

Country Report ICELAND

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1. Background and country context

In Iceland the system of government is based on the principle of the tripartite division of power. According to the Constitution, Parliament (Althingi) and the President jointly exercise legislative power. The President and other governmental authorities are entrusted with executive power and the judiciary with judicial power. In 2005 there were 98 municipalities. Municipalities are responsible for pre-primary and primary education whereas the state is responsible for all post compulsory education.

Education in Iceland has traditionally been organised within the public sector, and there are very few private education institutions. The state also monitors compliance with educational laws and regulations.

Unemployment hardly exists and drop-out from education and training is high. Compared to other Nordic Countries, relatively few Icelanders complete upper secondary education. Only a 1/3 of those who do complete it have chosen VET. This low level of VET graduates and the high demand for skilled personnel has resulted in the immigration of foreign workers partly or fully qualified to journeymen standards. Approximately 2/3 of a cohort complete upper secondary education before the age of 30. 90-95 per cent enter upper secondary education after comprehensive school. Many take one or more breaks for a job etc. and come in later on to finish the study.

Initial vocational education and training

VET usually begins at upper secondary level, even though there are a few courses that for statistical reasons are classified as lower secondary education (e.g. the licence to drive trucks or other heavy machinery). School-based IVET is perhaps more common nowadays with 10-40 per cent of the total study time is on-a-job-training. This is true for the biggest and most technified branches like electro... metal/mechanical, construction AND health, social care, cosmetology AND handycraft like dressmaking where 1/4th to 2/3rd of total study time is spent at a work-place.

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

The main providers of VET are:

- Industrial-vocational schools (*i_*nskólar) which offer theoretical and practical programmes of study in certified and some non-certified trades;
- Comprehensive schools (*fjölbrautaskólar*) which offer theoretical and practical training as in the industrial-vocational schools and some other programmes providing vocational and artistic education. All these schools also offer general upper-secondary education and training and it is possible to combine a general degree with a vocational one;
- Specialised vocational schools (*sérskólar*) which offer specialised programmes of study as preparation for specialised employment, such as marine schools. At post

secondary and tertiary level, there are also special schools for the agricultural sector.

Continuing vocational education and training

CVET provision is mainly private and is designed to meet the training needs of enterprises and individuals. The largest change in recent years has been the increase in demand which is more the result of general growing interest than any change in government policy. CVET has been an important matter of wage agreements on the common labour market after the year 2000 and the government has increased considerably. Overall planning and forecasting has not taken place. With improvement in technology, distance education has flourished and many schools now offer a combination of distance and on-campus education and training.

CVET can be divided into:

- Further education and training for those already with some qualifications.
- Basic training for those with compulsory training or less.
- Training at the workplace. This is a growing field, even though it is mainly larger companies that provide it.
- Training for unemployed people.
- Hobby courses.

2. Organisation: How is the work and training of trainers organised?

The teaching profession is regulated in the legislation, but other teaching occupations are not regulated by law. In the latter case those teaching are referred to as instructors or trainers.

Work-place trainers. Training for a skilled trade includes a study contract with a master craftsman (work-place trainer) or industrial firm. Work-place trainers within certified trades must at least have the formal qualifications of master craftsmen. To become a master craftsman one needs to complete a Programme of Master Craftsmanship (operated within various comprehensive schools and industrial-vocational schools). That training includes (among other things) a two credit course on teaching/training. The entrance requirements for a Programme of Master Craftsmanship is a Journeyman's certificate and at least one year of work experience in the trade in question. Master Craftsmen receive their education at the upper secondary and post secondary school level.

Health care trainers. Training for health care occupations includes 16 to 40 weeks of work-based training within the health-care system. There are no formal criteria set for the employment of health care trainers. However, generally health care trainers have completed training in individual health care occupations (practical nursing, dental assistant, medical secretary, pharmaceutical technician and foodstuff technician) and have professional experience.

The initial training for work-place trainers

The Ministry of Education authorises enterprises or individuals to take on apprentices if they meet the qualification requirements laid down in regulations (280/1997) issued by the ministry. According to these regulations, master craftsmen and enterprises are allowed to take on apprentices if they meet following qualifications:

A work-place trainer should be a certified master craftsman. Master craftsmen are certified according to the law (42/1978) issued by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce

in the trade he intends to teach. Enterprises are allowed to take on apprentices if they employ a qualified work-place trainer.

A work-place trainer/enterprise should have assignments/project that are accepted by curriculum or individual occupational councils.

The facilities that a workplace trainer/enterprise offers should be satisfactory.

Individuals who meet the following qualifications can become master craftsmen:

- Icelandic citizens or foreign citizens who have been residents in Iceland uninterrupted for at least one year. Exempt from this rule are citizens of countries within EEA and EFTA.
- Legally competent individuals.
- Financially competent individuals (Hefur forræ_i á búi sínu).
- Individuals who have not been convicted according to the General Penal Code No. 19/1940
- Master craftsmen are required to have basic business knowledge (book-keeping/accounting). These requirements are according to the National Curriculum Guidelines.
- Individuals who have successfully completed the journeyman's examinations.
- Individuals who have worked in their trade, for at least one year, under the supervision of a master craftsman.
- Individuals who have successfully completed the course of study in the School of Master Craftsmanship (operated within various comprehensive schools and industrial-vocational schools).

CVET trainers

There is no organized pre-service training for CVET trainers in Iceland. Most trainers in CVET primarily work as specialists in their respective field, and have teaching and training in continuing education only as a secondary obligation. Some training centres even explicitly only hire experts whose main qualification is practice in their field of expertise and who are respected in the field. These trainers have very different backgrounds, ranging from master craftsmen to a doctorate. Their training is thus as diverse as the trainers are many.

Trainers usually have little or no pre-service pedagogical training in addition to their subject of expertise.

3. Economy: How is the work and training of trainers financed?

The only piece of information available is that workplace trainers do not receive payment from the upper secondary level school system.

It is hard to say that workplace trainers in Iceland have special status. A trainer might have been training for years, but does not very often have a trainer identity. The professionalisation and formalisation of training is an interesting debate going on now and for example universities support that kind of development. It would be interesting to offer a certificate for those trainers who have already been trained.

4. Selection and Allocation: How are trainers selected and how are human resources allocated?

The training is almost always part-time in Iceland – there are very few full-time trainers (Eurotrainer expert interview)

5. How is the reputation of trainers and how are they integrated in enterprises/society?

According to the expert interview there is now a common acceptance: people understand the need for training the trainers. The people who should train are highly motivated, they are often the best people in companies. They are also active people in many other ways and they are the most competent people – which also often means that they don't have time. Most of these persons like the training and especially those who have done it earlier.

In companies they don't know however how to train and they are not educated for that. Managers and key staff give training tasks but, they don't enough time to prepare their courses; they managers don't give time people time to prepare their training programmes or even some lessons.