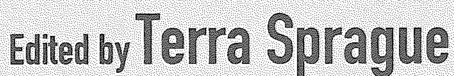

Edited by Terra Sprague

EDUCATION IN NON-EU COUNTRIES IN WESTERN AND SOUTHERN EUROPE

BLOOMSBURY

Bloomsbury Academic
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

50 Bedford Square
London
WC1B 3DP
UK

1385 Broadway
New York
NY 10018
USA

www.bloomsbury.com

BLOOMSBURY and the Diana logo are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published 2016

© Terra Sprague and Contributors, 2016

Trevor Corner and Contributors have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Author of this work.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

No responsibility for loss caused to any individual or organization acting on or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Bloomsbury or the author.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-4725-9249-1
ePDF: 978-1-4725-9251-4
ePub: 978-1-4725-9250-7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Sprague, Terra, editor.
Title: Education in non-EU countries in Western and Southern Europe / edited by Terra Sprague.
Other titles: Education in non-European Union countries in Western and Southern Europe
Description: New York : Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. | Series: Education around the world | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2015030727| ISBN 9781472592491 (hardback) | ISBN 9781472592507 (epub) | ISBN 9781472592514 (epdf)
Subjects: LCSH: Education--Europe--Case studies. | Educational change--Europe--Case studies. | Comparative education--Case studies. | BISAC: EDUCATION / Comparative. | EDUCATION / Reference.
Classification: LCC LA622 .E38185 2016 | DDC 370.94--dc23 LC record available at http://lccn.loc.gov/2015030727

Typeset by Fakenham Prepress Solutions, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 8NN
Printed and bound in Great Britain

Contents

Notes on Contributors vii

Series Editor's Preface xiii
Colin Brock

Introduction: An overview of contrasts and similarities of education in non-EU countries in Western and Southern Europe 1
Terra Sprague

1 Iceland: Educational structure and development 11
Jón Torfi Jónasson and Gunnhildur Óskarsdóttir

2 Norway: Formal education and its role in education and development 37
Tone Skinningsrud and Birgit Brock-Utne

3 Norway: New approaches to governance and leadership 59
Jorunn Møller

4 Switzerland: Between the federal structure and global challenges 75
Matthis Behrens

5 Switzerland: Teacher education 99
Lucien Criblez

6 Albania: An overview 123
Meg P. Gardinier

7 Bosnia and Herzegovina: The impact of an unreformed system 151
Valery Perry and Matthew T. Becker

8 Kosovo: An overview 177
Dukagjin Pupovci

9 Macedonia: Reforms of the education system 205
Ana Mickovska-Raleva

10 Montenegro: An overview with focus on higher education 227
Veselin Vukotić

11 Serbia: An overview 247
Ana Pešikan

12 Serbia: Higher education at the crossroads 269
Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić

13 Micro-states of Western and Southern Europe outside the European Union 283
Colin Brock

Index 291

1

Iceland: Educational structure and development

Jón Torfi Jónasson and Gunnhildur Óskarsdóttir

Introduction and a conceptual background

Icelandic society generally emphasizes education with an eye to ensuring that every child and young person has an equal right to education, free of charge, in compulsory, upper secondary school and university. There exist relatively few fee-paying institutions at all levels, and all of these receive substantial state or municipal funding, including pre-school. The equal right to education is outlined in the Constitution as well as in the various laws pertaining to the different educational levels. In general terms it may be claimed that the system is inclusive, egalitarian and open.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Icelandic education system was poorly developed – the legal framework for primary education was still largely derived from the framework moulded by the church. During the next hundred years, however, the system became mature, sturdy and fairly advanced, largely being on par with systems in the other Nordic countries. Regular programmes in upper secondary and tertiary education are more open to students at all ages than is normally the case in other countries. While the total Icelandic population did not reach 300,000 until around the turn of the twenty-first century, Icelandic education developed in similar ways to much larger systems, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. This chapter deals with many of the same concerns. Thus we draw attention to the importance of similarities between different systems and warn against over-emphasizing their differences, though they abound of course in the details.

Five perspectives that are useful for understanding such system developments in describing the Icelandic education system (Jónasson 2006; Jónasson and Blöndal 2011) will serve as a framework later in the chapter. The first

perspective brings attention to recurrent issues that emerge, sometimes in different guises. The second perspective can be characterized by the terms continuity and gradual change. While new features are initiated and some changes are constantly taking place, for example schools being established, changing legal frameworks, or factors such as curriculum or attendance rates, these can often be identified by pointing to certain actions or events that are thereby given historical status. Looking more closely, we practically always see a more gradual change where the historical events have clear precursors. Therefore, third, we also emphasize the importance of the long-term perspective, and suggest that short-term changes can often be identified as fluctuations in a robustly developing process. By doing this we note that the regularities in the developments are often hidden by short-term fluctuations. Fourth, we point to various examples of academic drift where institutions and programmes gradually become more academic when using the long-term perspective and this can be noted at all educational levels. The fifth perspective draws attention to what here is called the institutional drift, whereby institutions gradually emerge or change their position within an educational system (normally by moving upwards).

Icelandic education: An overview[1, 2]

Recently, the Icelandic central government has carried out a reform of the entire school system, with new acts for all four school levels being passed in 2008,[3] namely pre-school, compulsory education, upper secondary education, and public universities. In 2010, an adult education act was passed which, however, is aimed exclusively at those who have not already obtained upper secondary education and extends to all age groups above the normal upper secondary schooling age. The global financial crisis in 2008 impinged on the Icelandic economy, which is gradually regaining its strength, but serious cuts have delayed the full realization of the reforms.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Pre-school education						Compulsory education										Upper secondary education				University education. Bologna structure							
Pre-schools						Basic school. Grades 1 to 10. Formerly primary and lower secondary education.										Upper secondary. Gymnasium, Comprehensive schools. Vocational schools.				Bachelor programmes			Master progra-mmes		PhD programmes		

Figure 1.1 The basic structure of the Icelandic educational system

Figure 1.1 shows the basic structure of the Icelandic educational system and indicates to which ages the system refers, but after compulsory education the age of the students does not necessarily correspond to the numbers shown here. Pre-schools provide education for children until the age of six. Icelandic children normally start formal school at six years old and automatically progress annually throughout ten years of compulsory education. In addition, practically all three-, four- and five-year-olds attend pre-school. Implicit in the main principle of an equal right to education is the compulsory responsibility of schools to attend to the educational needs of each student. Inclusion is the guiding policy but it is not all plain sailing (Marinósson and Bjarnason 2014; Sigurðardóttir et al. 2014). In 2013, three out of 169 compulsory schools operating in Iceland were special education schools with less than 0.4 per cent of the primary school student population. While enrolment in private schools at the compulsory level has slightly increased during the last decade, less than 2.5 per cent of pupils attend the ten privately operated schools.

The compulsory system includes primary and lower secondary schools and is financed and operated by local authorities (the municipalities). In contrast, the upper secondary system is operated and financed by the central government, except for the municipalities, which provide up to 40 per cent of building construction costs. The tertiary system is financed by the state, but student fees are collected at some institutions.

After completing compulsory education at age sixteen, most students proceed directly to non-compulsory upper secondary school. Since 2010 over 95 per cent of sixteen-year-olds enrol in upper secondary level each year, even though some drop out during the first year. Upper secondary school administration is based on legislation, regulations and the curriculum guide issued by the central government. The structure of the system and the curriculum framework are dictated by the central government, whereas the schools have a rather limited but increasing scope for independent action. Thus, the administrative structure is essentially two-layered, where one layer represents the central government and the other the individual schools. Upper secondary studies are typically four-year programmes (with some notable shorter exceptions), and are intended for the sixteen to nineteen age group (graduating at the age of twenty). Around 100 branches of study are offered, of which over eighty are vocational (Kjartansdóttir 2013).

The Icelandic tertiary system is essentially a unified system, similar to those in the United Kingdom and Spain and to some extent the Swedish system. There is also a considerable adult and continuing educational activity in Iceland outside the formal system and this is expanding.

Literature and data on Icelandic education in English

Those wishing to obtain information about Icelandic education can find English language materials in a number of locations. First, the Ministry of Education and Culture[4] provides a description of much of the education system in various documents and national curriculum guides in English.[5] Under legislation, the principal acts on all levels of education and other legislation relevant to education are available, including Chapter 7 of the Constitution which contains statements about human rights, such as Article 76 on education.[6] Second, Statistics Iceland has much numerical data on Iceland and Icelandic education readily accessible in English.[7] Third, Icelandic researchers now publish extensively in international journals and participate in numerous international projects.[8] A number of journals publish English language material on Icelandic education. Examples include *Netla*, a web-based reviewed journal with a special section containing English material,[9] *Uppeldi og menntun [Pedagogy and Education],* and *Tímarit um menntarannsóknir*, *Journal of Educational Research* (Iceland). In some cases only abstracts are available in English, but in other cases the full articles are written in English. Finally, Iceland is included in the Eurydice and OECD descriptive and comparative publications and participates in a number of international comparisons, which publish reports, notably PISA.

The features of Icelandic education

What follows is a high-level overview of the education system with some historical background presented chronologically.

A historical preamble

The story of the modern development of the Icelandic system of education begins in the 1860s or 1870s. During that period, a relatively large number of different schools at various levels were established and in the following decades the current system started to form. Thus the Icelandic system of education is less than 150 years old.

But historically this would be somewhat misleading, for three reasons. All of these reflect the fact that during the Middle Ages Iceland came under

the jurisdiction of Norway and later Denmark, which continued formally until 1944. First we note the historical ties with the Church, initially with the Catholic Church and then with Protestant denominations, which were most significant even though the secular and religious ties were clearly inter-woven, due to the influence of the Reformation. Thus the influence of the State and the Church are not easy to distinguish. The roots of Icelandic education extend nearly 1,000 years prior to the twentieth century with schools being established in the two dioceses in Iceland, the first in 1106. The two schools were operated intermittently (especially during the early centuries) until around 1800. But there are, throughout history, also well known cases of education in the home and even private tuition and substantial literary activity took place in the monasteries and nunneries. A Latin school, a legacy of the schools in these dioceses was moved to Reykjavík in 1846. It had been a combination of a gymnasium and initial education for the clergy, but was split up when established in Reykjavík. The gymnasium became a separate institution, while a special school for the clergy was established. This gymnasium was the flagship of Icelandic elite (higher) education for a long time and is still seen as a prestigious gymnasium, perhaps as a *primus inter pares* in upper secondary education.

Second, a considerable non-formal educational approach was taking place outside any special system of education. A primary mover was the Church, not least through the influence of the Pietists during the eighteenth century who played a very active role in initial education. For all intents and purposes, preparation for confirmation was in itself a system of education, with clear aims, criteria, rules, teaching material and an instructional system and manpower to enforce all this. Furthermore there were examples of home teaching and the reading societies, established in many districts during the nineteenth century, which were instrumental in spreading reading material among the population as a form of adult education.

Third, Icelandic education was a part of the Danish education system in many respects for a long time. Iceland complied with Danish edicts on education and the University of Copenhagen was also open to Icelanders, who received grants to stay in student housing. A considerable number of Icelanders went to Denmark for various studies, and in fact still do. But Iceland gained gradual independence. An important step for primary and upper secondary education was taken in 1874, and with home rule in 1904 impediments to establishing an Icelandic university were essentially removed. Iceland had gained independence in internal affairs by 1918 and later in

all affairs by 1944. We now turn to the description of the current system of education.

Higher education

According to the European Bologna framework for higher education, which the Icelandic government has accepted as a framework for higher education in Iceland, the university level is largely a 3+2+3 cycle system with essentially no post-secondary non-university track (Jóhannsdóttir and Jónasson 2014). This refers to a first cycle of three years for bachelor's degree, two years for a master's and three years for a doctorate. But in perhaps the majority of cases, students take longer to complete the programmes as they have part- or even full-time work alongside their studies.

Currently, there are four public and three private higher education institutions operating in Iceland. All are subject to the provisions of the Higher Education Institutions Act of 2006. Additionally, there is the Public Higher Education Institution Act of 2008. The oldest and by far the largest institution is the University of Iceland, established in 1911 to mark the centenary of the major proponent of independence, Jón Sigurðsson. This was nevertheless in an important sense a symbolic event as three of the faculties established were already existing schools, namely of divinity, medicine and law. The number of universities increased after the middle of the twentieth century to the current total of seven. This relatively large number of institutions can be explained in at least three ways; first, existing institutions were elevated to university level without merging though this has happened later in some instances, second, due to a policy of strengthening rural areas and third, because vested interests have managed to retain the independence of certain institutions.

Teacher education

An important part of the series of laws enacted in 1907 was the establishment of a school for teachers, Icelandic Teachers Training College, which opened in 1908. There had been teacher education for at least twenty years previously, and girls in the home economics schools were being prepared to teach children at home. The college for teachers was at the upper secondary level until 1971, when it became a university, the Iceland University of Education. The school for pre-school teachers and physical education teachers united with the college for teacher education in 1998. At the University of Akureyri, the

Faculty of Education was established in 1993 educating at compulsory schools. It soon also educated pre-school teachers and offered a programme for upper secondary teachers. Teacher preparation for upper secondary teachers began at the University of Iceland in 1951, which developed into a one year programme and a similar programme was later developed at the other institutions offering teacher education. The Iceland University of Education was merged with the University of Iceland in 2008 and became one of its five schools. All education programmes, including the diploma for upper secondary teachers, that had been developed in the Faculty of Social Science were thereby moved to the new School of Education. At the same time it was decided that teacher training, for all the three levels, pre-school, compulsory and upper secondary, should be a five-year master's level programme.

Upper secondary education

Upper secondary has two tiers, the academic and the vocational, with the academic being initially more dominant, but the vocational taking over for a period during the early twentieth century, and the academic gaining the clear upper hand around the 1970s.

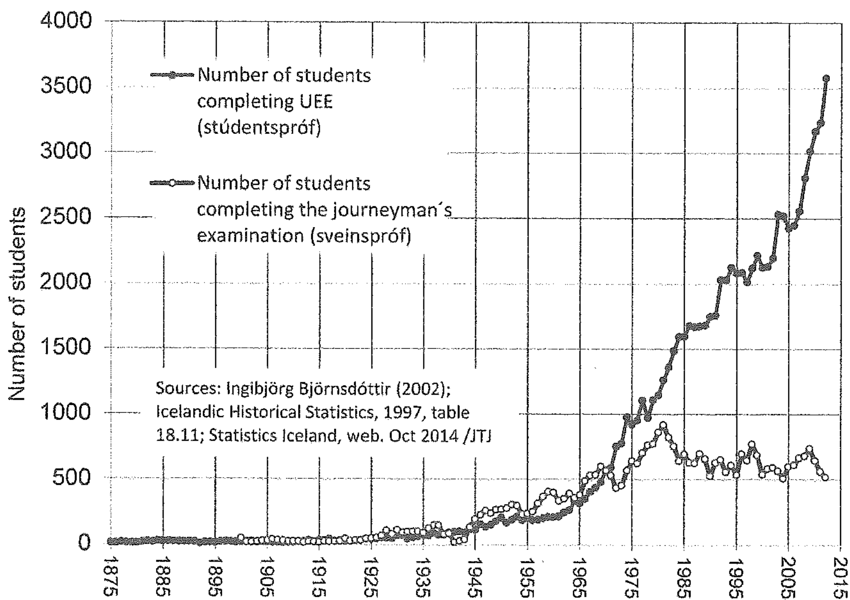

Figure 1.2 Number of students passing the UEE (the university entrance examination) and passing the journeyman's examination (sveinspróf) during the period 1875–2012

There is always a slight problem in defining what should count as vocational programmes and what as academic programmes, but in Figure 1.2 we single out the journeyman's examination, which has been considered in Iceland the most stable, and generally speaking the most important group, of vocational programmes within the educational system. This includes examination for a host of different trades, *inter alia* all machine, building, cloth-making and catering trades. The figure shows the substantial parity between the two groups of programmes, namely the university entrance examination (UEE) and the journeyman's examination from around 1910, when the latter started to emerge as a real option in Iceland right up to the 1970s, when the vocational tracks started to taper off in relative terms.[10]

There are several likely reasons why attendance at these two types of programmes begins to diverge. With the expansion of tertiary education, along with the flourishing of the service industries and with endless new opportunities in the arts, media and business, the relative attraction of the vocational trades may have diminished. Thus in an important sense there is competition between different programmes and the type that is controlled by a credential expansion (for *bona fide* reasons) takes over, namely the UEE.[11]

Currently, there are thirty-two upper secondary schools in the main system and they fall into three chief categories. First, traditional grammar schools that offer only matriculation examination programmes. Second, various vocational schools developed from the late nineteenth century onwards which were specialized, with those offering programmes for the industrial arts emerging as the most prominent vocational schools. Third, since the late 1970s, comprehensive schools have been established, in accordance with the governing policy of opening up schools that offer both vocational programmes and academic programmes for the UEE. Comprehensive schools combine the two former types of schools, not only following the rationale of economy in rural areas, but also serving to help eradicate a perception of unequal status between the different types of programmes. This was also intended to facilitate transfers between programmes and schools whenever students so desire. An explicit rationale for building up the comprehensive system was to allow students to easily change routes. Recently, the vocational schools have been permitted to offer university matriculation programmes, typically in combination with their vocational programmes. This merging of academic and vocational programmes has been a gradual development since the 1970s. It is also a major principle behind the most recent law on upper secondary education, that the status of vocational and academic education should be equivalent within a holistic

system, such that the UEE might be completed from both the vocational and academic routes. The main pathways within the secondary system are: (1) academic programmes, leading to the UEE; (2) arts programmes; (3) a multitude of vocational programmes such as the industrial arts, which have been the mainstay of vocational schooling; (4) a general programme, mainly intended for those who have not obtained access to the other programmes; and (5) a variety of (normally short) work-related programmes. There are two organizational principles within the upper secondary system: a class based system where the students follow their class from the first grade to the last, and a credit-unit based system where students attend courses with different students depending on the credit-units they need to take. In addition to the thirty-two schools there are a number of schools often classified at the upper secondary level, such as for the police, a film school and a number of schools related to the arts, especially music schools.

The 2008 act provides for a new qualification, the upper secondary school leaving certificate taking one-and-a-half or two years, but does not entail any specific courses. Other qualifications provided for are vocational certificates giving professional rights, the matriculation examination and other final examinations which are defined by upper secondary schools that prepare students for certain jobs but give no legally protected qualifications. Finally, upper secondary schools may now begin to offer post-secondary education. The new upper secondary school leaving certificate is aimed at students who do not plan to complete further degrees and one of its main purposes is to decrease school dropout at the secondary level. Whether this will make much difference to students is not clear, since the certificate conveys no rights except to further study at the same school level, which they have anyway. However, this certificate may induce students to complete at least eighteen months instead of one year which many have typically completed before dropping out. This remains to be seen.

Compulsory education

The first primary school, which still exists, was established in 1852 and very gradually more schools were established, mainly in the villages or emerging towns. The curriculum was based on the strong Pietist tradition and borrowed from the schools in Denmark, which in turn was much influenced by German standards. A major turning point in the moulding of the education system was a law making education compulsory in 1907, accompanied by a law on

teacher education and a framework administering the education system. The compulsory period was four years, where children entered the compulsory system when they were ten and left at fourteen. This was a certain break with tradition as many children in the towns were already starting school at seven and would have left at fourteen. This could of course continue, but the law specified the ages for which the State shouldered financial responsibility. Figure 1.3 shows when the compulsory age was first set and then extended, with an indication that there is an extension of one year every fifteen years on average which means, by simple extrapolation, that it may be extended to twelve years around 2020.

Figure 1.3 shows the dates at which there was a change in the number of compulsory years in Icelandic education. The extra point in the top right hand corner is meant to show that in 2008 the State guaranteed education for sixteen and seventeen year olds in upper secondary school (i.e. until they are eighteen), but it is not compulsory.

Until the 1960s the difference between the rural and urban areas remained quite marked, and it can be suggested that there were two education systems operating in terms of school attendance, one for the urban and one for the rural areas. This distinction was permitted by law for the first two-thirds of the

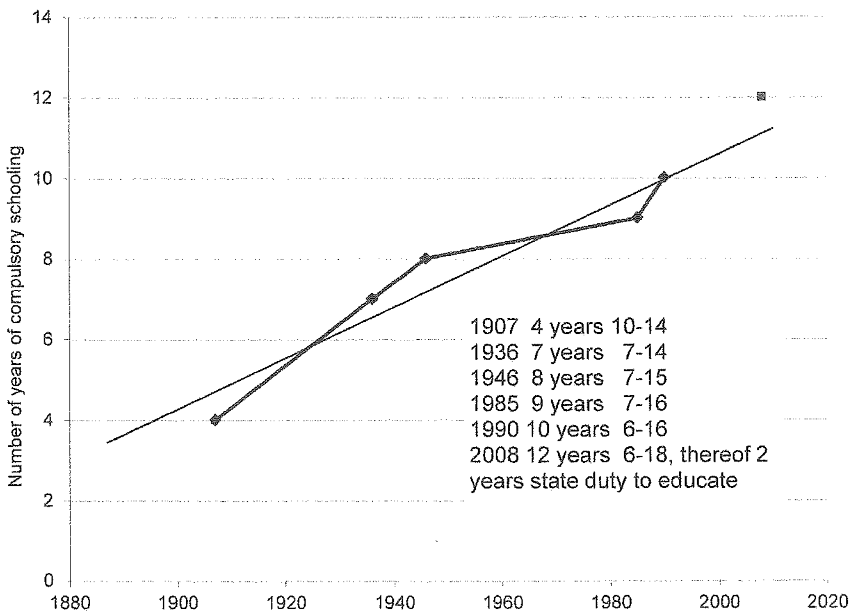

Figure 1.3 Changes in number of compulsory years in Icelandic education

century. The law gave the different municipalities some leeway of enforcement, and in some cases attendance was lower than the law stipulated. Figure 1.4 shows a number of important developments by looking at the crude numbers, first, how the compulsory system gradually extends to the age group 6–15 (ten cohorts) and reaches it in 1990. Second, it shows that at times many more students were in the system outside the compulsory age which indicates that the change in law normally only accommodated the current state of affairs. Third, it shows the enormous strain on the system between 1950 and 1970 with an explosion in the number of children the system had to cater for, even though the graph does not show the additional strain due to migration from the rural to urban areas. Fourth, the graph shows, perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, how stable the school population has been since the 1970s.

In Figure 1.4, the top line shows the number of children in the age groups 6–15 years during the period 1880–2014. The next line, with filled circles shows the number of children attending primary and lower secondary school as these were organized at any given time. The lowest line shows the number of children who were obliged to attend school at any given time. Only one data point shows school attendance prior to 1907, but quite a large proportion of children attended school at some time prior to this date, but many only for short periods.

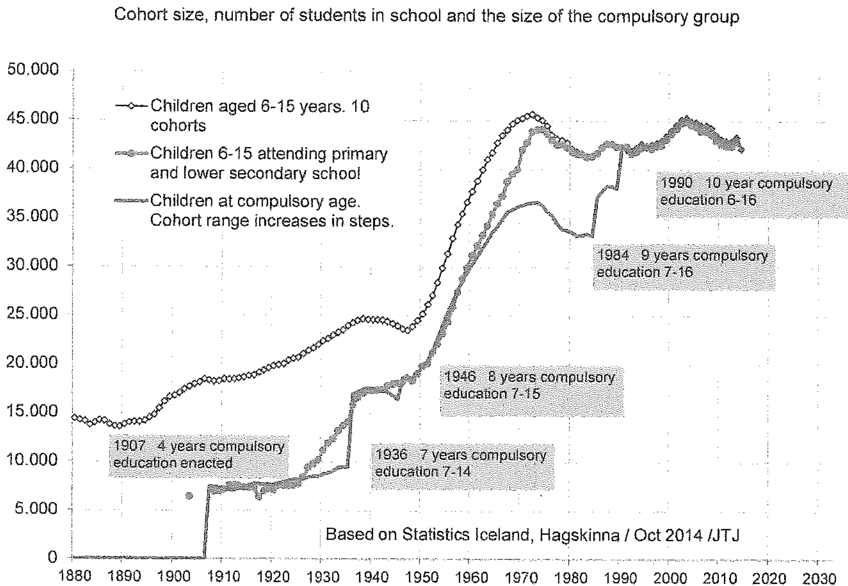

Figure 1.4 Cohort size, number of students in school and size of the compulsory group

A number of educational issues were publicly debated throughout the twentieth century. The issue of testing is a prominent example. Discussion surrounds the extent of testing, the purpose of tests (i.e. for feedback, comparison or monitor selection) and thus, related to this, the stakes involved. There was an entrance examination to the gymnasia, which was transferred to the secondary schools to carry out in 1946. These were fairly high stakes tests determining entrance to the gymnasia. They were retained and became a part of the compulsory final tests in 1974, but the stakes diminished considerably, in the sense that the marks might control into which gymnasia one had access but there would always be some avenues open. These standardized tests were compulsory until 2008, but are still used early in the final year. The importance of standardization seems still to be acknowledged and also the importance of participation in international testing, ranging from the IEA Reading literacy study done in 1991 up to the more recent TIMSS, PIRLS and PISA studies, many of which Iceland has participated in. Much emphasis, both from media and policy, is placed on the standing of Icelandic schools in PISA.

Another issue concerns a 'school for all'. This is, whether or to what extent all children should be in the same schools irrespective of academic performance or ability. The general policy is to offer all children the same choices, but it varies to what extent the schools, or the parents, think this is the best option for all children. Special educational support is available in special education classrooms and in general education classrooms, or most often a combination of both. During the school year 2012–13, approximately 27 per cent of pupils received special education, 33 per cent of boys and 21 per cent of girls, along with attending mainstream classes. Since the 1990s, there has been a substantial increase in pupils with a foreign mother tongue, and they now comprise 6.5 per cent of pupils in compulsory education. Polish speakers are the most numerous, with Filipino related languages, English and Thai speakers coming next. In both the Compulsory School Act and Upper Secondary School Act there are special articles on reception plans for pupils whose mother tongue is not Icelandic.

Pre-primary education

The roots of pre-primary education extend to the 1930s, even though it took off during and after the Second World War. Initially nurseries, day-care centres, kindergartens or pre-schools all existed and were run by private or charitable organizations and were mainly intended for children from broken or poor homes. It has been abundantly clear that the provision of any type

of pre-school education was primarily to provide children from broken homes with a place to stay. Gradually this provision extended to parents who could not provide a stable home environment and then more generally. But as the profession of nursery pedagogues began to form after the middle of the twentieth century, as a professional group they provided a well-argued rationale for the pedagogic importance of these centres. This was gradually accepted by the authorities, who started to assume responsibility for building the facilities and paying the salaries to some extent, but it was on the basis of a welfare policy, not the pedagogic rationale. During the 1980s and 1990s this began to change. In 1985 a pedagogic plan was published by the Ministry of Education (a plan similar to what had been used as a part of the curriculum

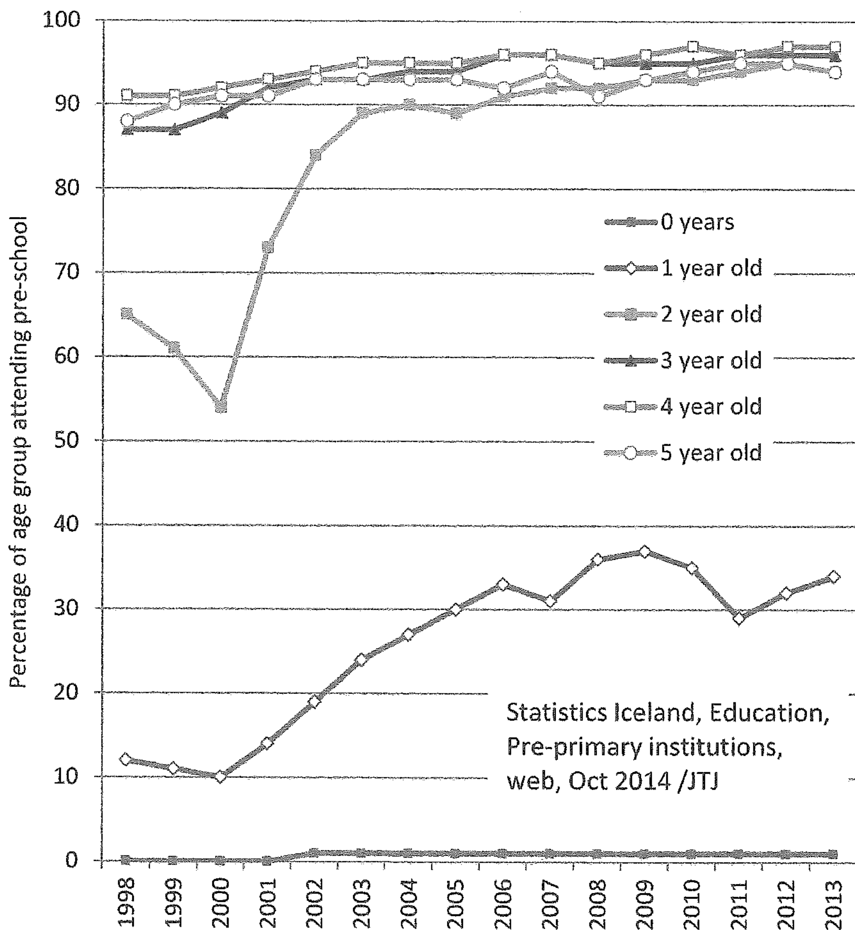

Figure 1.5 Percentage of age group attending pre-school

at the school for pre-school teachers) and in 1991 and 1994 two laws were passed to move the pre-schools into the system, the latter formally asserting the school level as the first stage in the school system. Now it was a school, the staff became teachers and in 1999 a curriculum replaced the pedagogical plan from 1985.

Figure 1.5 shows the proportion of the cohorts 0–5 years that attend pre-primary institutions. The normal time for the age groups 2–5 is eight hours. Some five year olds are already in primary school.

Pre-school is not compulsory, but Figure 1.5 shows that practically all children aged three, four and five attend these schools, in that sense they could be given a foundation on which the first class in compulsory school can build. This is, however, not done formally, and in some cases not at all. It is noteworthy how many two year olds are attending and even around 30 per cent of the one year olds are already at school.

Adult education

In many ways informal adult education has been an integral part of the Icelandic way of living for a long time. With various activities, such as journals, reading clubs, public lectures, such activities became semi-formalized but within a non-formal setting. A major argument for the establishment of Icelandic Radio in 1930 was education at a distance. A correspondence school was established in 1940 in close co-operation with a school run by the co-operatives, *Samvinnuskólinn*. Later the international discourse on lifelong learning that became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s was quite influential in Iceland and the establishment of a special programme for older people (over twenty-five) was started in one of the new gymnasia in 1972 (it closed at the end of 2014), and subsequently also at several upper secondary schools. The term adult education has a different meaning in different cultures, and quite often it caters predominantly for those adults who are not otherwise within the formal education system. This is the case in Iceland, and from the 1990s there has been a steady development of continuing educational centres around the country that in many respects have formed a 'new' mode of education that is outside the formal system. It is gradually becoming parallel to it in some respects. The centres are self-owning institutes, established by the local labour unions, the local upper secondary school and the municipalities in the area with the participation of some industrial firms. They obtain funds from the State, from a central fund, to an extent controlled by the confederation of industries and the labour unions and from fees paid by participants.

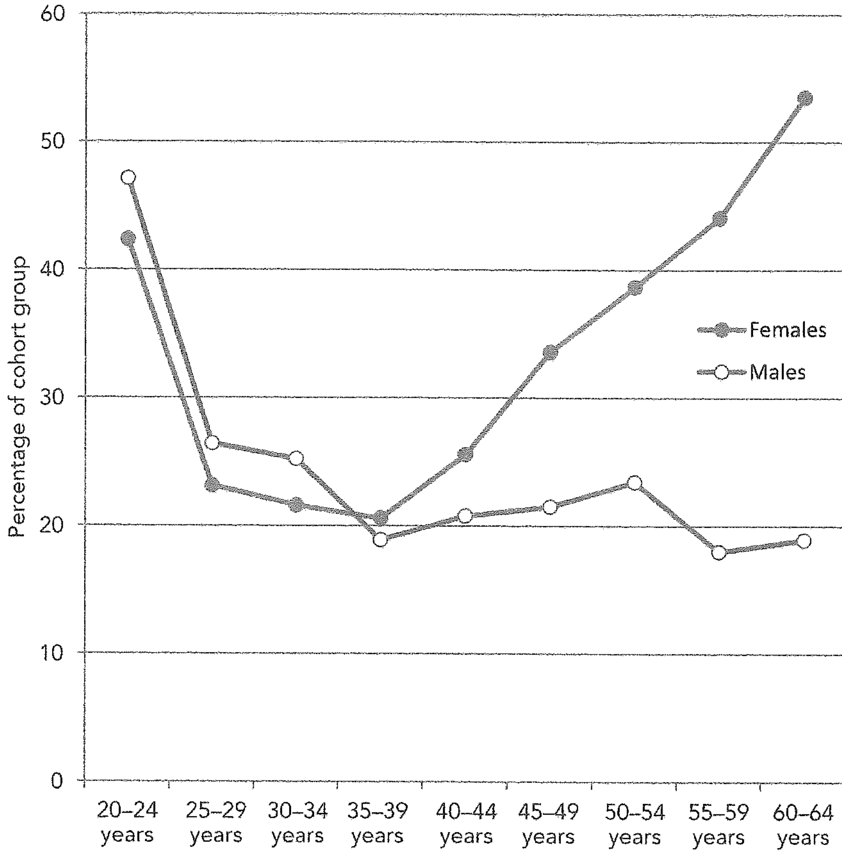

Figure 1.6 Percentage of males and females who have not completed any upper secondary certificate, average for the years 2009–2011. Based on Labor market survey. Statistics Iceland 2013/JTJ

Figure 1.6 gives the percentage of different age groups who have not completed an upper secondary certificate, shown for males and females. This data is the basis of much of the funding of adult education and the consensus that increased completion of upper secondary education is a policy priority.

The legal basis for running and funding adult education has been uncertain. In 1992, there was for the first time enacted a law on adult education in Iceland, but this was subsumed under the law on upper secondary education in 1996, and a legal framework for adult education was only re-established in 2010, partly on the basis of the situation shown in Figure 1.6. This new law only

applied to those adults who had not completed upper secondary education – reinforcing the understanding that adult education is not referring to those who are or will proceed within the formal system. The State provides funds under the umbrella of this law for educational provisions to support this group.

Five perspectives on the development of education

Here we will mention important features of the development and standing of the current Icelandic system seen from the five different perspectives mentioned at the beginning of the chapter.

Perspective 1: Constancy or recurrence in the discourse

Everything seems to evolve, the times change and so does the educational discourse, both the issues and the terms used. When looking closely at the themes or issues that underlie the educational discourse they appear remarkably stable and persistent, even if the flavour of the debate may change. There are a plethora of clear examples of this, such as where shall the control of education lie, what should be the weight and role of examinations, how segregated can one allow an inclusive system to be, to what extent should the system respond to individual differences and how should one ensure quality control and how central should that be.

The status and development of vocational education

An intriguing problem which has been discussed in one way or another from the middle of the twentieth century is the interest in, and status of, vocational education among the potential students and their parents. An important part of the law on compulsory education in 1946 was to strengthen a vocational route at grades seven and eight within compulsory education – but this came to nothing, except for a change that lasted for a few years in some smaller municipalities. A revamp of upper secondary education in the 1970s with the establishment of comprehensive schools was largely to enhance the appeal of vocational education, but also to increase the viability of such programmes, being spread around the country. And practically every government since has vowed to respond to calls from both the vocational programmes or schools, but especially industry to do their utmost to both strengthen and lift the status of

vocational programmes. They have never succeeded (and perhaps never really tried) but the issue is very much alive.

Curricular issues are not seriously debated

Serious curricular debates have been relatively few and far between in Icelandic education even though such discourse is constantly alive at some level in the system. There were sporadically serious debates about teaching methods, right from the eighteenth century (about how the catechism was taught) through a debate related to testing at the turn of the twentieth century, and 'new school' efforts during the 1930s and again in the 1970s, but perhaps not so much since. Related to content, the decision to reduce substantially the importance of classical subjects, notably Greek and Latin in the Reykjavík gymnasium in 1905 spurned a weighty debate and it was claimed that this marked the demise of real education as the 'modern' languages and natural sciences were given more priority. The introduction of typing and book-keeping at both lower and upper secondary levels in the 1960s evoked no serious debate, perhaps scorn; but to many this was not the task for the system of education. There can be little doubt that the introduction of the OECD-backed new curricula, largely inspired by ideas from the United States in the 1960s and 1970s provoked the most vehement debate in Icelandic curricular history. It proposed much simultaneous change; new methods (guided discovery), new materials (e.g. the new maths) but most notably both new material and the merger of subjects, both in the natural and social sciences. What some saw as the practical disappearance or watering down of Icelandic history was perhaps considered by others as the most serious threat to education as it had been developed, and caused a fierce debate in the early 1980s. More recently, the introduction of a new curricular guide in 2011 was a single, common document for pre-school, compulsory school and upper secondary education and thus a novel step to be taken, emphasizing the holistic nature and continuity within the school system. This overarching curriculum, which presented six fundamental competencies with the focus on literacy, sustainability, democracy, equality, health and creativity, was apparently quite well received, if with some bewilderment as it was not entirely clear what this emphasis exactly meant in practical terms.

Perspective 2: Continuity of development through identifiable phases

The second perspective is characterized by continuity in educational development. The advent of new pedagogical ideas, the passing of new laws, the

establishment of new institutions, all may seemingly signal important initiatives or changes. This is, however, not the way education develops; in most cases clear traces of the precursors to the changes seen can be traced. The causal history in education is not always what it seems, especially when governments attribute important positive educational developments to their action, when often their actions are simply in line with normal developments or perhaps a response to these. In these cases the continuity of educational changes is underestimated. When the precursors to the kindergarten or pre-schools were established in the 1930s, there had been a number of efforts made during the 1910s and 1920s, but these were short lived. When the first primary schools were established in the 1850s, there had been other schools established which were not sustained, but of course a lot of home-schooling had taken place long before that.

Maintaining that a continuum best describes the build-up of education in Iceland, it is possible to identify distinct phases of development. One such phase can be noted during the 1870s and 1880s when a number of primary schools were started, but more importantly a number of vocational schools at the secondary level. A second phase is during the first decade of the twentieth century which saw the formal establishment of the primary school system, with the addition of a school for teacher education, formal establishment of a comprehensive vocational school for the industrial arts – a trade school, a commercial school and then the University of Iceland was established in 1911. Around 1930, considerable developments took place, in particular at the upper secondary level and the Icelandic state radio was established with a large educational portfolio, both as a part of the formal system but also outside it; only the latter part came to fruition (due to debates about where the money should come from). During the post-Second World War years – in 1946 and the following years – the whole legal edifice of the educational system was revamped, but some of the changes intended did, however, not come to fruition. In 1946 the school system was essentially redefined, with the six classes of children aged 7–12, defined as primary school (children's school, the then grades 1–6) and then the middle school, with ages 13–16 (grades 1–4), with grades 1 and 2 being a part of compulsory education, which now covered eight years in total. In 1974, the primary and lower secondary system were reorganized as an eight-year unitary system (7–14, ages of starting first and last grade), gradually extended to ten years (6–15).

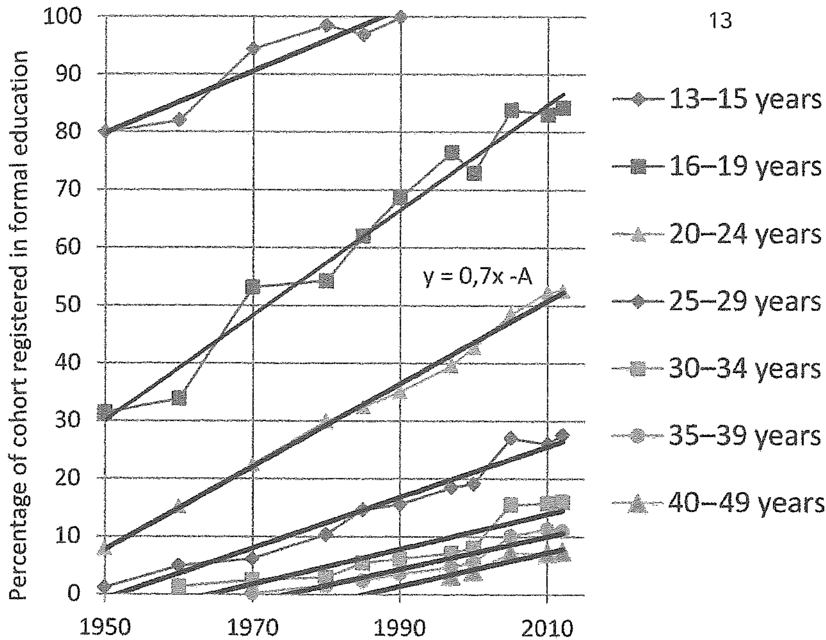

Figure 1.7 Percentage of cohort registered in formal education

Perspective 3: Regularity

The third perspective is the regularity of educational development. On the whole the changes are small but consistent, and even when there is some growth it seems to follow a very consistent or regular pattern. When we look at the whole system, undifferentiated, we see very regular, smooth, apparently linear growth, as seen in Figure 1.7. Here we see how the attendance of all groups increases gradually over sixty years.

Figure 1.7 shows the proportion of different cohorts registered in formal education during the period 1950–2012. For one cohort group, 20–24 year olds, the slope of the best fit is 0.7, which indicates a 0.7 per cent increase a year on average during this period. Note that no distinction is made between school levels, for example the twenty+ age groups are registered either at the upper secondary or the tertiary levels.

Figure 1.8 shows UEE passes for males and females for the period 1912–2012. The number of passes per year is expressed in terms of the twenty year cohort, even though the candidates are of various ages. The best fit lines are assuming saturation at 100 per cent of the cohort completing this examination. For the males an underlying simple exponential line with an

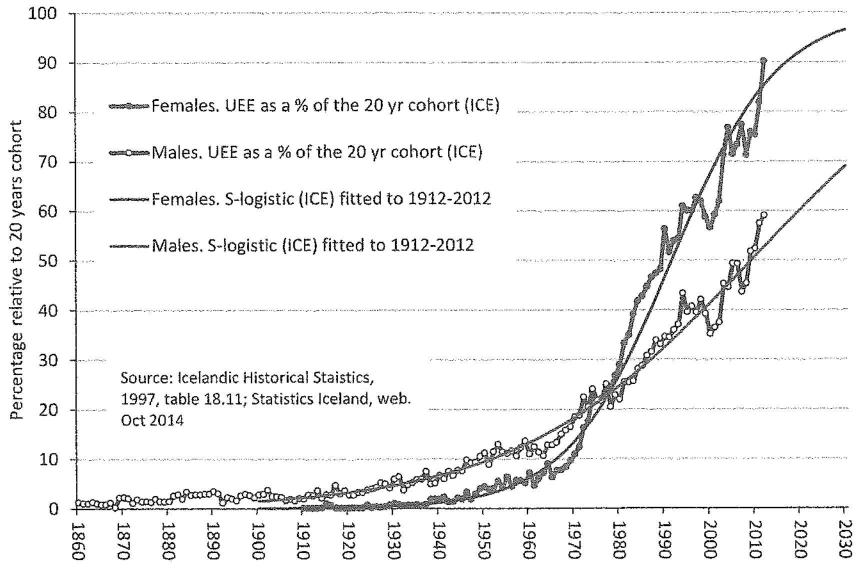

Figure 1.8 Percentage relative to twenty years cohort

exponent near 0.03, which means a roughly 3 per cent rate of growth, shows that the growth is obviously quite regular for a whole century. The best fitting exponent for females indicates a 7 per cent growth and saturation seems to be operating.

But we have two rather startling examples of exponential growth, namely growth of attendance at particular types of institutions or programmes that have the highest status within the system. The first example is from the UEE, where we note that the expansions for males and females are at once very robust and very regular over a very long period. What is perhaps most interesting is that the rate of expansion is very different for males and females (see Figure 1.8). Jónasson (2003) discusses this in detail from the Nordic comparative perspective, showing the similarity amongst the Nordic countries. The other example is the same for university education, where the growth is similarly, robust, regular, predictable and exponential for a very long period, as seen in Figure 1.9 (see also Jóhannsdóttir and Jónasson 2013). It should be noted that there are no signs that these developments will not continue for a long time. There is considerable evidence, not taken up here, that we are noting a universal phenomenon, even though the details vary.

Figure 1.9 shows the number of Icelandic university students registered for a whole century, expressed as a percentage of a cohort, which is the average of the age group 20–24 year olds. The smooth line is the best fit of only the numbers

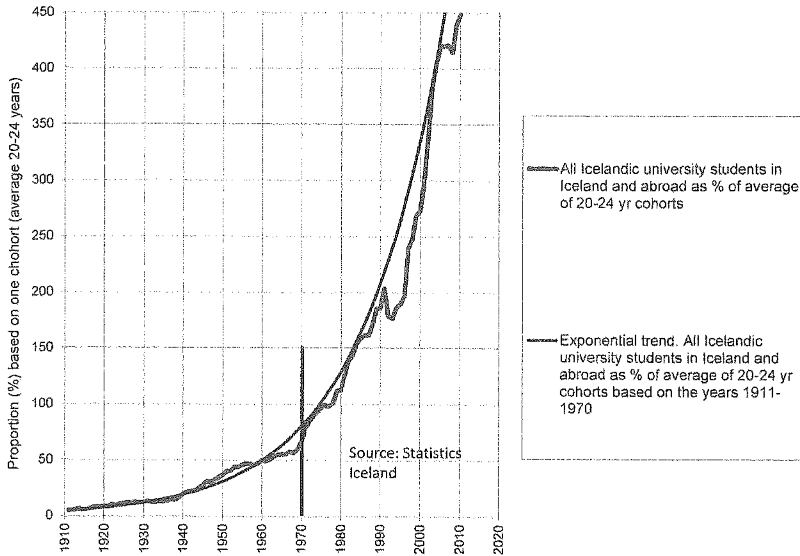

Figure 1.9 Proportion based on one cohort (average 20–24 years)

from the period 1911–70. Thus it can be assumed that it predicts what happens subsequent to this and the fit is very good.

Perspective 4: Academic drift

The fourth perspective is that of academic drift (AD) of individual courses, programmes and even a group of programmes or within whole schools. The first type we mention is when informal or non-formal education gradually becomes a part of the formal system; it becomes more 'school like'. We also call it academic drift when the activity that is being explored relies progressively more on 'the book', on text, on theory, namely on codified, rather than procedural knowledge or practice-based experience. Even when the latter is being emphasized, it is increasingly confined within the school setting rather than in the field of practice. We suggest that there are three categories of AD and are all derived from developments within Icelandic education. The first and the crudest form (the institutional level AD) is when informal or non-formal education gradually moves into or towards the formal mode, where formal refers to the school system. The clearest example of this is when vocational education moved from a non-formal setting, namely from the field to schools, and this occurred in stages throughout the twentieth century, varying according to vocations, and may be

ongoing. The increased attendance at all types of educational institutions is clearly in this category. Credentialism, which was referred to above, is within this category. We suggest that the increased attendance of pre-school children at school (in Iceland all kindergarten or pre-school activities since the 1990s have been a part of the school system) is also a part of this. So would be the growth of professional master's programmes, for example MBAs or MPAs which people undertake to enhance their employability where on-the-job experience is no longer sufficient for progression. The second form of AD (the programme AD) is the increased relative strength of general programmes as compared to vocational programmes, most visible at the upper secondary level (see Figure 1.2). Here we see institutions on balance becoming more academically oriented. The third form (the content or substantive AD) is when programmes that were not originally meant to be academic (i.e. not intended to be theoretical and based on book or similar work) drift in that direction. In this category we see the increased tendency at the kindergarten level to emphasize language, reading, mathematical and ICT skills. Also vocational programmes become gradually more theoretical or computer or 'office' oriented, as characterizes many vocational programmes. It is a moot point if it is appropriate also to place the drift towards moral, communicative and co-operative competencies within vocational programmes in this category, but the increased demand for these competencies is evident.

Seen over an extended period of time the signs of AD at all the three levels mentioned here are reasonably clear even though some can only be discerned with a perspective of a half or even a whole century. The pre-school is an interesting example of drifts numbers one and three, as for a long time there were no institutions available, they gradually came into existence during the middle part of the twentieth century as child-care centres were formally converted into school in the 1990s (with changes in terminology, from *child minders* to *teachers*, and from *pedagogical plans* to *curricula*) and more recently with debate as to whether or not there should be more emphasis on literacy and ICT skills.

Perspective 5: Institutional drift

The last perspective presented here is that of institutional drift. This is seen when a set of activities gradually become institutions, or when individual or a group of institutions become formalized or drift, normally upward, in the educational system. This can happen either of their own accord, but more often through

governmental intervention. Iceland offers several examples of such change. The first was when the old gymnasium was split into two parts in 1846 with one part becoming an academic preparatory school (and thus relieved of any vocational or professional component) while the other part became a professional school for the clergy. Then we have gradual drift of a number of schools from upper secondary level through tertiary level to university during the latter half of the twentieth century. This was followed by an amalgamation of upper secondary or tertiary institutions into existing universities. At the (lower) secondary level a whole spectrum of different kinds of secondary schools was combined into a simplified school system in 1946. This left, however, a number of loose ends, which were tied together in 1974 by including these into the unified compulsory school. Then a law describing the whole education system in Iceland was also enacted. The upper secondary system started to form with the establishment of comprehensive schools in 1973, but it was in 1988 that a law on upper secondary education first attempted to unify all the different upper secondary schools clearly into one system, with the next step taken in 1996.

The institutionalization of the pre-school sector is in some respects similar to the unification of lower secondary education in 1946, as here there were a number of quite different institutions (nurseries, day-care centres, kindergartens, pre-schools), having different origins and purposes, that were gradually unified into one kindergarten or nursery school. This has now become a unified institution, a pre-school, which is formally the first stage in the school system, even if it is not compulsory. This formalization took place in stages from 1973 and was completed by the 1990s.

It is still possible to find people who only attended school for two to four years. Presently, however, children starting pre-school can expect to attend formal education for 20–25 years before they are expected to enter the labour market (but it should be noted that many work alongside school). This profound development has taken less than a century. It was also noted above that adult education is becoming institutionalized in two ways. First is the gradual movement of non-formal education towards the formal system, as programmes are becoming more stable and partly recognized by the schools. Second is the recognition of prior learning, or learning outside the system, which is also an interesting form of institutionalization.

Using a long-term perspective, we can see, as if in slow motion, how the system gradually forms at all levels, and gradually moves towards a holistic, unified, fairly academic institution, even though we are not quite there yet.

Concluding remarks

The Icelandic system is a small one, but it has a similar structure to much larger systems and has developed in a similar way. We have used five different perspectives to guide a discussion about the development at all its levels. Upper secondary and tertiary education have a long history, even though their development as a system is more recent, while the history of primary and pre-school education is even shorter. The discussion has been focused on the macro features of educational change and important invariants. Education policy and provision in Iceland continues to be a changing landscape. Taking into account a recent White paper published by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2014, it appears that forthcoming emphases may include the enhancement of literacy among all ages and decreasing dropout rates from upper secondary schools.

Notes

1 Commemorating the centenary of the institution of compulsory schooling in 2007 in Iceland an extensive history in two large volumes was published covering most aspects of pre-school, primary and secondary education in Iceland covering the period referred to (Guttormsson 2008). The abundant material therein will be a continuous basis for the present discussion without referring much to it; this would be overwhelming, and the text referred to is in Icelandic.
2 The data presented is normally from the Statistics Iceland website Education unless otherwise specified, see http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Education
3 See reference to all these acts and a link to all of them in English at http://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/Acts
4 The website is http://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/
5 Icelandic national curriculum guides, http://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/publications/curriculum/
6 The constitution is to be found at http://www.government.is/constitution/
7 Statistics Iceland, http://www.statice.is/
8 Much is now written on Icelandic education in Icelandic and much of the recent material is available on the web. The search tool *leitir.is* is useful to find material, in English and Icelandic.
9 Netla, articles on education in English, http://netla.hi.is/articles-in-english
10 Data for males and females separately would have shown somewhat different patterns as the bulk of the vocational students are males.

11 In order to give the complete picture a correction for the age of the students would be required. In both groups there are students of all ages, but the relative spread in the journeyman's examination is greater. If we only presented data for the age range 19–22 who completed these examinations, the gap would be much wider.

References

Guttormsson, L. (ed.) (2008), *Almenningsfræðsla á Íslandi 1880–2007 [Public Education in Iceland 1880-2007]*. Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan

Jóhannsdóttir, G. and J. T. Jónasson (2013), 'The Development Dynamics of a Small Higher Education System: Iceland - A Case in Point', *Netla – E-journal.*

Jóhannsdóttir G. and J. T. Jónasson (2014), 'External and Internal Influences on the Development of Icelandic Higher Education'. *Nordic Studies in Education* 34: 153–71.

Jónasson, J. T. (2003), 'Does the State Expand Schooling? A Study Based on Five Nordic Countries', *Comparative Education Review* 47 (2): 160–83.

Jónasson, J. T. (2006), *Frá gæslu til skóla [From Care to School – On the Development of the Pre-school in Iceland]*, Reykjavík: Rannsóknarstofa um menntakerfi. Félagsvísindastofnun.

Jónasson, J. T. and K. S. Blöndal (2011), 'The Development in Icelandic Education: the Situation in 2011 in the Perspective of a Century', in P. Mikiewicz (ed.), *Social Capital and Education. Comparative Research between Poland and Iceland*, 52–95. Wrocław: University of Lower Silesia.

Kjartansdóttir, S. H. (2013), 'OECD Review: Skills beyond School National Background Report for Iceland'. Paris: OECD.

Marinósson, G. L. and D. S. Bjarnason (2014), 'Special Education Today in Iceland', in Umesh Sharma, Anthony F. Rotatori, Festus E. Obiakor, Sandra Burkhardt and J. P. Bakken (eds), *Special Education International Perspectives: Practices Across the Globe*, 271–309. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing.

Sigurðardóttir, A. K., H. Guðjónsdóttir and J. Karlsdóttir (2014), 'The Development of a School for All in Iceland: Equality, Threats and Political Conditions', in U. Blossing, G. Imsen and L. Moos (eds), *The Nordic Education Model: 'A School for All' Encounters Neo-Liberal Policy*, 95–113. New York: Springer.