by "active labour market policies" as in the Netherlands where students must be in a combination of work and schooling until they earn a credential, and they must stay in school until age 18 or they lose benefits.
- To align the system to labour market needs, a challenge is to relate real time labour market data to the structure of the education system. What are the job qualifications which are currently needed? This needs to be done by the Ministries of Education and Labour, as well as by the Welfare Councils.
- Raising the status of VET could be done by emphasising modern careers in the technical and innovation sectors and ensuring the equipment is modern and teachers up to date.
- Students need much better advice in the last two years of compulsory school about what they can achieve in a VET program. There also needs to be a structure on guidance and counseling because parents and teachers might not know about programs and what is needed in the labour market.
- Finally, schools can be incentivised to recapture drop outs; there can be a financial increase for each student who returns to school and stay to complete.

TEACHERS

P3. Support teaching quality: *With recent teacher training reforms the quality of teachers will be strengthened, but further work to support more stability in the teaching career, including continuing professional development of teachers, advice, evaluation or incentives is key to help them address better the variety of students' needs in their classes.*

Key issues:

- **Upper secondary teaching seems to require modernisation** in terms of organisation and working methods. But instruction will not change unless the teachers are trained and the culture of the schools is changed as well. Iceland can rely on their recent reforms, but initial education and professional development, which can take very different forms need to be reviewed. For example, compulsory education teachers receive a three-year training of pedagogy, while upper secondary teachers receive only one year and a half. Improved training could help prevent teacher burnout.
- Teacher reforms have been put in place to increase the quality of the teachers in Icelandic schools, but **further areas to increase stability within the workforce** are necessary.
- To attract better candidates into teaching, Iceland needs to **provide adequate working conditions, professional development opportunities, and better salaries** to teachers throughout their careers. Iceland needs to offer salaries that are competitive in the labour market with other professions of comparable value.
- **Dialogue is needed with teachers and other actors before moving forward** with reforms that focus on them. There needs to be a proactive approach during this dialogue emphasising the positive role teachers can play for improving student outcomes, and how important it is to support them in this task. This will help obtain a better assessment from teachers as to what tools they will need to do this.

How to support teaching quality

- Teaching is not regarded as a popular profession in Iceland. It is unlikely that modest changes in teachers working conditions would change this situation. Therefore it is important to pay more attention to the factors that would increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, including teacher pay, career development opportunities and the professional development opportunities for teachers.
- Teachers who are already in service need to be quickly prepared to take more responsibility of curriculum planning. This needs to be coordinated with the teacher pre-service education programmes that are renewed according to the new requirements in the university.
- Teachers need to be prepared to respond to special education needs in schools, but it is important to clarify whether all teachers need to be prepared to support these students or there should be specialised support.

STUDENTS

P4. Improve the capacity of schools to assess students' needs and provide guidance to help identify students at risk of dropping out or struggling, and can prevent them from leaving the school system. This can be done through: adequate data collection regarding students' characteristics, exploring partnerships across schools for adequate pedagogic support and career guidance for different kinds of students, or helping schools pursue more effective opportunities which link learning at school with work.

Key issues:

- **Certain characteristics of students can increase their risk of dropping out**, such as their motivation, gender, immigrant status or special needs. Implementing support policies geared towards students, teachers or head teachers can help address some of the characteristics which can increase dropout.
- **Schools need training to connect the social and academic aspect**. This involves analysing the role that head teachers, teachers and parents can play in underpinning the school's own strategies against dropout.

How to improve the capacity of schools to assess students' needs and provide guidance

- Data collection can help identify students from early on if they might be at risk of dropping out. There is a need for more systematic information:
 - Student data should be available across schools, so the history of a student is available to the schools before the student arrives.
 - Schools would benefit from knowing which of their former students remained or not in the system and why.
- The availability of information will only provide effective results if it is connected with capacity building and shared collaboration across schools as to how to use this information appropriately to establish a diagnosis of the needs of an individual student and how these connect with those of the school.
- Once schools have information, they need to be provided with the adequate tools to act. A selection of key services could be made in consultation with schools and offered as part of a permanent menu to help them address their most frequent needs.
- The transition to education and/or to the labour market is also important to address. Counselling and the situation of the VET system were also mentioned as areas to improve support practices.
- Parent accountability and involvement is also important.

P5. Explore the effect of incentives in the labour market to reduce dropout or late completion. Different incentives, wages and other welfare benefits can influence choices made by students and by employers. The goal could be to revise welfare benefits and labour costs so that they incentivise completion of upper secondary.

Key issues:

- **The economic crisis has rendered more difficult the transition from education to the labour market.** Previously, with full employment, there was no concern about upper secondary dropout because the transition to the labour market was easy at different ages and well supported with a strong adult learning system. The effects of the crisis have shown that this situation is no longer sustainable.
- In the current context, **the incentives in the labour market draw students away from education** but do not bring all back. There appears to be some conditions in Iceland which incentivise students to dropout and enter the labour market:
 - **The welfare and/or social system**, which include minimum wage and unemployment benefits might incentivise students not to return to education or obtain an upper secondary degree if they can receive benefits which allow them to have a certain living standard.
 - **The economic situation of students and families** can detract students from education if there is a need an income to support the student and/or the family.
 - The **relatively small differences between low and high skilled employability** can deter students from returning to education to obtain higher skills.
 - **Young people also see a small difference between low-skilled and high skilled education.** This is a problem in the rural areas and large areas.
 - The perceived **high opportunity cost of going to school** rather than working, especially in rural areas.
 - On the supply-side, **key occupational areas, such as tourism, commerce and the processing of fish, do not seem to demand special qualifications.** Thus, there is no need for an upper secondary degree.

How to explore the effect of incentives in the labour market to reduce dropout

- The Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Education can work together to create a plan to address dropout holistically, and occupational councils can play a role. Special attention should be given to sectors where no training is currently needed (such as services or fish processing), by establishing required learning profiles.

- Employers need incentives to ensure the future workforce obtains a minimum education. This includes exploring possibly sub-minimum wages for youth and ensuring that labour costs do not deter companies from hiring high-skilled labour with a minimum of an upper secondary school degree. Employers also need an incentive to participate in VET programs as well as students (the benefits cannot be too low that discourage students from beginning VET).
- Students without access to companies/employers should also have quality VET programs that provide the experience that an apprentice would be receiving in a work placement. Updated teachers, resources and materials allow quality VET programs.
- Both students and employers need to understand the importance of upper secondary education. Exploring why adults return to education might indicate a realization later in life of the importance of upper secondary education. Students should be given the right opportunities and facilities to complete upper secondary education to deter dropouts and the constant exiting and entering of students into education.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

P6. Promote a governance system focused on support and capacity building for schools. Policies should be designed to align the current national-local-school autonomy organization, placing the needs of schools at the centre. As part of this process, it is key to clarify priorities, identify and enable institutional support where needed, as well as to ensure adequate capacity building of the main actors concerned according to their responsibilities within the system. School leaders have a key role to play.

Key issues

- Decentralisation has taken place, but upper secondary schools **may lack capacity of action focused on school improvement.** Among some of the factors mentioned by workshop participants include: numerous constraints posed by contracts, unsolved capacity building needs for school actors, insufficient financing, or the lack of tools to help them implement their strategies. While schools have autonomy and responsibility, there appears to be a lack of communication on common objectives of schools and their students.
- **Involving key stakeholders in the process is vital.** For any reform to be successful there needs to be adequate communication with key stakeholders on: *what* the reforms will be, *why* these are necessary and *how* best to contribute to their success. Engagement is key, but capacity building of all key actors also needs to take place. Without these two steps, efficient implementation will hardly happen. For example, teachers presented with new information need to be convinced and trained together so they can effectively change their practice.
- Given the recent reform towards more school autonomy and increased responsibility of schools in delivering results, **school leaders need to be supported to be pedagogical leaders.** In addition, there appears to be a lack of preparation and support towards school leadership across Iceland. School

leaders in Iceland, because of the scale, can be supported to be key school improvement agents for the system as a whole.

How to promote a governance system focused on support and capacity building for schools

- A possibility could be for the Ministry should take the initiative to conduct a consultation process with stakeholders to review the reform elements and jointly agree and draw up a plan for implementation. This process should be organised and carried out along with all the major stakeholders. It is important to examine the following issues carefully:
 1. Which measures are the most important in preventing dropout?
 2. How could the measures be fitted within a responsible budget frame?
- Consensus from the teachers' unions and the Ministry is important in drawing up future steps.
- School leadership is a key lever for improvement that needs to be developed and supported. As there are only around 35 upper secondary school principals, formulating a strategy for them should be a cost effective and winning strategy for reducing drop out. One possibility could be to do a common training programme with all principals teachers where:
 1. They would receive preparation on pedagogical leadership.
 2. They would identify a set of general challenges for schools.
 3. Schools would be grouped in clusters, according to specific needs.
 4. Within each cluster, head teachers would select a strategy and would pilot it in a specific school, with the support of the rest of the principals.
- Promoting greater coordination across the different government ministries: Good quality of upper secondary needs the collaboration of different ministries. For example, the Ministry of finance takes care of teachers' salaries and other resources that could be allocated to education. But better upper secondary education also means sending the right signals to students on how useful their studies can be for their professional lives. The Ministry of Labour is key in this step, and that of Welfare can also influence on providing incentives that persuade students from leaving upper secondary. Other areas such as trade and investment can help define further what kind of education is more relevant for the students' future needs in the labour market depending on the economic model that Iceland is currently defining.

THE OECD-ICELAND WORKSHOP AGENDA PREVENTING DROP OUT: ICELAND IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

22 November, 2011

Chair: Ásta Magnúsdóttir, Secretary General

11:30-12:20		
<i>Lunch and Opening session</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lunch Welcome by Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Minister of Education of Iceland Objectives and structure of the workshop, OECD background and methodology of the project (<i>Beatriz Pont, OECD, Project Manager: Policy Implementation</i>) 	
12:25-13:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An international overview of policies and practices to reduce drop out and challenges for Iceland (<i>Beatriz Pont, OECD, Project Manager</i>) (20 minutes) Presentation of reforms in Iceland to prevent drop out (<i>Ministry of Education</i>) (15 minutes) 	13:00-13:15 <i>Questions and comments</i>
13:15-14:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers in Finland (<i>Pasi Sahlberg, CIMO, Finland</i>) Successful student pathways in the United States (<i>Nancy Hoffman, Vice-president, Jobs for the Future, United States</i>) Ensuring completion in Norway (<i>Petter Skarheim, Delegation of Norway to the OECD</i>) 	14:00-14:15 <i>Questions and comments</i>
14:15-15:30	<i>Parallel thematic sessions</i>	
15:30-16:00 Coffee break		
16:00-16:45	<p><i>Moderator: Ásta Magnúsdóttir</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each team will take 5 minutes to present their conclusions relative to the challenges Discussion Conclusions of discussion by the moderator 	
16:45-17:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving schools: the OECD collaboration on policy issues: tailored recommendations, consultation with key stakeholders, creating capacity in policy implementation (<i>Diana Toledo, OECD Policy Analyst</i>) (15 minutes) Improving Lower Secondary Schools in Norway: an example of how Norway engaged with the OECD to actually reform their policies (<i>Petter Skarheim, Delegation of Norway to the OECD</i>) (15 minutes) 	
17:15-17:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of conclusions by the OECD and the Ministry of Education 	
End of workshop		

Annex 2: The OECD-Iceland Team: A combination of OECD and international experts

Nancy Hoffman is Vice President and Senior Advisor of Jobs for The Future. She also worked as a consultant for the OECD, in its study of vocational education and training, "Learning for Jobs." Dr. Hoffman has held posts as academic services dean at Harvard Graduate School of Education and programme officer at the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. She was a founder and faculty member of the College of Public and Community Service at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. At the University of Massachusetts, she also ran the Center for the Improvement of Teaching. She also participated recently in the OECD Project for Quality in Lower Secondary Education in Norway. Dr. Hoffman holds a B.A. and Ph.D. in comparative literature from the University of California, Berkeley.

Petter Skarheim is currently acting as Counselor in the Permanent Delegation of Norway to the OECD, where he covers the fields of education, science and technology. His permanent job is Director General for the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, a position he has held since the directorate was established in 2004. Previously, he was in the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research as the head of the Department for Learning and Workforce Development. He has a long employment history in the Ministry of Finance where he was Deputy Director General in the Budget Department. He has been main secretary for a series of Norwegian Official Commissions Reports (NOUs) both within public finance and education. Two of the most influential reports were from the Committee for Quality in Primary and Secondary Education, which laid the foundation for a thorough-going reform in primary and secondary education in Norway. Petter holds a MBA from the Norwegian School of Economics and Business administration.

Pasi Sahlberg is Director General of CIMO (Centre for International Mobility and Cooperation) in Helsinki, Finland. He has global expertise in educational reforms, training teachers, school improvement and advising policy-makers in more than 40 countries. In Finland he has worked as teacher, teacher-educator, senior advisor and director, and overseas served the World Bank (in Washington) and the European Commission (in Torino, Italy) as senior education specialist. His forthcoming book is titled "Finnish Lessons: What can the world learn about educational change in Finland". He has a Ph.D. from the University of Jyväskylä and is Adjunct Professor at the Universities of Helsinki and Oulu in Finland. He has also participated in the OECD Project for Quality in Lower Secondary Education in Norway.

OECD staff

Beatriz Pont is Senior Analyst on Education Policy Implementation in the OECD Education Directorate, where she is currently coordinating the OECD Project for Preventing Dropout in Iceland. She also recently coordinated the Quality in Lower Secondary Education in Norway Project. At the OECD since 1999, she has focused on education policy issues, except for a year that she spent in the Secretary General's cabinet studying political economy of reform across OECD countries. She has managed and contributed to a range of education policy comparative reviews in the area of school improvement, school leadership, equity adult learning and adult skills, among others. Previously Beatriz was a researcher on education, training and active labour market policies at the Economic and Social Council of the Government of Spain and worked for Andersen Consulting in Barcelona. Beatriz has a B.A. in Political Science from Pitzer College, Claremont, California, holds a M.Sc. in International Affairs from Columbia University, and was a research fellow at the Institute of Social Science in Tokyo University.

Diana Toledo Figueroa is Policy Analyst on Education Policy Implementation in the OECD Education Directorate, where she has participated in the OECD Project for Quality in Lower Secondary Education in Norway, as well as the OECD-Mexico Project to Improve the Quality of Mexican Schools. Since 2007 she has also contributed to several other OECD projects, such as: the PISA 2006 Initial Report, the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2008), Education at a Glance, among others. Previously she also worked with the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC) at UNESCO. Diana holds a Ph.D. in Development Socio-Economics and a M.Sc. in Comparative Development Studies from EHESS, France. She also holds a B.A. in Political Science from ITAM, Mexico.

Juliana Zapata is Analyst on Education Policy Implementation in the OECD Education Directorate, where she is participating in the OECD Project for Preventing Dropout in Iceland. She previously contributed to the Social Policy Project Families and Children in the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs. Juliana has recently completed her Master of Public Affairs at Sciences Po in Paris. She also holds a M.S. in Urban Education from Mercy College as well as a Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs from Tufts University. Her experience includes field research in Mexico and India as well as teaching experience in both New York City and Paris.