

# **Arts and Cultural Education in Iceland**

Professor Anne Bamford



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Austurbæjarskóli - Compulsory school in Reykjavík  
Bakkaskjól - Preschool in Hnífsdalur  
Borgarhólsskóli - Compulsory school at Húsavík  
Borgarholtsskóli - Upper secondary school in Reykjavík  
Breiðholt College in Reykjavík  
Brúarásskóli - Compulsory school  
Do Re Mi Music School  
Egilsstaðir Community College  
Egilsstaðir Music School  
Fellaborg - Preschool in Breiðholt, Reykjavík  
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Hitt Húsið Youth Center  
Hulduheimar - Preschool in Selfoss  
Húsavík Music School  
Iceland Academy of the Arts  
Icelandic Association of Local Authorities  
Icelandic Ballet School  
Icelandic Music Heritage Museum  
Ingunnarskóli - Compulsory school in Reykjavík  
Ísafjörður Compulsory School  
Ísafjörður Music School  
Ísafjörður Youth Centre

Kramúsið - Dance and Art Studio  
 Lækjarskóli - Compulsory school in Hafnarfjörður  
 Laufásborg - Preschool in down town Reykjavík  
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## Executive Summary

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In 2008-09 an impact evaluative research was undertaken in Iceland to gather comprehensive data about the extent and quality of arts and cultural education in Iceland. The evaluation focused on the following questions:

What is being done in arts education and how is it being done?

What is the quality of arts education in Iceland?

What are the possibilities and challenges currently and into the future?

These questions were addressed through an intensive six-month study using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The focus of the research was on both formal and non-formal provisions of arts and cultural education. In the context of Iceland, this includes arts and cultural education within schools and also the activities completed by children in a range of after school possibilities, including music schools, arts schools, local theatres and museums and other providers. The research also investigated provisions in nursery years and for children with special learning needs. Implementation issues were explored, and a focus was given to teacher education and the professional development of both teachers and artists. Additionally, the research examined the economic dimensions of the creative and cultural industries in the context of recent, broader changes political and economic conditions in Iceland.

Arts education in Iceland is of high international standard. It receives widespread support from pupils, parents and the community. There are generally adequate resources for effective, high quality arts education. Icelandic education is dedicated to building skills and knowledge in the arts forms, especially visual arts, music, wood craft and textile and to a lesser extent dance, drama, photography and film making. Arts programmes in Iceland embed ideals of quality and this is evident in the fluency with which most Icelandic students are able to work within the languages of the arts. Additionally, the arts scene in Iceland is characterised as being supportive with considerable levels of community involvement and individual and collective freedom.

There is a difference between, what can be termed, *education in the arts* (e.g. teaching in fine arts, music, drama, crafts, etc.) and *education through the arts* (e.g. the use of arts as a pedagogical tool in other subjects, such as numeracy, literacy and technology). Schools need strong programmes in the arts AND artistic and creative ways to learn in an integrated way across the curriculum. More focus needs to be given to developing creativity in schools through creative approaches to learning, including in the arts. There is a lack of distinction made between arts education, creative education and cultural education. There is a mismatch between the broad definitions of the arts generally within Icelandic society and the comparatively narrow definitions of the arts within education. More emphasis needs to be given for integrating creative learning across all curriculum areas.

While Icelandic pupils are skilled and confident in the processes of the arts, they are less confident and skilled in the presentation, description and critique of their arts making. Process and product should be clearly linked. It is important that projects and learning lines culminate in a high quality presentation of the learning process. Celebratory events such as performances, exhibitions and presentations act as a powerful driver of quality enhancement and also can be an influential advocacy tool.

Accessibility for all is a highly prized belief in Icelandic education and arts education in preschools, compulsory schools and secondary schools are available to all and strive to meet the needs of individual children. More consideration needs to be given for out-of-school (especially music) provisions for children with special needs. After school arts provisions espouse accessible

practices, but in reality there are very few examples of music or other arts schools that make a concerted effort to be inclusive for special needs pupils. Cultural institutions should continue to make their work more broadly accessible, especially to communities located some distance from the institutions. A committee should be formed with the specific task of encouraging diversity and monitoring issues of accessibility.

Innovative, passionate and committed arts teachers are needed if arts education is to reach a high standard and while there were concerns about falling standards of arts education within teacher education numerous instances of high quality teaching were observed in Iceland. Teachers are generally well-qualified, but there is a shortage of qualified arts teachers in more remote areas, especially in the field of music in the general school. The issue was made that there is insufficient time given to art and culture within teacher education and many students are leaving teacher education without having the skills and knowledge need to be effective arts educators. In response to these perceived shortfalls, teacher education providers could become important in lifelong approaches to teachers' professional development. It is reported that initiatives in teacher education have been reduced, rather than increased. More post-graduate places need to exist for professional degrees for practicing artists (across music and all the art forms) and teachers (at all levels) to enhance their qualifications is creative and cultural education. A review of teacher education is currently underway and the results of this research and other research needs should be enacted to improve teacher education in the arts.

A notable feature of Icelandic arts education is the extensive system of local government funded after school music schools. The curriculum of music schools is generally based on classical music and traditional instrumental instructional approaches. Music schools tend to operate in separate facilities and with individual instrumental and vocal tuition. Music schools should be encouraged to continue to work more closely with their local compulsory school(s) and research needs to be undertaken on the impact of group or individual tuition on musical instrument and vocal learning on pupils, attendance, enjoyment and quality of learning. Parents make considerable financial contributions to arts and cultural education so the effects of changes in affordability of music school lessons needs to be monitored to ensure there is not an adverse impact on attendance or accessibility.

A number of private options are also available for after school visual arts, craft and dance activities. Other activities operating at the local level include amateur theatre groups, bands and choirs. These other art forms do not receive the same degree of support as music but some music schools could consider widening their offer to include other art forms.

Ongoing partnerships between the education, culture and creative industry sectors needs to be embedded within policy and practice. Partnerships between the schools and outside agencies (artists, industry, cultural organisations) are not common in Iceland with the exception of some music schools which are embedded in close partnership with some schools. Meetings should occur on a regular basis between those people responsible for culture and education at the national, municipal and local level to encourage shared strategic thinking and communication of good practices and initiatives. Partnerships should be extended, in terms of the number of schools involved, the diversity of partnering organisations, and the length of time of the partnerships.

In relation to the creative industries, data needs to be collected on the economic, social and cultural impact of the professional and amateur cultural and artistic activities in Iceland, including the impact of festivals and the newly emergent cultural and environmental tourism.

Quality arts education programmes have impact on the child, the teaching and learning environment, and on the community – but these benefits were only observed where quality programmes were in place. By world standards, Iceland has very high quality arts education that is valued by parents and pupils and is given a core position within Icelandic society and education. Given the level of support for this research and the open and enthusiastic attitude and dedication and determination of the Icelandic education and arts community the future looks very promising.

## Recommendations

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There are 5 major recommendations from this research:

### **1. Policy and implementation**

**1.1 Media education should be further developed**

**1.2 Clear lines of learning need to be developed for the arts to cover all a child's education**

**1.3 More integrated, creative learning through the arts be promoted**

### **2. Collaboration and sharing**

**2.1 Moneys should be specifically tied to sharing good practice**

**2.2 Stronger partnerships with the creative industries should be developed**

### **3. Accessibility**

**3.1 A committee should be formed with the specific task of encouraging diversity and monitoring issues of accessibility**

**3.2 Music schools need to more specifically address children with special needs**

### **4. Assessment and evaluation**

**4.1 Strategies for assessment and evaluation are very limited within arts and cultural education and this area needs further research and development**

**4.2 Simple models for determining quality in arts education need to be developed and applied**

**4.3 Data needs to be collected on the economic, social and cultural impact of the creative industries in Iceland**

### **5. Teacher education**

**5.1 A review of teacher education is currently underway and the results of this research and other research needs to urgently be enacted to improve teacher education in the arts**

**5.2 Closer monitoring of the quality of arts and cultural education within initial teacher education is required**

**5.3 More post-graduate places need to exist for professional degrees for practicing artists (across music and all the art forms) and teachers (at all levels) to enhance their qualifications in creative and cultural education.**

# Chapter 1: Introduction and overview

---

## 1.1 Introduction

---

In 2008-09 an impact evaluative research was undertaken in Iceland to gather comprehensive data about the extent and quality of arts and cultural education in Iceland. The evaluation focused on the following questions:

1. What is being done in arts education and how is it being done?
2. What is the quality of arts education in Iceland?
3. What are the possibilities and challenges currently and into the future?

These questions were addressed through the use of an intensive six month study using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The report is organised in a way that starts from definitions of terms and the nature of practices. The research analyses the implementation framework of arts and cultural education and identifies factors that influence the adoption of best practice in arts and cultural education.

The focus of the research was on both formal and non-formal provisions of arts and cultural education. In the context of Iceland, this includes arts and cultural education within schools and also the activities completed by children in a range of after school possibilities, including music schools, arts schools, local theatres and museums and other providers. The research also investigated provisions in nursery years and for children with special learning needs. Implementation issues were also explored, and a focus was given to teacher education and the professional development of both teachers and artists. The research also examined the economic dimensions of the creative and cultural industries in the context of recent, broader changes political and economic conditions in Iceland.

This research is linked to the international evaluation of arts education conducted in 2006 for UNESCO<sup>1</sup> and mirrors the subsequent in-depth country studies conducted in Denmark, Flanders and The Netherlands. To build a benchmarked set of knowledge, complementary methods have been used for these studies and the same framework has been applied to data gathering and analysis of themes to enable international comparisons to be made.

## 1.2 Scope

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The research was led by Professor Anne Bamford, Director of the Engine Room at University of the Arts, London. During the in-country study, the *Ministry of Education, Science and Culture* provided logistical support. Jón Hrólfrur Sigurjónsson provided contextual leadership, translation and document and policy interpretation.

The research commenced in October 2008 and the data gathering was completed in March 2009. In total, 214 people were interviewed and/or participated in focus groups and 47 schools and organisations were visited. The participants came from all stakeholder sectors and included civil servants, politicians, school principals, teachers, cultural coordinators, industry representatives, cultural institutions, students, artists, teacher educators, professors, performers, members of the media, parents and the museum and gallery sector. An internet-based survey was sent to all schools – including ‘after school schools’ in Iceland to gather

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<sup>1</sup> Bamford, A (2006) *The Wow Factor: Global research compendium on the impact of arts in education*. Waxmann, München.

quantitative data. A total of 551 surveys were distributed with an average response rate of 76.3%.

The field research was conducted in 11 municipalities in Iceland and through a matrix it was ensured that a diversity of types of schools and institutions were covered as part of the data collection.

The research used a range of methodologies including:

- Document and media analysis
- Internet-based survey for quantitative data
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Observations
- Provisions for electronic submissions by email

The scope of the study included a comprehensive sample of formal school provisions for young people between the ages of 1-20+ years and also incorporated non-formal cultural offerings that directly intersected with the specified target group.

A survey was sent to all pre-schools (n=255); all compulsory schools (n=170); all upper secondary schools (n=30); art and dance schools (n=18) and music schools (n=88). The response rates were as follows: 53.7% of pre-schools completed the survey; 78.8% of compulsory schools completed the survey; 96.7% of upper secondary schools completed the survey; 72.2% of art and dance schools completed the survey; and 85% of music schools completed the survey.

A detailed evidence-based analysis of arts and cultural education resulted in the production of this published report, an executive summary, and initiated public and media discussions.

The appointment of an in-country researcher to work as a collaborative member of the research team for the duration of the project ensured that – while the study could be conducted in an independent and unbiased manner – the methodology and analysis could benefit from the value of local contextual understanding. The in-country researcher was responsible for translations and ensured that contextual knowledge and interpretations were embedded in the project. This person also sought relevant ‘on the ground’ permissions and selected, planned and booked meetings, agendas, itineraries, accommodation and visits, in-line with agreed the research plan.

All participants were given full and open access to the information gained and invited to comment and respond to the report. All data remains protected as per international data protection protocols. The contributors were acknowledged and referenced in the work where this did not contravene privacy. The aim was to highlight salient, transferable and overarching themes, not to comment on the success or otherwise of particular cases or specific schools, individuals, groups or organisations. As far as possible, actual quotations have been used to evidence the analysis made. These extended narratives allow for an authentic insight into all levels of the implementation and delivery cycle and present a cross section of the views of stakeholders. Where contradictions of evidence occur, these embedded anomalies are highlighted and the range of opinion fully represented.

Each section begins with a summary of the key findings of that particular topic, theme or issue. When reading the report, where points are particularly pertinent to particular levels or types of schools or institutions, these have been specified and it is clearly indicated the level or

school type to which the comment refers. If a comment does not specify the type of organisation or school, it can be assumed this refers as a general point to all situations or generally within the field of education and/or culture in Iceland.

### 1.3 Arts education

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- **There is a mismatch between the broad definitions of the arts generally within Icelandic society and the comparatively narrow definitions of the arts within education**
- **A future study could examine specifically the interface between formal provisions and the 'broader' community provisions**
- **There is a lack of distinction made between arts education, creative education and cultural education**
- **More emphasis need to be given for integrating creative learning across all curriculum areas**

It appears that there is a good balance between traditional and contemporary practice in arts education in Iceland. For example in visual arts, pupils might be studying knitting and traditional design while at the same time doing film making or working with digital technologies. While music is more likely to concentrate on more traditional forms, some music schools and music education in schools feature contemporary and world music alongside more traditional offerings. Film making seems to be particularly popular especially with young adults.

The Nordic countries Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland have a distinct tradition of art and craft education<sup>2</sup>. This includes visual arts (formerly known as drawing) and two craft subjects; textiles and wood and metalwork. In Nordic countries, culture is seen as the pillar of society.

In response to the question, "What is considered to be included in arts and cultural education in Iceland?" the following aspects were generally reported: Music, theatre, dance, films, design, fine arts, literature/poetry, photography, computer programming, textile art, ceramics, jewellery and industrial design. Creativity was not specifically mentioned. It was generally considered that the curriculum in crafts, visual arts and music are very strong, but that dance and drama are not given the same priority, as the following comments suggest:

We need to bring more dancing into schools. We do it once a year as part of our celebration and the pupils really enjoy it. We should do it much more. We do a big play every second year. Everyone joins in.

We need more drama and dance. We need broader definitions of the arts.

It was suggested by a focus group of arts and cultural professionals that the official definitions of the arts as they stand in curriculum are "reductionist" and that practice in the arts in Iceland is more dynamic and comprehensive than policy would suggest. It was noted that this dynamic definition of arts is "an important characteristic of the arts" and that it is impossible to "give static definitions because as soon as these definitions are written they are outdated". This comment points to the fluid nature of contemporary arts practice and the need for policy to remain conscious of the ever changing nature of professional arts practice.

In most countries there is a general congruence between what is viewed as arts within the general community and what is included within the curriculum. The benefit of this is that it enables a diversity of forms of context-specific expression to be developed within school. For

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<sup>2</sup> Published 2001 in *Visioner om slöjd och slöjdpedagogik, Techne Serien B:10/2001*, pp. 140-149. Vasa: NordFo Nordisk Forum för Forskning och utvecklingsarbete inom utbildning i slöjd. Dr. Gudrun Helgadóttir Art, sloyd and the good life. Based on a presentation at the annual conference of the National Art Education Association, Chigago, Ill. April 1993.

example, in Senegal hair-braiding is an important art form and is present in the curriculum. It could be argued though, that by being quite specific in the art forms covered, that the curriculum has a sharper focus. For example, in Colombia a strong focus on music has greatly lifted educational standards in music.

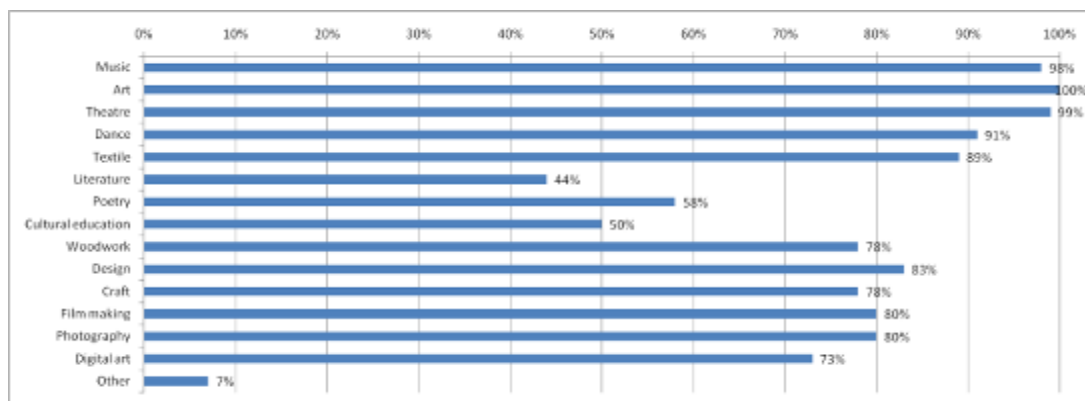
In the compulsory school, there are basically 4 disciplines that make up arts education. These are:

- Visual arts
- Textile
- Wood (including metal) craft
- Music

Additionally, drama and dance may occur, but these tend to be on a less regular basis and occur either as part of a festival, performance or occasion or as a component of another subject, such as language learning or physical education. Some specialist colleges exist for dancing and to a lesser extent for drama, but these are singular and not representative of the general situation. Colleges may also have art history, cultural studies, design, media and other arts options. Secondary schools appear to have more flexibility to develop arts electives, but they have less core offerings in the arts. Extra curricula activities in the arts are common at all levels of education and can include talent competitions, quizzes, discos, dances, festivals, school performances, film making and a range of youth-developed initiatives across all art forms. College students seem particularly keen to develop and promote extra arts offerings.

Figure 1.3.1 shows those subjects that school principles in compulsory schools consider to be generally included in arts education in the school system. It can be seen that visual arts, textiles and woodwork are almost always present.

*Figure 1.3.1 Subjects considered by compulsory school principles to be generally included in arts education.*



There is also a range of community groups specifically targeting youth. For example, youth clubs, local brass bands, 'garage' bands, the Red Cross, churches, camps, summer festivals and a number of other local offers add considerably to the cultural possibilities for young people. Anecdotally it was reported that although many these have a social, environmental or sport foci, they frequently include arts and cultural dimensions within the programme. It was also noted that there were 'youth-led' groups in many towns and cities and that these provided further creative opportunities for young people. 'Ground up' initiatives seem to be particularly popular – and often more sustainable – than more contrived initiatives. It would be recommended that these be more fully 'mapped' to determine their extent and distribution. Also many lessons on success factors could be gained from these initiatives and could be incorporated into future cost-effective cultural planning.

A future study could examine specifically the interface between formal provisions and the 'broader' community provisions. In particular, such research should look at the way these may work more closely to connect a child's experiences of the arts. There are also possibilities the community arts sector could assist in leveraging community and parental support for the arts in the educational sector and conversely how education could assist in the expansion and development of this cultural sector.

The presence of other art forms related to the creative industries (such as fashion, film making, and animation) and those described internationally as urban arts (such as rap, beat box, hip pop) is not common in Icelandic general schools. These tend to be more common at the college level or in youth or community generated projects.

Culture is generally used as the overarching term to describe the identity of people including languages, art, relationships, people, and food. In Iceland, the term arts education is applied to mean music, visual arts, textile and woodcraft lessons. The aspects of culture specific to Iceland form part of heritage study, as the following quote suggests:

It is great that textile is well covered. It is part of our heritage. We have very strong roots in craft heritage. To what extent should schools reflect the heritage of the area? We have not talked about that yet. I think it is very important. Nearby to here we have the turf houses. These are unique, but the schools don't know about them. There is tangible and intangible heritage.

While in the preschool curriculum there is evidence of attempts being made to adopt more creative curriculums in all subjects, the development of specific creative skills and divergent thinking across disciplines was not evident in this study. In several of the focus groups that featured professional artists and performers and the 'industry' focus group, the lack of integrated and creative curriculum was criticised. This is significant as there is international research that would suggest that countries with an emphasis on creative education across subject disciplines are likely to produce more innovative economies in the future. While the strong and high quality nature of much of the arts education is to be commended, this has also inadvertently contributed to a lack of integrated practice and consequently may inhibit the transference of creative competencies to areas such as science, mathematics and literature. Generally, the atmosphere in schools visited was flexible and open and this would suggest that adopting creative pedagogies should be able to occur more readily than in more rigid educational systems.

The following section overviews the political and policy context for arts and cultural education in Iceland. The purpose of this is to highlight the salient factors that have formed and continue to shape policy and practices in Iceland. As Iceland is currently in a period of considerable political flux, the analysis made was correct at the time of conducting the research and research reporting.

## 1.4 Context

- **The political and financial system in Iceland is currently undergoing considerable change**
- **The arts scene in Iceland is characterised as being supportive with considerable levels of community support and individual and collective freedom.**

Iceland has a population of 319,326<sup>3</sup>. There are 43,694<sup>4</sup> pupils in 2008 in post-compulsory education; 18,278 in preschool education and 43,511 in compulsory school<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.statice.is/>

Iceland was ranked first in the United Nations' Human Development Index report in 2007/2008. Icelanders are the second longest-living nation with a life expectancy at birth of 81.8 years. Concurrently, Iceland is a very technologically advanced society. By 1999, 82.3% of Icelanders had access to a computer. Iceland also had 1,007 mobile phone subscriptions per 1,000 people in 2006 – the 16th highest rate in the world.

Despite the current economic crisis, Iceland has a strong economic base and while the economic growth rate has slowed, it is still 0.3% per annum. Iceland is the fourth most productive country in the world by nominal gross domestic product per capita (54,858 USD), and the fifth most productive by GDP at purchasing power parity (40,112 USD).

In the beginning of the 20th Century, Iceland was granted autonomous status from Denmark (in 1918), which meant that the country was free to conduct its own domestic policies. There are seventy-nine municipalities in Iceland which govern local matters like schools, transportation and zoning. Reykjavík is by far the most populous municipality, being around four times more populous than Kópavogur, the second most populous.

Of particular relevance to this research, Iceland has the highest proportion of under 24 years olds of any country in Europe (36.4%)<sup>6</sup> and Iceland has the highest percentage in Europe of 'arts and cultural active' citizens with just under 86% activity rate reported in 2006<sup>7</sup>.

In autumn 2008 there were 43,511 pupils in compulsory education in Iceland. The number of pupils has decreased by 330 since the previous school year, or by 0.7%. It is expected that the number of pupils in compulsory education will continue to decrease in the next years, since the age groups that will be entering compulsory education are smaller than the age groups that will be completing compulsory education. The number of pupils in compulsory education in Iceland was greatest in autumn 2003 when there was a total of 44,809<sup>8</sup> pupils.

There are currently 173 compulsory schools operating in Iceland – the same number as in the previous year. New schools opened while others were shut down or united with other schools. There are four special education schools operating in Iceland with 146 pupils in attendance.

The number of pupils in private schools has risen steadily since 2005 (see Figure 1.4.1) but still represents a very small percentage of pupils, with the vast majority of pupils attending their local, government school. During the school year 2007-2008 there were 9 private schools operating, catering for a total of 664 pupils. The number of pupils has increased by 92 since the previous school year. The number of pupils in private compulsory schools has never been greater since the start of the data collection by Statistics Iceland in 1997. In 2007, 54.4% more pupils attended private schools than in the autumn of 2004. Two new private schools operating according to the Hjalli pedagogy opened in autumn 2007, increasing the number of private schools by a further two.

*Figure 1.4.1 Pupils in private schools*

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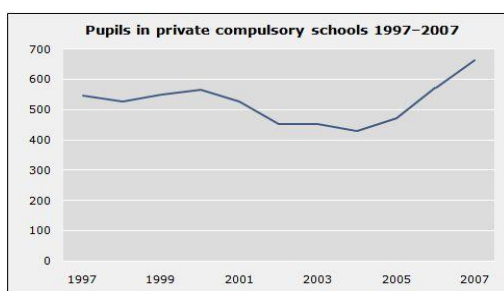
<sup>4</sup> <http://www.statice.is/enrolled> <http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Education>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Education/Pre-primary-institutions>

<sup>6</sup> Eurostat cultural Statistics 2007

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

<sup>8</sup> These figures are derived from the Statistics Iceland data collection from compulsory schools, which is undertaken in October every year. Statistics Iceland has collected this information since the autumn of 1997.



The number of pupils with a foreign mother tongue has increased but still represents a very small percentage of the total of pupils, compared to the general pattern in Europe. In the autumn of 2008, 2,069 pupils have a foreign mother tongue, or around 4,7% of all pupils. Polish speakers are the largest foreign group in schools, with the majority of these living outside the capital area.

There were 5,101 teaching staff members in autumn 2008 and 9.5 pupils per full-time equivalent teacher. This is a low pupil teacher ratio and the number of pupils per full-time equivalent teacher has decreased each year. For example, in autumn 1998 there were 13.3 pupils for each full-time equivalent teacher. On average there are 18.4 pupils in each class and the average class size increases with the higher age of pupils. The average class size is smallest in the 1st grade (16.5) while the largest classes are in the 9th grade, with 19.7 pupils on average.<sup>9</sup> In terms of class sizes specifically in the arts, woodwork and textile are likely to be taught as half classes (around 12 or less pupils), alternating for different times throughout the year. Music and visual arts may also be taught this way.

In a general sense, the arts and cultural scene is very energetic and people in Iceland (in and outside the arts and cultural field) are highly supportive of the arts. People are inclined to value the arts and give financial and voluntary support to a range of arts activities. As this comment suggests, there is a strong sense of community around the arts; “Everyone is putting so much in and continue to be committed to it throughout their lives.” The following table (Figure 1.4.2) summarises the main benefits of living in Iceland, in terms of art and cultural education as summarised from all the focus groups during the research.

Figure 1.4.2 Perceived strengths of the ‘arts scene’ in Iceland

Benefit	Frequency
Freedom/flexibility	16
Local choirs	2
Close and active networks	4
Active community (grassroots) support	7
Dialogue between communities	1
Plenty of possibilities to try things	1
Strong amateur arts groups (e.g. Theatre, art, music)	2
Dividing the class so we teach half classes	1
Good quality facilities	3
Teachers have freedom	2
School principals are keen to try new things	1
Music schools	15
Arts grants	7
Craft	6
A history of literature	6
Accessibility of education for all	6
Quality of life	2
A small world for creative ideas to flourish	6

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.statice.is/Pages/444?NewsID=2990>

Relaxed atmosphere	2
High level of interest in the art	4
People attend arts events	7
You can earn an income	4
Local companies will give money to the arts (though this might change)	1
Resourceful people	1
A lot of activity happening (festivals)	5
Good organisational structures	1
Multicultural activities	1
Broad definitions of the arts	1
Publicity	1

These overall strengths were mirrored in the following comments from internationally successful members of the creative industries in Iceland:

There is plenty to do. The community is so strong. The arts are not a narrow thing here. They are really widespread. The community supports activities and talent can really develop. Many of the arts activities have a social dimension. Creative people bring a resonance to the community. They don't accept you straight away. You do have to prove yourself. In the beginning I did all kinds of jobs. You have to give a lot of time for free, but then things start to happen. I began to sell works in the local cafe. There is not a commercial gallery in the town. I have also travelled internationally, but you need money to travel. International shows are a great place to sell works, but it takes funds. We used to be able to apply for funds to travel shows.

There is a common interest in all the arts and strong traditions in culture. It is easy to get people involved. People have an ear for music and like it. I think Iceland is a particularly artistic community. But the results are not always evident. Things are not sold.

The size of the country and opportunities, fearlessness of growing up, changes to study whatever we want to... Icelanders are harnessing their creative energies, even though not professionals, most have the opportunity to practice their talent... Making money out of our art is slim, but still so many people are doing it...

Iceland is the creative melting pot... I'm absorbed in New York by the fashion industry, it's so big... The slice of the creative melting pot is the biggest one I've seen anywhere – Milan, Rome, New York... ...merchant driven companies, thus you are not lead by any commercialism... the melting pot is in the society, not in the schools. The Arts Academy is the only place where there is a melting pot... Arts and craft are strong in the public schools but tend to drift away in favour of the academic subjects... People from abroad envy us for having special music rooms, rooms for wood work etc...

From Figure 1.4.2 also the qualitative comments, it can be seen that Iceland has a number of key strengths. Freedom and community support seem to be of great importance, as is the structure of the schools and the underlying artistic development that occurs in the music schools (even for those not being musicians). These strengths provide an excellent context for the arts to flourish, but as the qualitative comments indicate, there are challenges that sit along side the strengths.

The music scene is very active and well-supported by the community. There are a number of festivals over the spring and summer months. The level of this community support is evident in the following vignette:

*Vignette 1.4.3 We were able to find the funding ourselves*

In 2000, Reykjavik was the European Capital of Culture, I said to the director of this project we can get 2000 students to work and we did all of this without any budget. We worked around it, the pre-primary school said yes and we started with this school then the next, then the next. We got the teachers working with the class to explore themes like water, earth, wind, fire and so on. We made the structure and had workshops and then the teachers went off and did the work. Every school got portraits of each child and you can still see some of those portraits around. We went to a composer and the composer composed a piece of music, working alongside teenagers and six year olds and they created beautiful music. We went to the banks to raise money but they said they can't pay and we needed more than 1million. We went to the ministry, all the children came and they closed the streets off. We sold coffee to the parents and posters of the children, and so we raised the money ourselves. We also recorded a CD and we sold this and raised money. It seemed like it was all hopeless at the start but we were able to find the funding ourselves. The beautiful

pre-primary school teachers were so helpful though I was surprised that none of the banks would do it; it is very ironic. We then had a pyjamas party for all of the people involved and it went really well.

This level of community support was equally evident away from the capital:

*Vignette 1.4.4 We don't see other people and we are isolated*

In this town everyone gives a lot for nothing. There are very few people so it is difficult to survive. There is not enough work for professional actors. The weather is a challenge too. It is unpredictable. Transport is hard. We don't see other people and we are isolated. That can be a strength and a weakness to the creative process. I would say in our town the arts are blooming but not spreading. There is a bit of an attitude <outside Reykjavik> that we are not as good here... less professional. But if you look at the academy in Reykjavik, our students are getting in there. So there is quality there if you look at it objectively. In this town, all the companies support the arts. There is a very high level of local support. We are lucky with this as central government is not active here. They should put more support in here. It is difficult to travel.

## 1.5 Policy Cooperation and curriculum

- **Meetings should occur on a regular basis between those people responsible for culture and education at the national, municipal and local level to encourage shared strategic thinking and communication of good practices and initiatives**
- **The curriculum is open and flexible but in reality taught in a very similar way around the country**
- **The curriculum is considered valuable for establishing overall objectives but of less value in terms of teaching and learning content and method and ways of assessing.**

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the policies and methods that schools must use, and they issue the National Curriculum Guidelines. There are different types of schools:

- Pre-primary school or *leikskóli*; which are non-compulsory for children younger than six years, and is the first step in the education system.
- Compulsory education, or *grunnskóli*; which comprises primary and lower secondary education, generally conducted at the same institution.
- Upper secondary education or *framhaldsskóli*; which follows lower secondary education and is not compulsory.

*Figure 1.5.1 Percentage of budget by level of schooling*

### **Public educational expenditure, percentage breakdown by school level, 2006**

Pre-primary 8.2%  
Compulsory 49.7%  
Upper secondary 18.3%  
Higher education, tertiary level 18.2%  
Other 5.6%

(Source: *Statice*, 2006)

Education is mandatory by law for children aged from 6 to 16 years. All schools in Iceland are mixed sex schools.

The law in Iceland is that communities are to create their own policies and each school its own curricula. The majority of schools publish their curriculum on the web and make it generally available. The most commonly provided information includes:

- When the school operates.
- Lists of subjects taught at the school.
- General information on the administration of the school.

The curriculum is flexible and schools are encouraged to be proactive. Despite this apparent freedom, in the schools visited throughout Iceland there appears to be remarkable similarity in pedagogical practices and the way learning is organised. The most likely explanation for the similarity is probably the shared teacher education training. Although more fully discussed later in the report, the general view was that teacher education did not encourage divergence in the curriculum and tended to promote the status quo, as this comment suggests:

The teachers need to be taught to teach creatively. All teachers need some arts and cultural education. It needs to be a focus throughout the school system.

New music syllabuses have been introduced over the past few years. They are based on the classical system. These new music documents were not pilot tested and they have not been reviewed. Once again, with this new syllabus there appears to be a disjuncture between the flexible philosophy that underpins the document and the feeling ‘in the field’ that such documents constrain and dictate teaching and learning choices. While schools argue that the way they organise things is bound by a number of laws, this is disputed by those responsible for the syllabus who say, “It is the music schools that impose their own rules and restrictions. There are no laws that are in effect other than about financial support. The syllabus is published and it is a guideline and no one is obliged to use it. It is a big misunderstanding in the field.” As can be seen in Figure 1.5.2 the music curriculum is seen to be quite useful in establishing objectives for music but of less use for educational content or methods, where less than 50% of respondents found it either useful or very useful.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 1.5.2: How useful is the National Curriculum Guide (music)

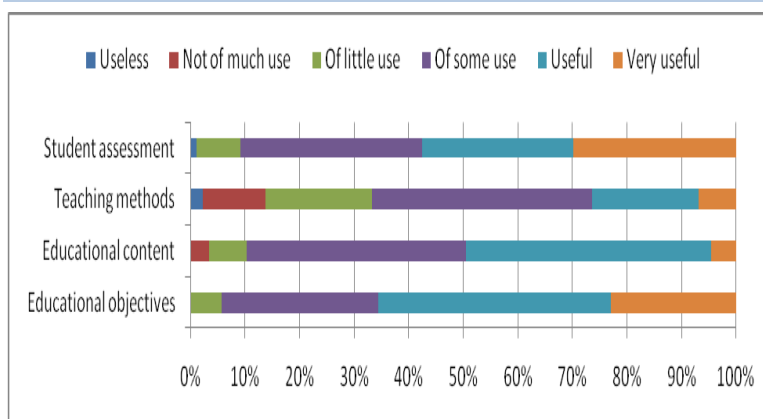


Figure 1.5.3 shows the response to the usefulness of the curriculum in the compulsory school. In this instance, educational objectives was seen to be most useful, while teaching methods and assessment were considered to be the least useful aspect. Despite this pattern, there was general acceptance for the value of curriculum with less than 1% of respondents feeling that it was ‘useless’.

<sup>10</sup> The music syllabus has been in the works for more than 17 years and is not completed yet. The General Section was published 2000. Eight separate documents have since been published for different instruments (see <<http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/utgefid-efni/namskrar//nr/3955>>). The last syllabus, the one for jazz and rock music, is pending later this year. Almost all music schools operate according to existing law (nr. 75/1985) on financial support for music schools. Chapter 1, article 1 of this law states that the law applies only to schools that teach "... according to an official curriculum published by the Ministry of Education...". Furthermore, as can be seen at the beginning of the general section (available in English translation through the URL above), the curriculum is quite extensive as to the operation of music schools. Increasingly, service contracts between municipalities and music schools mandate that music schools operate according to the official curricula. According to the current survey about 80% of music schools use the service of the Music Schools' Examinations Board and thus, operate according to the official curriculum.

Figure 1.5.3: How useful is the National Curriculum Guide (Compulsory school)

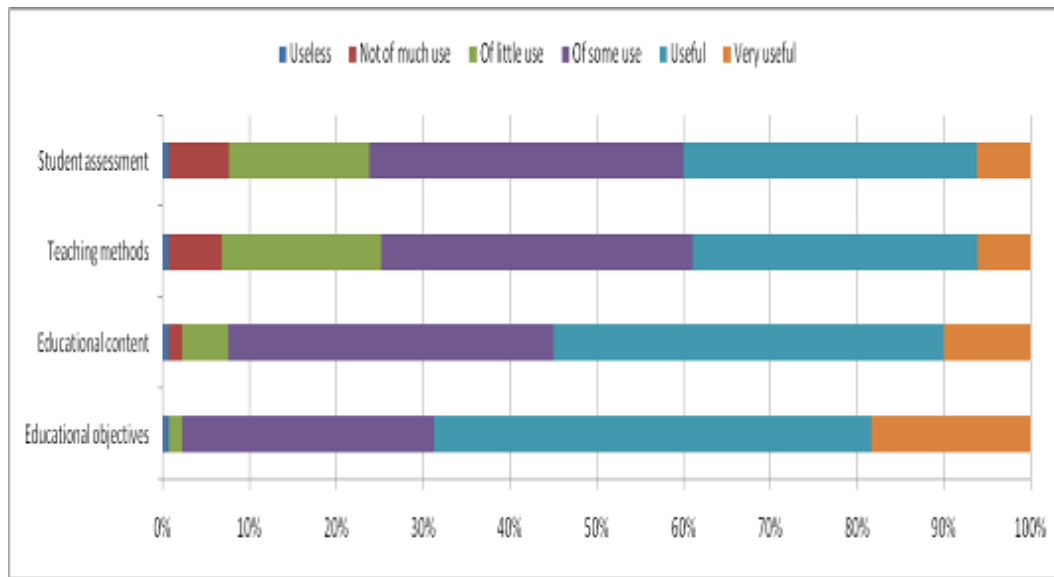
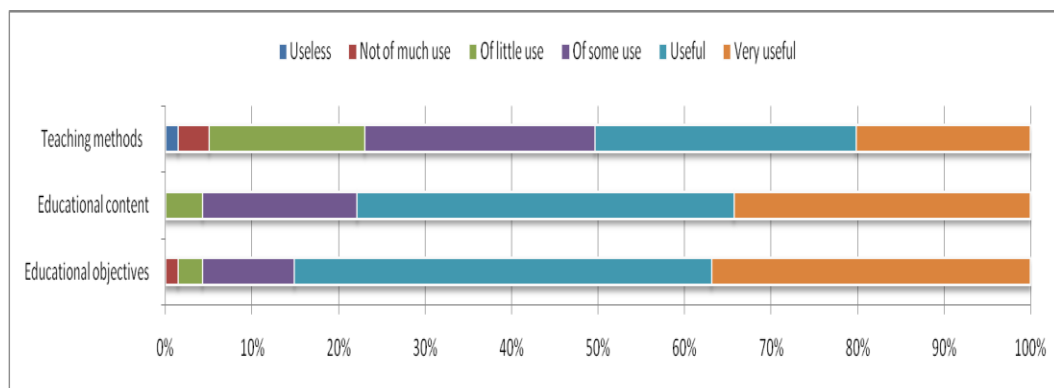
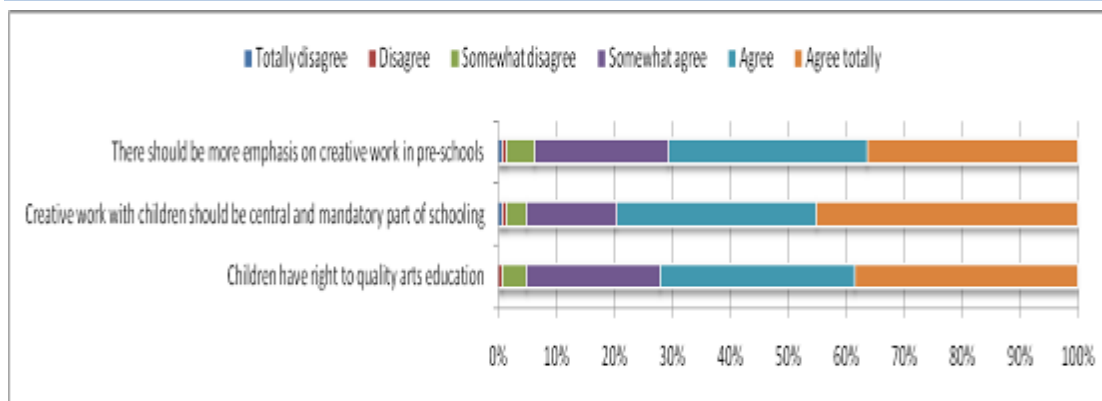


Figure 1.5.4 How useful is the National Curriculum Guide (Preschool)



The preschool system very strongly supports the value of the creative arts in the curriculum, as can be seen in Figure 1.5.5.

Figure 1.5.5 Importance of creative arts in the curriculum (Preschool)



It was also argued that the open curriculum (where schools have a choice what to teach) means that the arts are often left out of the curriculum. This does not though in reality appear to be the case. Arts and craft account for 11 percent of the curriculum – the same as modern

languages; Icelandic and mathematics account for, respectively, 19 and 17 percent; and, science accounts for 9 percent. Given these figures, it would appear that adequate curriculum focus is given to the arts within Icelandic education with around 1/3 of school time dedicated to the arts (including wood and textile). The usual pattern of time is 2 x 40 minutes per week for each arts subject, though this can vary considerably from school to school. This comparatively high allocation in compulsory school for arts education seems to be a favoured part of Icelandic education as this parent comment (typical of many similar comments made by a variety of respondents) suggests: "It is important that art is a part of the compulsory curriculum. That way it does not depend on the economies of the family. I think we are missing some talent if we count only on the after school courses in music schools."

In 2011 there will be a new Bill (law) for high schools. Each school can create their own lines for subjects. While some of the research respondents saw this change as a positive move that should allow more creativity into the curriculum, other people felt that it would lead to a reduction in the scope and quality of arts education in schools, as this comment from a school principal suggests:

This change might be a good thing. But that is a big question about the place of the arts. I think it could be a problem for smaller schools. They have to serve everyone, but they will have less choice of what they can offer. I worry that what we will find is that everything will be cut. The arts will be viewed as a luxury. Less than 50% of schools are teaching according to the official curricula.

It was also felt that the ready adoption of the arts within the new curriculum framework might be adversely effected by the current economic climate (as is covered in more detail in section 1.6 that follows).

## 1.6 Financing patterns

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- **In 1996 many aspects of cultural and educational funding moved from the National Ministry to become the responsibility of the municipality, region or city.**
- **The inherent complexities of funding directly impacts on the planning, delivery and monitoring of arts and cultural education**
- **While the financial support for education indicates a high level commitment to education, it is unclear the amount of funding to arts and education within the global funding model**
- **Parents make considerable financial contributions to arts and cultural education**
- **The physical resources in schools and after school arts and cultural centres are of a high standard**

A joint study from the *Ministry of Education, Science and Culture* and the *Icelandic Central Bank* (conducted in late December 2008) examined arts and culture expenditure in Iceland (by the state and municipalities) during the period 1998 to 2007. The study indicates that public expenditure in Iceland (state and municipalities combined) towards arts and culture has almost doubled from 1998 on a fixed rate scale (counting for inflation). Concurrently, the per capita expenditure by the state (on a fixed rate) went from about 12.600 ISK in 1998 to in excess of 22.000 ISK in 2007. Comparable figures for the municipalities were about 7.000 ISK in 1998, to about 13.000 ISK in 2002 and close to 17.900 in 2007. The study also examined expenditure on cultural matters in 2005 in Iceland compared to the other Nordic countries as a proportion of GDP. In this comparison, Iceland was the highest with 0.85% of GDP. This was followed by Norway (0.71%); Denmark (0.60%); Finland (0.59%) and lastly Sweden (0.47%). Although still at the top of Nordic expenditure, this figure for Iceland in 2005 was lower than for the years immediately before and after, where the average for the years 2005-2007 in Iceland was 0.91%.

The conclusions from this report indicate that funding for arts and culture in Iceland has increased considerably during the last 10 years at both the state and municipality levels.

There is a co-operative agreement between the Ministries of Industry, the Ministry of Education and the various areas of Iceland (West, North, East, etc.) that focuses on children and youth. The agreement brings money from the state that is then distributed locally on various cultural and artistic projects. There is some concern that this money tends to be distributed in small amounts and over a short period of time, making substantial, long-term efforts in arts education more difficult, as this comment suggests:

The government give one lump of money to the west and then they think “we have got it covered”. When the money is distributed, they give too little money to too many people. Everyone only gets a little bit. They change their focus every 6 months and then you have to change what you do to suit the themes where they are giving money. It would be much better if they made longer term deals. Say for three years. Sometimes it takes longer to get the money than to actually do something with the money. It takes a long time to do all the paperwork. They want to see that it is value for money. We need to clarify and outline the responsibilities of the state on the one hand and the city councils.

Another comment from the creative industries sector was concerned that in difficult financial times there may be less discretionary money available:

Some money is labelled and some is not. It is a bit of a tension. The tighter the laws and regulations the less experimental we can be. Discretionary funding via a facilitator or mediator might be a good approach. Currently, cultural production is largely financed by the individual. This leads to more co-operation and local level support. But the problem is it is not systematic. There is not any local cultural plan and there is no marketing.

Despite these concerns, there was general agreement that in the current situation funding for the arts was quite good. It was also acknowledged that it was not just government expenditure, but rather private and public funding that should support arts and culture, as this quote suggests, “Icelanders don’t demand that the government pay everything; access is important, be it can be provided by the government or the private sector.”

There was though, a real fear that the economic crisis would adversely impact on people’s ability to support arts education. Many comments echoed the concerns such as the ones expressed below:

At the moment, everything is fine; however, uncertainty looms, due to the economic situation.

We have not felt the impact of reduced funding yet, but I think it will affect the amount of trips we can do. Buses are very expensive so I think we will have to cut down on that. But I will try to make sure that teachers have anything they need to do good learning and teaching. I won’t cut down on that.

We have not noticed a decrease in the number of pupils in our music school since the financial crisis. I am worried though. More are moving to just doing 30 minutes per week instead of one hour. Also there has been a more than 20% increase in people paying with credit cards.

We have had a 12% cut in funding and if you have less money, well? We’ll find a way. We will make sure we protect the standard of what we do. But even a loss of 30 minutes will affect standards. The local council assumes we can adopt a business model. But this is education.

The budget will need to be reviewed. It has stayed the same for the past year but I feel it is going to have to go down and there has been a lot of inflation over the past few months. However there has been no change in the pupils dropping out and we are still having the same number of pupils as we used to have but we do not know what the situation will be like in the future.

Other respondents took a more positive position suggesting that Icelandic society would continue to support the arts and that the challenging economic climate might actually assist to refocus the arts, as is indicated in the following comments:

The economic situation has not yet affected the number of students coming to the school. Tuition will not be increased next year. In addition to a voucher, issued to all children, less-well-of parents can apply for a support regarding school fees for their children.

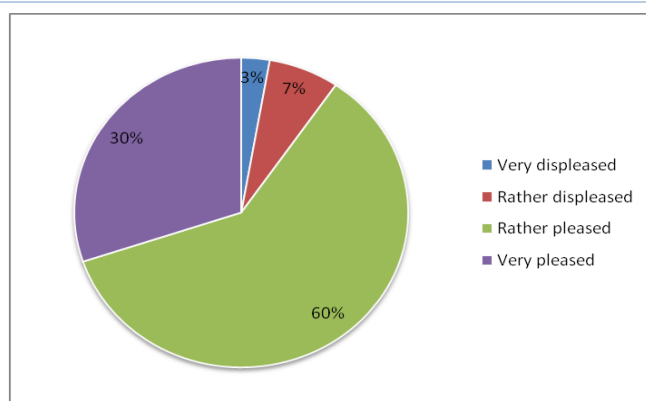
I don't agree that now is a bad time. Previously in Iceland we were losing our identity, we were off track. Now is a major time for arts and craft, now is the time to break boundaries. The Reykjavík Committee for Sport and Leisure should be working with the education office. The arts are fighting for the same money, the children should be at the centre, working in teams work on projects using all subjects. Interdisciplinary is the thing, to much compartmentalization...

Up until now money has not been a problem. The school principal prepares the budget and a committee of parents looks at the budget. The community really supports the school so they never say no.

I don't think it is a question of money but of thinking. Art is a tool that helps you learn and understand life. Every child needs to know the basics.

Local government provides considerable support for community and amateur arts. While some criticisms are made, the overall view is that the Cultural Agreement with the government is a great help. Additionally, the strong sense of community means that local companies are also helpful with donations and resources. Figure 1.6.1 shows that for the music schools (most directly impacted by local funding) there is a high level of satisfaction with funding, with 90% of respondents being very pleased or rather pleased with the cooperation with the local municipality.

Figure 1.6.1: Satisfaction with the cooperation of the school and the local municipality



The cost to the parents of a child attending music school can vary considerably. A typical cost is in the order of 61,500 ISK per year for 2x30min lessons a week during school terms. Most schools offer some form of family or sibling discount. This ranges between a 10-50% discount – largely dependent on the number of children (e.g. 10% for the second child up to 50% for 4<sup>th</sup> or more children). During the parents' focus group all the parents were concerned about the affordability of arts education. It appears that costs have risen and disposable income fallen, as this comment underlines, "The music school has become twice as expensive as it was in 2001."

In October 2005<sup>11</sup> an article was published on the future of art education at upper secondary level in Iceland. The article pointed to two major issues related to recent shifts in funding:

By the transfer of responsibility for primary education from the state to city councils, and the resulting changes of state support for music schools, the most basic principles for providing art education have dramatically shifted – and we have yet to adapt. In that respect there are two crucial issues. The first being the funding of secondary art education that the councils previously provided, and secondly the education of exceptionally gifted students needs supplemental support. At the upper secondary level privately run art schools have very weak funding, and their position within the education system is unclear, and on the

<sup>11</sup> Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson: *Menntaskóli listanna* ('College of the Arts') the principal director of the Icelandic Academy of the Arts. Published in Morgunbladid newspaper October 2005

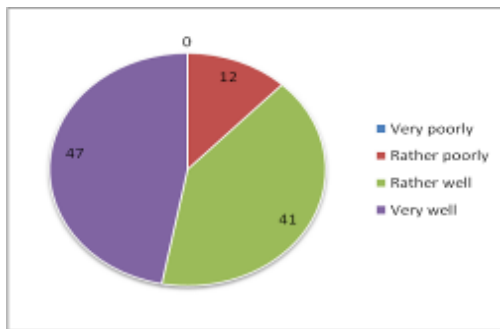
primary level exceptional students are given support that only to a limited degree meets their abilities and needs. The senior managers of art schools and other relevant spokesmen of the arts have drawn attention to the problems associated with these discrepancies, but so far they have not suggested reasonable solutions that will constructively move the issue forward. (page 1)

It may be the case – especially if economic conditions continue to tighten – that consideration may need to be given to providing additional support to those of talent whose capacity to continue their arts education may be detrimentally effected if parents can no longer afford the lessons. Conversely, other comments stress that the building of talent at a local level is helping to generate a very robust and sustainable arts environment, as this comment summarises:

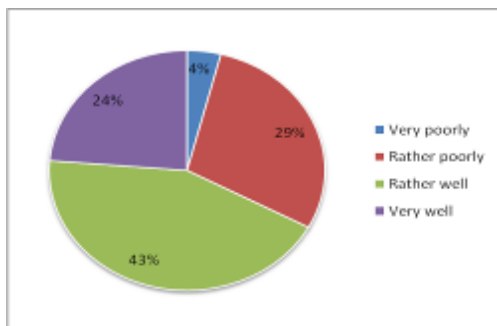
Many talented children are coming up because of increased resources put into arts education. Parents have been willing to pay. It is important for the Ministry to realize this and not reduce support.

In a general sense, though, funding for arts education is deemed to be sufficient and there is a very high standard of facilities for the arts both within schools and more broadly within the community. Figures 1.6.2a and 1.6.2b show a relatively high level of satisfaction with the provisions of specialist arts facilities, with dance dancing recording 88% as being very or rather good facilities and music reporting 67% as being rather or very good facilities:

*Figure 1.6.2a: How well or poorly are the school's facilities suited for teaching (dance)*



*Figure 1.6.2b: How well or poorly are the school's facilities suited for teaching (music)*



## 1.7 Management

### ➤ Young people could be more actively involved in decision making

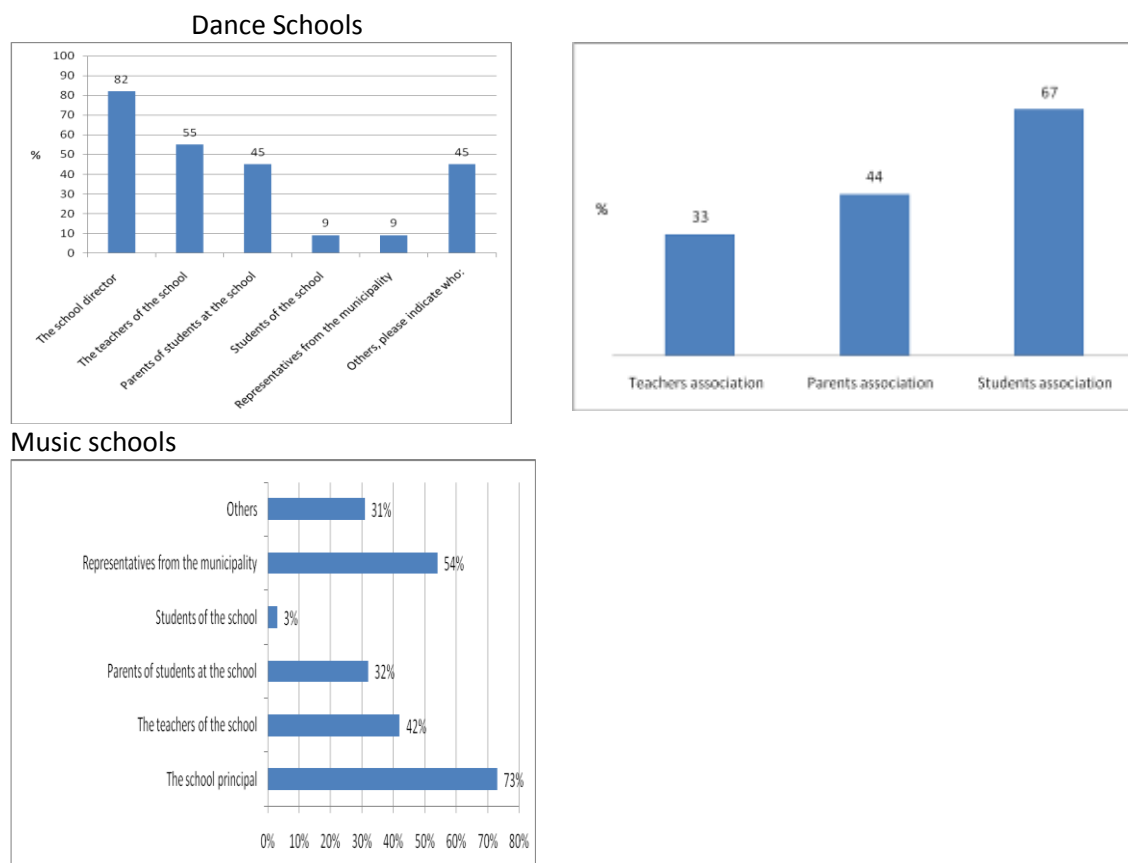
Management of most schools and cultural institutions is through quite autonomous Board structures. These boards tend to be made up of staff, parents and community members. The voice of young people is rarely represented directly on the Board structure, though there is generally a comparatively high proportion of 'student associations' or similar that exist in Icelandic schools. It is unclear the extent to which the student associations provide an opportunity for shared planning and priority setting ("The teachers usually plan. We get a bit

more of a say in youth club”) but they do appear to provide a stimulus for a number of student generated initiatives.



Figure 1.7.1 shows the stated representation on boards in various types of Icelandic school systems and compares these with the presence of a student association or similar.

Figure 1.7.1: Board membership by type of school / other pupil involvement by type of school



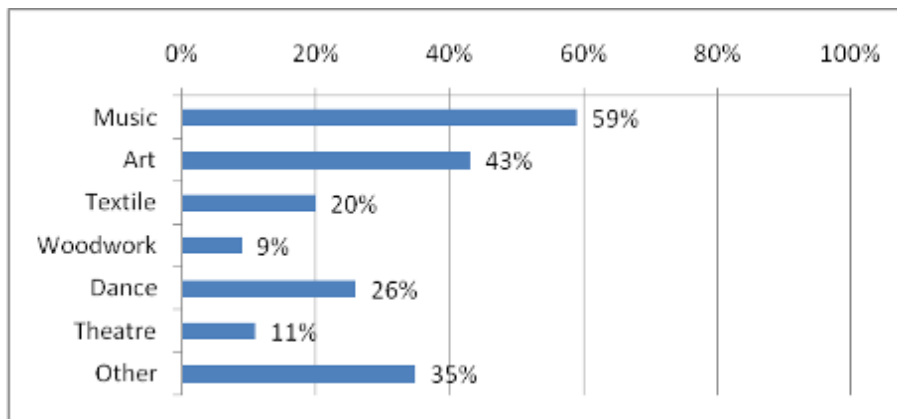
## 1.8 Arts education in schools

- **Teachers are generally well-qualified, but there is a shortage of qualified teachers in more remote areas, especially in the field of music in the general school**

➤ **Schools and colleges should be encouraged to display students' work more professionally**

In the compulsory school (6-16 year old pupils), in most cases, specialists teach visual arts, textile, wood craft, music and – where available – dance. In the upper secondary school, teachers with specialist training teach all the arts, craft, design and cultural subjects. Specialist teachers are generally very well qualified having either a first degree in their chosen art form and a post-graduate diploma or degree in education; or a general education degree with a major specialization in their chosen art form. Even in preschools, specialist teachers are employed in the arts (especially music and visual arts) at a very high level, according to international standards. In Figure 1.8.1 it can be seen that music and visual arts are quite regularly taught by specialists.

Figure 1.8.1 Specialist teachers in the preschool



A small number of teachers in the arts subjects in the compulsory school are unqualified. This is most likely to be the case in rural areas or areas where staffing of positions may be more difficult. Generally though, even the teachers without formal qualifications are considered by the school leadership to be experienced, enthusiastic and committed. A number of the 'unqualified' teachers may also have significant industry experience (for example, they may be carpenters, designers, professional artists or musicians).

Despite the overall high standard of teachers, there appears to be a shortage of music teachers trained and confident to teach music within the compulsory school context (as opposed to after school music schools). Music teachers find the challenges of teaching a whole class and more general music education to be a less attractive options than teaching in specialized music schools, so there is a drain away of qualified teachers from the compulsory school sector to the *after school music* school. Teaching in the Music Schools is preferred to teaching in the general school as teaching is generally on a one-to-one basis and with more favourable 'physical' and cultural environments for music education in the music schools.

The teachers interviewed in this research appeared committed, with many examples evident of teachers working in excess of school hours and also staying after school to do extra activities such as choir classes, festivals and theatre productions.

By international standards, the schools are well-equipped and effectively organised. Classrooms in the many schools visited were attractive, light and well-maintained, with computers and other technology readily available. The schools visited had good-sized halls, or similar spaces suitable for holding performances and exhibitions. Most schools have specialist art rooms, including wet areas for painting, music spaces and/or flexible project spaces. Schools

have well-equipped specialist rooms for textile, woodcraft and computer design. There appears to be readily available arts resources such as paint and paper and musical instruments. In most schools, fundraising by parents supports arts programmes by providing such 'extras' as theatre or other visits and additional resources. None of the schools visited felt that they lacked adequate resources to deliver quality arts programmes, though some concern was expressed that this situation might change in the future.

The upper secondary colleges visited were very well-resourced in terms of both rooms and materials. While less common, some schools and colleges also had specialist dance and drama spaces. Music and other after school schools were also very well-equipped with high quality teaching spaces and resources.

Some schools have students' art displayed in the classroom and in publicly accessible parts of the school, but the range and standard of these displays varied considerably. While particular schools have well-labelled and carefully presented, dynamic displays of pupils' work, there is a general lack of emphasis given to public presentation. Public presentation of work is important as research suggests that pupils should be encouraged to produce more 'resolved', quality artworks and performances for public presentation. The lack of displays may have been influenced by the timing of the research, with some schools commenting that work was removed over the holiday period, but this seems to not fully explain the lack of presentation of pupils' work.

With a few notable exceptions, there is a lack of displays in and around schools of the pupils' achievements in the arts. It is a key factor to enhancing quality that work is displayed and presented in a way that accords with professional standards in the field. For example, artworks should be mounted, labelled and hung with an awareness of the curatorial process. Display and presentation should be a key element of textile, woodcraft and design courses. Even in schools that have clear spaces for exhibitions, these are rarely attractively used. For instance in one school, children's work from 2003 was still on display, despite its yellowed and unappealing appearance.

There appears to be a trend in more recently built schools towards making very flexible use of the school facilities. For example, schools may be designed around large shared spaces instead of classrooms. Similarly, classes might be grouped to enable flexible and 'team' teaching. Multi-age classes were also apparent. Teachers appeared to enjoy working flexibility. This had generally encouraged more creative learning, though a small but significant number of teachers felt that more 'open' classes may have actually decreased creativity as teachers working in more open rooms were concerned by "disturbing other teachers" and felt "desk work" was "easier to manage" than creative work.



Increasingly, schools are becoming more multi-function community centres and may be designed to also house the music school, cultural centre, library, pre-primary schools and other community services. Schools with the music and/or arts schools embedded appeared to be very successful with higher numbers of pupils attending the optional arts education and greater flexibility of space, time and teaching personnel. Conversely, some teachers – especially from the Music Schools – were against the trend towards embedding the music school within the regular school, claiming that this influenced the special “ethos” and “feel” possible in a separate music school facility.

Similarly, while having high quality specialist rooms for the arts was generally viewed as being a good thing, a number of specialist teachers felt that the arts room isolated them from other teachers and made their work appear to be peripheral to the main function of the school. While there were only a few examples of specialist arts teacher working alongside the other subject teachers, there was a desire expressed by many arts teachers for their work to be more integrated into the general school.

In Iceland, the vast majority of parents send their children to the nearest local school. While in Reykjavik and other larger towns, some choice may be possible, there appears to be high levels of satisfaction with – and support of – the local school by parents and the community.

## 1.9 Preschools

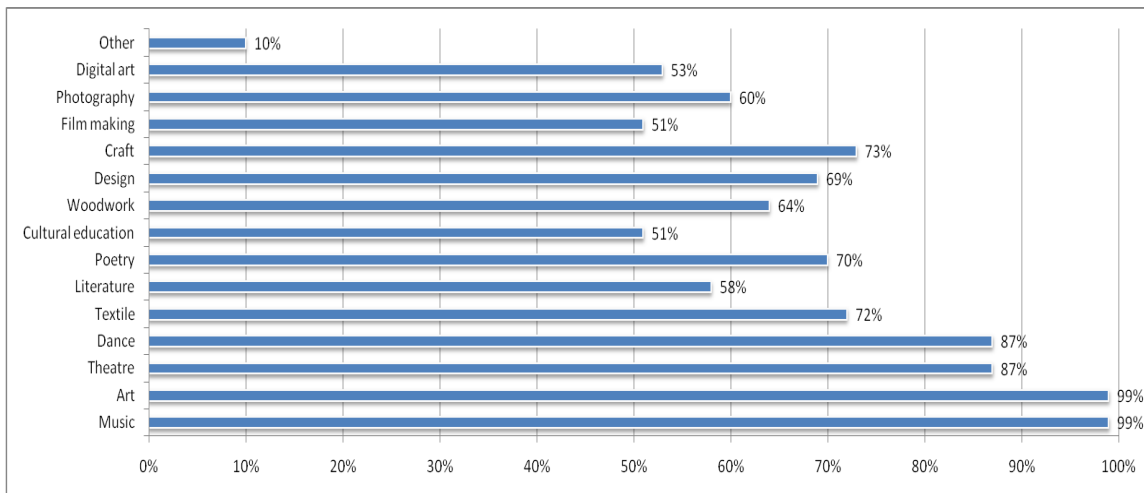
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### ➤ Arts and cultural activities are given a high priority in preschools

Throughout the country there are a range of preschools and childcare centres. These are highly diverse, but all appear to offer a very high level of care in a creative environment. They make maximum use of their community and children are encouraged to learn in harmony with the environment. These centres generally operate a very creative curriculum. Following are vignettes which provide insight into the implementation of the arts and creative curricula in different preschool settings. Figure 1.9.1 shows the high level of inclusion of the arts in preschools:

*Figure 1.9.1 Arts education in preschools*

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The first vignette (1.9.2) is of a small preschool in a rural location. The director of the preschool has undertaken additional study in the arts and is influenced by the Reggio Emilian approach. She believes that the children are the happiest when they are doing the arts.

*Vignette 1.9.2 We do something with the arts at least once a day*

There are 15 children in the centre and they range from 1 to 4 years of age. We do a lot of instrument work – percussion, xylophone, drums, and shakers. We also play music when they are working. The children do a lot of dance. And of course there is a lot of singing... singing with actions. We do something with the arts at least once a day. We encourage the children to try everything. Painting (including with fingers and with brushes); lots of play dough and clay; cutting with scissors. We don't have any space to do the arts, so the teachers have to put out the materials. Sometimes the activities are structured from the teacher, but I would prefer it if the children could decide. We don't really look at art works and we don't go on visits because it is too expensive. I was trained as a nursery teacher, but I did an extra course about art over the summer. I get ideas from the internet, books and other schools. Actually I get ideas from everywhere. I always put up the children's work on display but we don't do any performances. There are some festivals we get involved. We do professional development. We get 4 days per year. We can also apply for extra support from the unions. Every third year we go to Reykjavik. I went back to college to get more training. It was really helpful. I got more ideas and theoretical underpinnings. I also learnt how to more effectively work in groups. We get most of our materials for free. Local companies give us things. We take the children on lots of walks around the local community. For example, we looked at plants and that led to lots of arts. The children are always happy when we do the arts. The children do a lot of make believe (costumes and props). We do not have a specific philosophy but we are influenced by the Reggio Emilian approach.

The following vignette (1.9.3) is of a preschool with a very strong community focus. The preschool believes in the value of children's artwork being publically displayed. The preschool also supports visiting artists as part of their curriculum.

*Vignette 1.9.3 Our school has a special philosophy of working between culture and society*

We tried to embed the arts in everything we do in the school. Our school has a special philosophy of working between culture and society. We take the children out a lot and we cooperate with the local old people's home. We try to involve the parents too. We do storytelling with the community. They tell you everything about what it was like. We also go to farms and do story walks and we value real life experiences. At least every second week we are going somewhere.

The cultural house is next to the school so we are very lucky. We go there at least three times a year and they do a special programme for us as they have a very good education person. There are paintings but it is not really a gallery. The children's work goes to the bank and we exhibit in the local area, such as in the post office. The theatre group comes to the school once a year and we try to take the children to the theatre too.

We have a puppet maker that lives close to us and he makes puppets with the children, we have to try and keep the costs down. The children learnt different traditional old dances. Each week they had a professional dancer come

here, it is a good cooperation. We paid for the dance teacher but they had a lot of fun, it is part of a three year cultural project and we include it in the big evaluation of the school. We use the evaluation to generate a plan.

We regularly evaluate each other's work each semester as they were worried creative things were not being evaluated but now we want to share it with parents and teachers. We found it to be valuable to share our school plan with the whole school community. We are producing a book of the plan including our philosophy explaining to the parents why we do things as we do it. I think when it is in the book this fumes interest. They browse through the book and then they want to discuss things with us. We also hold some regular festivals. The professional development of our staff has also been part of the plan. A lot of our teachers are not qualified so we have encouraged them to do their diplomas via distance learning; we decided this was important in our five year development plan. We have also employed a reading specialist and we have 15 percent less teaching than other school to promote professional development.

Parents have to personally pay for their child to come to this school on top of all the government funding. We will need to increase the level of payment for next year, twice a week a music teacher comes in and we have cooperation with a music school. The music school teacher comes in twice a week and we work with the children. We have two groups for the five year olds and one group for the four year olds. We ask the parents to pay a top-up fee for these music lessons; they pay roughly 25 to 20 percent of the total costs. For example one hour cost about 2530 ISK and we times that by eight to give the monthly fee and that includes everything. We give a 30 percent discount though to single parents.

We all want to do creative stuff and even though we are doing it we want to do more and therefore we try to do something new each year. We want to combine experiences and work with more creative experiences. Every spring they have a festival in the school where we exhibit and perform and we always do something artistic for these, then we call it a cultural festival. But I think training in the early years is a big problem there is not enough experience. What we do is take a book and work through that or we may take a nation as a theme and work through that. We try to involve parents as much as possible in our theme.

The following preschool (vignette 1.9.4) has a large enrolment (140 children). The preschool has a strong commitment to the arts and also a focus on environmental and imaginative education. Every child has a portfolio that is used to evaluate the children's progress and record their achievements in a rich and vibrant manner. The school works actively with other preschools to increase creative learning. The staff bemoaned the lack of continuing professional development courses (in-service courses) that allow teachers to develop skills in teaching creatively with the arts. The director was also critical of the reductions in preschool teacher's pre-service training in terms of artistic and communication development.

*Vignette 1.9.4 Almost everything we do is arts related*

There are 140 children in the preschool. The centre is based in a lower income area with a number of young families. The pre-primary school adopts an experimental method believing that children learn from doing. They make a lot of use of the immediate environment and also the nearby forest.

The children are encouraged to access their own resources, and despite being very young, the children are confident with glue, scissors and pencils. They have music teachers on the staff and music and dance are very important. They make their own instruments and use locally found and available materials. They have at least 3 hours per day outside play. The children do group singing for 15 minutes throughout the day. Classical music and fairy tales also play while the children play and work.

They have a parents' day 4 times a year and women's and men's days twice a year. They keep a portfolio of every child's progress.

Although there is a compulsory school next to the pre-primary school, they have struggled to build a closer connection with the school. The pre-primary school head teacher explains, "We do not do enough visits to the compulsory school. They do not have enough time for us. They have very strict timetables". Each year the Parents' Association pay for a children's performance group to come to the school. These professional performances usually cost around 40,000 ISK. The parents choose the play or performance.

We have introduced photography into the school. We take the children around the area a lot too. The bus is free so we go to amateur theatre, the library and the symphony. You have to make the best of what is around you. Our parents are very supportive.

Almost everything we do is arts related. The children learn through the arts. It is part of their lives. Free play is very important. They learn to make choices. We encourage the children to use their imagination. Their work is always their ideas. Working with the arts is an important form of communication.

I think within the school system, pre-primary school is definitely the most creative. In the pre-primary school you are free to experiment with everything. I think the compulsory school teachers need to learn from the pre-primary school teachers. Teachers want to come here. It is a nice place to work. It is a good place to let your ideas grow. I really try to support the staff. We encourage and support creativity. The atmosphere and attitude affects the mood and then this view spreads across the school. In the town there are 6 pre-primary schools and we all share our practice. Two days per year the pre-primary school is closed to pupils and we can have a meeting and bring someone from the university, but it is expensive, maybe 120,000 ISK for 4 hours. So as much as possible we try to use the talent of the staff here. And participate in courses the town offers. These only cost around 30,000 ISK. But there are very few offers in the arts. They had an offer 'Dance for Children'.

The final vignette (1.9.5) is for a preschool that follows an Icelandic early years' philosophy known as Hjalli<sup>12</sup>. The preschool separates boys and girls for learning. They have highly developed assessment techniques and take the children to professional exhibitions. They employ specialist arts teachers to work with the children.

#### *Vignette 1.9.5 We give students the freedom to shape their world*

This pre-primary school operates under Hjalli pedagogy – an Icelandic early childhood theory of learning that promotes outdoor learning and discourages giving toys to children, instead favouring the development of a child's imaginative potential. Boys and girls are taught in separate classes but mix socially at points throughout the day. The school has been operating since 2007.

They encourage the employment of specialist teachers and have specialist teachers for art, music and computers. The children are encouraged to work with open materials and to make the most of the inside and outside environment.

The children are regularly taken to museums and exhibitions.

The principal of the school has noticed the impact on pupils and teachers; "Parents say that their children talk a lot more. They notice that the children are calmer and creative and that they are more curious. We have had a lot of comments that the children's behaviour has improved. They use space imaginatively. It is very positive to not have toys. We give the children real things. The children do plays and sing and dance every day. We provide open clothes that they turn into costumes. They make puppets. Teachers who come here notice that the children are more positive to one another."

"The staff work closely together. The children are well-behaved and independent. They have good self esteem. There seems to be a challenge though when the children go from here into the compulsory school. One parent told me, "My son got bored so quickly in compulsory school. He started closing his mind to things." We give students the freedom to shape their world."

"Teaching in the pre-primary school is exceptional, then there is a gap between the compulsory school."

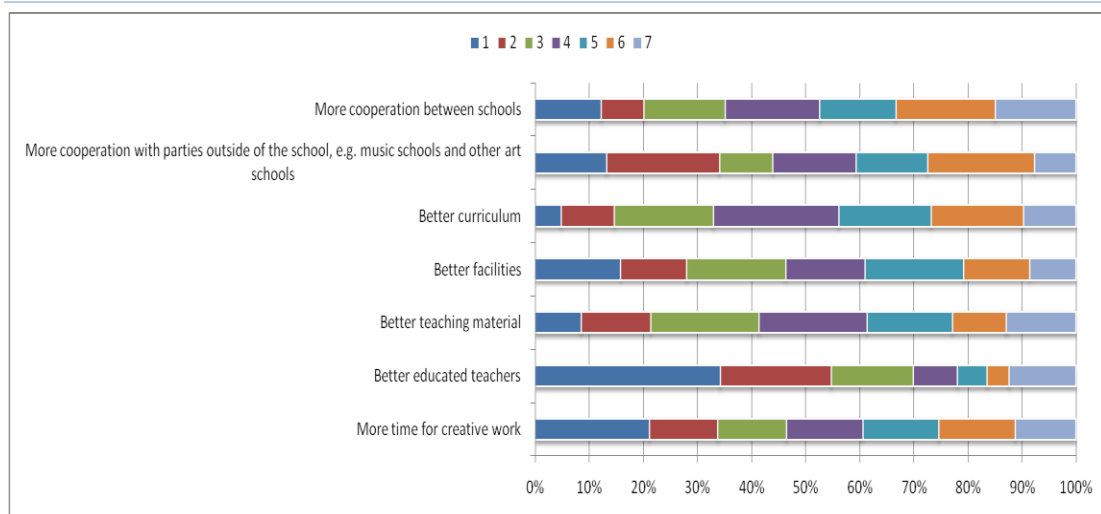
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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.hjalli.is/> The Hjalli pedagogy is mostly known for its method of segregating girls and boys in preschool classes to liberate the children from traditional sex-roles and stereotypic behaviours. Children at the Hjallastefnan preschools receive training in all human qualities as we believe that all children should have all the possibilities in the world regardless of their sex. The Hjalli pedagogy only uses open ended material instead of traditional toys and believes that positive discipline is the way to train social skills. The Hjallastefnan organization now runs nine preschools in Iceland; Akur, Ásar, Hjalli, Hólmasól, Hraunborg, Laufásborg, Litlihjalli, Litluásar and Vollur. Hjallastefnan also runs three elementary schools for students up to nine years old; Hafnarfjörður, Reykjavík and Vífilstaðir.



In terms of suggested improvements in the preschool, Figure 1.9.6 based on the survey findings suggests that better educated teachers is the key matter for improvement, while preschools would also welcome more cooperation with people and organisations outside the preschool.

*Figure 1.9.6 Improvements needed in preschools*



# 1 is the most important and 7 is the least important

## 1.10 Compulsory Schools

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- **Almost all compulsory schools have specialist visual arts, textile and woodwork teachers and facilities with the majority of schools having specialist music teachers and some dance and drama.**

In most schools, children get specialist lessons in arts and cultural education as a compulsory part of education from grades 2-8. While the way this is done can vary from one school to the next, the general picture includes specialist lessons in art (fine arts, drawing, painting etc); wood and metal work; textiles and sewing; cooking; and computers.

Additionally the majority of schools have specialist music lessons and some also have specialist dance lessons (though these are generally in a 'block' rather than spread throughout the year. In the majority of cases, these lessons are taught by specialist trained teachers in especially equipped, studio style classrooms. In most cases, classes are split. So for example, half the class might go to cooking, while the other half goes to wood work. After half the school year (usually around Christmas) the classes swap and experience the other arts form. Lessons are usually once a week for each art form and tend to be 2x40 minute lessons per week.

A shortage of music and dance teachers means that these are less common in school than the other art forms. To counteract this, a number of schools have outside providers who come in to offer music and dance lessons, including percussion lessons. These may be private artists or practitioners or might come from the music school. The teachers from the music school are more likely to come to younger children (who are too young to start after school music school) than to fill any 'gaps' in music education in the older classes. Most schools also get some other 'supplementary' arts professional during the year. For example, one school employed a Director to work with pupils in year 8-10 to produce the annual school play.

## 1.11 Upper secondary schools

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- **Pupils in secondary school have a wide choice of electives.**
- **Pupil generated arts and cultural activities are popular and can attract additional credit points.**

Upper secondary schools are not compulsory, but everyone to the age of 18 has the right to upper secondary education. The typical course length is four years, for students aged between 16 and 20, though students of any age can attend. Secondary schools (gymnasia) are divided into four types:

- **grammar schools**—offering four-year long programmes of study, ending with matriculation exams;
- **vocational schools**—theoretical and practical courses in various trades;
- **comprehensive schools**—offering a mixture of courses, has qualities of both a grammar school and an industrial-vocational institution, in addition to specialised vocational programmes;
- **specialised vocational schools**—programmes of study for specific trades and careers.

Several secondary schools in Iceland have an art specialism or arts options. The following vignette is one such example:

*Vignette 1.11.1 We are very proud of this department*

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There are 300 hundred pupils in this school aged between 16 and 20 years, of this 100 pupils and roughly a third of the school takes the art line. There are 90 pupils this semester taking the art line. The art line is available to everybody including students with special needs. There are students applying to a full range of universities. There are roughly 20 students in the visual arts line and 15 in the textiles line and also a range of electives that can be taken over two years.

Students take the art line alongside their matriculation line. Most students take around three years to complete the qualification. Currently there are only two teachers in art. The arts course covers basic visual arts, drawing, painting, colour and form, art and culture. There is also an art history course and this is available via distance learning, and also graphics and architecture. They can choose the line that suits them.

We do some history of design and we work in collaboration with other courses via online learning in particular students in the information and media course chose some of our electives. In particular, those in the media like to undertake arts courses. For example we currently have seven students that are doing design via distance learning. We started collaborating with three other schools and we focus on textiles. We followed an existing curriculum and we also do the basic line for tailors and for adults. We encourage designers who have graduated from our course to come back and talk to the students. We also encourage our students to be active in design projects such as designing for the school play.

The school has a strong culture of art throughout the school and the students do a lot of art activities outside the school. Personally I think it would be better if we could open things up a bit. Open to students of all different backgrounds and all different types of students that way we would be able to get students from wider horizons. We have less money this year so things have to be smaller.

They're also changing a policy and we are concerned about what the future will bring. I wanted to mix the disciplines but so far that's not been possible. I only got half the funding I'd asked for, the funding is only about 30million ISK per year, but I would do it anyway. I'll have to make do. We've all got less money in this country. But I'll survive because of help from the community, but I'll have to do it differently. I'm looking at programmes of cultural cooperation. We have one already with Ireland and another one with Norway. I think basic art and design courses give a good introduction to different sorts of courses. We have basically four cultural centres; visual arts, theatre, literature and music..

We encourage artists in residence. These come from other parts of the world, currently from Ireland. We also can send our students to Ireland as part of a cooperation. I recently sent students to a visual arts festival. I've tried to find opportunities for our students to work with other students, so their work is not so isolated. For example, students from Arizona, Norway and Ireland worked together to produce a short film. We also made an exhibition of 100 artists of stills. Basically, you get 20 hours a week for one unit.

We have a very flexible structure. We have a lot of visiting artists and there is a youth house which we collaborate with. It is an old slaughter house which is now a youth centre and a cultural house. We hold exhibitions there. The students are going to Sicily for two weeks to have an experience. We do this through a project. They have to pay 1500 euro each but we'll write a report and put some articles online. We can't go every year on visits because the students can't afford to pay. We are very proud of this department and think it is important in the community too. We do a lot of work with the town centre and festivals; there are a lot of festivals.

## 1.12 Music Schools

- **Iceland has an extensive system of local government funded after school music schools**
- **Attendance at Music Schools is comparatively lower in adolescence**
- **The curriculum of Music Schools is generally based on classical music and traditional instrumental instructional approaches**
- **Music schools should work more closely with their local compulsory school(s)**
- **Further research needs to be undertaken on the impact of group or individual tuition on musical instrument and vocal learning on pupils, attendance, enjoyment and quality of learning**
- **Effects of changes in affordability of music school lessons needs to be monitored to ensure there is not an adverse impact on attendance or accessibility**

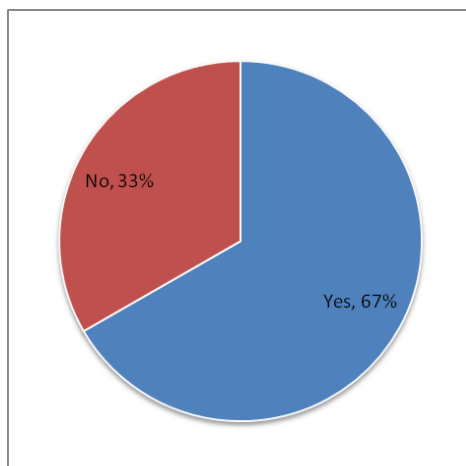
Iceland has an extensive network of after school arts schools. There are two main types of out of school provisions. The first are music schools offering substantial instrumental and/or

vocal training. These are heavily subsidised. There are a smaller number of ‘private’ schools offering visual arts, drama, dance, speech training, poetry, crafts or other art forms. The ‘private’ arts schools generally do not receive subsidies and are paid for by pupils’ fees. There are also a wide range of voluntary arts education providers including youth clubs, the Red Cross, church groups and others. These tend to be free of charge and cover a wide range of arts and cultural activities. Amateur arts are a strong force within Icelandic Society and local amateur theatres, choirs and bands are especially popular. These are spread across the country and even small towns and villages are likely to have access to an arts school.

The majority of these schools are for music – primarily to learn an instrument and to study musicology and musical theory. The most popular instruments appear to be the guitar and the piano, but this can vary from one music school to the next. There is some indication that music schools may restrict access to certain instrument tuition to promote a more ‘traditional’ mix of instruments (or due to availability or shortage of teachers). Guitar and drums seem to be particularly restricted, as the following comment from a music school director exemplifies; “Rock music is able to attract more boys. We didn’t dare offer guitar as all the pupils would choose that”.

The first music school in Iceland was in 1911. The 1963 the Law of Music Schools<sup>13</sup> was enacted. In 1975, the law was changed in such a way that funding of teachers salaries was split 50/50 between the local authorities and the state. In 1989 the music schools became 100% locally funded. While other arts schools are emerging they do not receive the prominence given to music. The music schools have high status in the system and more broadly in the community. There is an official curriculum for the music schools and an evaluation system, as can be seen in Figure 1.12.1.

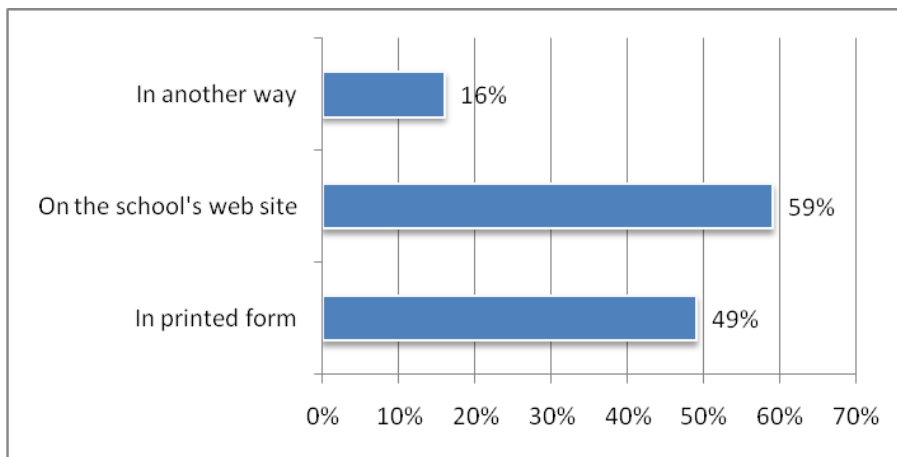
Figure 1.12.1 Does the music school have a school curriculum?



These curricula are widely accessible to parents and the community, generally via the music school website (Figure 1.12.2).

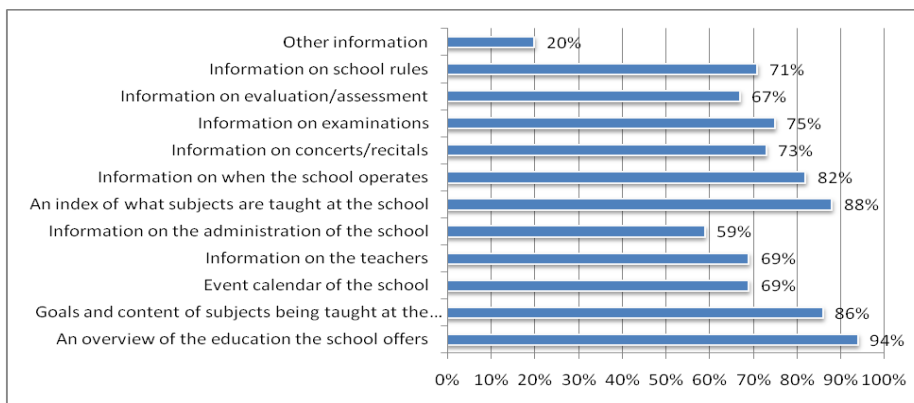
<sup>13</sup> This law was established by the Minister of Education who established the law [Gylfi Þ. Gíslason, minister of education 1956-1971 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gylfi\\_Þ.\\_Gíslason](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gylfi_Þ._Gíslason)>].

Figure 1.12.2 Accessibility of the school curriculum



The music school curriculum generally includes the following information (Figure 1.12.3):

Figure 1.12.3 Curriculum information



Music schools generally follow a curriculum centred around instrumental instruction based on western classical traditions. While survey results indicate that music school teachers value the music choices of the pupils (Figure 1.12.4), this seems to be less the case in practice with music schools having sets of repertoire pieces that are chosen by the instrumental or voice teachers to match the pupils' technical skills. Figure 1.12.4 shows the response to the question; "How essential do you consider that the following styles of music be taught at your music school?"

Figure 1.12.4 Choice of music in Music Schools

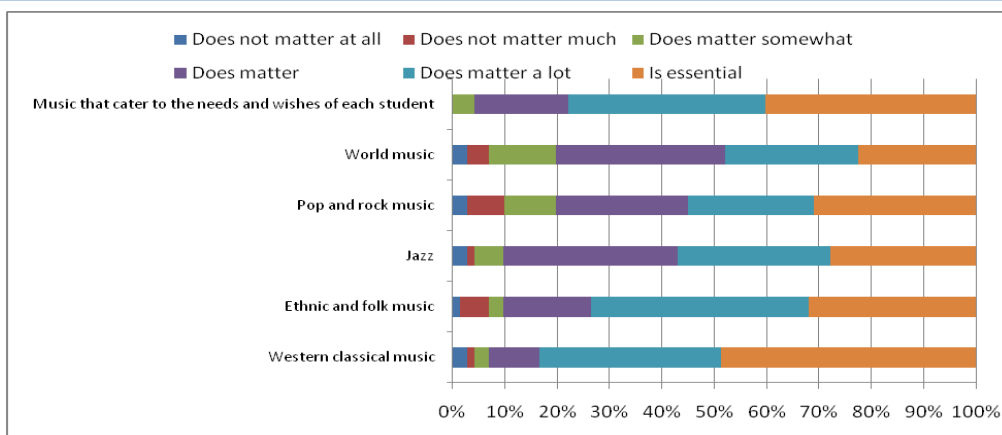


Figure 1.12.4 shows that pop and rock and world music are less likely to be taught than classical and jazz music. Over 80% of respondents felt that western classical music is essential or 'matters a lot'. While the music schools predominantly stress a classical music education based upon European traditions, classical music accounts for only 4.4% of all sound recordings in Iceland in 2007<sup>14</sup>, compared with 82.4% of recordings for pop and rock. If we compare this figure to 10 years earlier, then 73.2% of all sound recordings were pop and rock. This indicates a nearly 10% growth in the area of contemporary music, compared to a fall in recordings of classical music. While it could be argued that a solid grounding in traditional music leads to more innovative and accomplished rock/pop music production, this link is not evidenced and genre transfer in the arts is generally not apparent. The following quote from a music school director questions the current balance in the music school:

Jazz and pop music is not given the same status as classical music. It is sort of weird as there is more employment in pop music also it has a much higher priority in the mind of young people. Many teenagers are turned off music by having to learn theory. They should learn theory when they are ready for it and when they need it. I think that Icelandic pupils do not get enough ear training.

The most common pattern of attendance for children studying music is to attend 2 x30 minute private lessons per week. Children may also be encouraged to do listening classes or ensemble playing. Most schools stipulate that students can only learn an instrument beyond the first stage level if they also study theory. The music taught is classical, with some jazz or rhythmic music being introduced in some schools in recent years. Children tend to learn instruments such as piano, violin or other string or woodwind instrument. Guitar and percussion are also popular. Singing can also be learnt. The availability of certain instruments and singing choices is governed by a combination of interest from pupils and teaching staff available.

Most music schools provide 'added' experiences throughout the year. These can range from being more spontaneous opportunities to regular extra activities. For example, choirs, orchestras, involvement in community theatre, and musicals were all common 'extras' offered generally without additional charge. Many music schools (especially the larger ones) provided free preschool music classes, conducted either in their own right or as part of a cooperation with the local schools or children's centres.

It is difficult to determine the exact percentage of all child and young people in Iceland attending music school on a regular basis at any one time, but the anecdotal evidence from research visits suggests it can be as low as 8-10% of pupils in one area, while in other areas, such as a compulsory school in Ísafjörður where 41% or 205 students out of about 500 pupils attended music school. Attendance rates tend to be highest where the music school is closely connected with the compulsory school, for example:

The music school is inside the school; children are taken out of their regular class. This does not disturb their learning as we rotate the schedule. There are three choirs, different ages. We have a brass band in the school and form a big band before Christmas – to play for Santa and his guests.

All children go to music, out of class, to a music school – a separate music school but located in the same building... 80 - 90% of students take music, learning instruments...

There is a strong preference in the music schools for individual tuition. The content of the programmes tend to be based on models of the 'master' and the pupil and taught in individual lessons. The music teachers come from all over the world and have considerable expertise. Music teachers are encouraged to continue their own music profession. In practice though, the majority of teachers teach music as their main source of income, though they may concurrently

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Culture/Sound-recordings>

be active in a range of local professional and amateur musical activities including church choirs, playing the organ, in local bands and orchestras, appearing in local performances, running local festivals and so on. In all the centres visited, the practices were skill-orientated and quite traditional. Use of new technology was not apparent, except in one well-equipped music school that was using computers to teach music theory and musical composition.

Theory is a crucial part of musical studies, and, as the following example demonstrates some schools prevent further musical study without completing theory courses:

We start with Suzuki method from around 3 years of age. The general age to start music is around 7 years of age and they start with 2 x 30 minute lessons per week. Theory starts at 10 years of age. We also start Aural training at that time too. The pupils aged 16-20 years also study music history. The rhythmic department covers jazz – bass, guitar and keyboards. If students don't want to take there music seriously and sit exams and do theory then we ask them to leave and make room for others. There is another music school without the obligation to do theory and pupils can go there. But this school has over 100 pupils and does not get any subsidy so the parents have to pay. We are really interested in developing talent. We follow the syllabus and expect the students to follow exams. There is a gap in pupils aged 12-15. It is a difficult age. It depends how they studied. Musical development is closely linked to the development of the child. All the lessons we give are private and cost around 63, 900 ISK for a year for one instrument. The teachers come from mixed nationalities. A lot of teachers are Polish, Estonian and England. With the Icelandic teachers, they have all studied abroad, in the UK, USA or Germany and France.

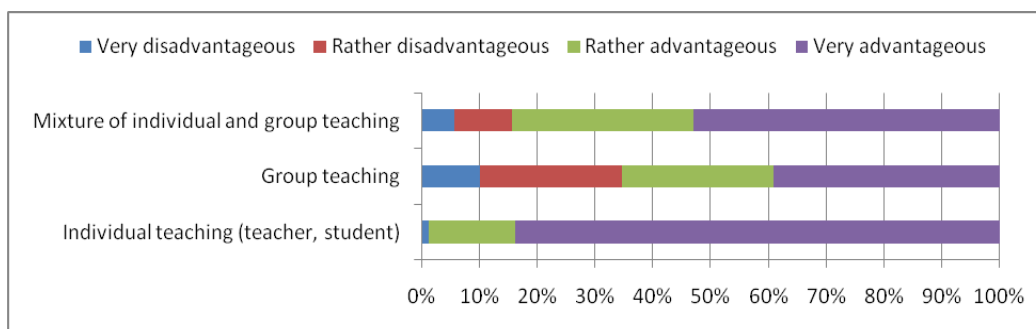
There appears to be some controversy over the place of music theory within music education. There is a widely held practice that theory is compulsory, but this is not the position of the syllabus editors. They argue instead that, "Nothing is compulsory. Pupils don't have to take exams at all and recreational musicians can be supported within the current system." Other music school directors are critical of the need to include theory and also the overly high demands of some curricula documents, as this criticism outlines:

We want pupils that enjoy playing and carry on playing. The system is wrong. The rules say you can't go on to grade 5 unless you study theory. You are in a situation of either having to force 12 year olds to study theory or they drop out. The emphasis on the theory, the scales and so on is over the top. I sent a complaint to the Music Schools' Examinations Board, because they had over 96 things that pupils had to do to move to the next level in woodwind. Everybody should have the chance to make music. Even the new jazz syllabus... I can't do half of the things! It is like the curriculum specialists go to heaven when they write these documents and forget the real world."

As can be seen in Figure 1.12.5, 98% of music school directors felt that individual lessons were very advantageous or rather advantageous. Similarly, 35% of the same survey respondents felt that group teaching was very disadvantageous or rather disadvantageous to pupils' learning. This presents a very clear preference in the music schools within the Icelandic system for individual instrumental and vocal education. The rationale for this preference is less clearly articulated and appears to be in contrast to methods such as those in the United Kingdom that have shown that group instrumental lessons with children 8-12 years of age has a success rate equal to – or better than – individual lessons. Further research could be conducted into this matter in Iceland as group lessons may be an effective way to reduce costs if these do not detrimentally impact on quality.

*Figure 1.12.5 Perceived advantages of group or individual instruction*

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Other music schools felt that local funding rules prevented group teaching and that in fact group teaching was preferable. The following vignette (12.1.6) is from a regional music school that has undertaken research into group teaching and also working more closely with schools.

*Vignette 1.12.6 The children learn more quickly*

This is a large music school with over 540 private music pupils. The school also runs 150 preschool music lessons. They like to work inside the compulsory school and the pre-primary school and work alongside the regular music teachers. Their funding comes 50% from private sources and 50% from the local council. When working in schools, they split the class in half and have around 8 pupils. This is optimum and better than private lessons as the children learn quickly. The music school director explains:

We are trying to put an emphasis on group playing. We find even for piano the children learn more quickly.” We have private lessons too. We allow the teachers to choose where they want to work, either in group lessons or private lessons. It works well to give choice as some of the teachers love working in the schools and others don’t like it. It is based around the talent of the teacher and their own way of dealing with music learning. Our instrumental work in schools is based around the recorder.

I have been arguing for much more flexibility in music schools. We should be able to use our professional judgement, not be tied into teaching one way or another. We try to put the pupils first.” In keeping with this idea, the school has a policy of giving preference to young children. They work in schools and go around to the small villages. They allow the children to choose instruments, but in practical way have to sometimes limit the choices especially in smaller villages.

We are not a rich area here. I would like all children to have an hour a week of music, but at the moment, 50% only do 30 minutes per week. Parents have to pay 58,800 ISK for one hour per week for the year, but only 37,300 ISK for 30 minutes per week.

We provide all the preschool music lessons for free.

We would like to see the policy of the municipality change so we can offer group teaching, so children can have more time and it would be cheaper.

We did a survey with the teachers and 25 out of 35 teachers said they would be very happy to teach group classes during school time. Only 5/35 said that they would not like to do group teaching and would only want to do private lessons.

Our job is to serve the community. I would like this school to be and arts school not just music. I could think of so many ways this could work, but the rules do not allow the funding for that idea. I think mixing the arts could make it more fun. If we stop to think of it, maybe only 1% of our pupils will actually become musicians. The other 99% need good arts education.

In government supported music schools, the salaries of teachers and administrators are paid by the local government under an agreement formed in 1989. The salary of music school teachers varies according to their experience, qualification and hours worked, but is generally around the same level as teachers working in the compulsory school.

Places in the music school are available from around the age of 3 for pre-school music, but in most cases, instrumental music education tends to begin around 8 years of age. Many music

schools have waiting lists of children wishing to start music lessons. This is especially the case in the area of singing and guitar, where demand seems to be in excess of supply of teachers.

Most music schools have developed their own pattern of offerings. These can include a range of in-school and out-of-school lessons. To accurately map these offerings is quite difficult as they not only vary from one school to the next, but also at different ages within the school as the following example highlights:

In pre-primary school the children get one 30 minute lesson per week. The six year olds get 2 x 30 minute small group lessons per week. The seven year olds choose an instrument (e.g. accordion, piano, violin and guitar). The 8 year olds get one hour individual lesson. Nine year olds get 2 x 60 minute lessons. These lessons are all free. We provide African drumming lessons for nine year olds and grade seven also get African music. These are whole class lessons given during class time and are free. But pupils can also do additional music lessons that are individual and paid for by the parents. Grades eight to ten can choose a music elective and most pupils do choose it because music is very popular. Children can apply to the music school for private lessons and these can be done during school time too, but for these they have to pay. It costs around 26,000 ISK for 18 weeks. This covers a one hour private lesson per week. In total we have 356 pupils in the music school across all programmes. Of these, more than 50% of the students do additional private lessons.

While historically, music schools have had little direct contact with schools, this pattern is changing. Many music schools are now working in very close collaboration with compulsory and secondary schools and pupils are able to attend the music school during school time. Staff from the music school may also teach group music classes and pre-instrumental lessons within the general school. This is particularly the case for younger pupils. Specialist music teachers in the music schools are generally reluctant to teach in the compulsory school. They feel that “it is hard work and low salaries”. Many schools “lack the facilities” and do not “support the music teacher”. The following quote from a teacher educator for music education in schools suggests that there are different training requirements for class or group teachers **in compulsory schools** compared to those teaching individual lessons in music school contexts:

I think the music teacher education within the education department is better for music teachers in the compulsory school. We teach them how to teach music in bigger groups and how to motivate students. We also talk about how to reach students from a range of abilities. I think music has changed a lot. But music education is still expensive – it is quite luxurious really. Students coming from the conservatoire are not prepared to teach in the classroom. There is a big difference between teaching a private musical instrument lesson compared to communicating music to a whole class. Teachers need skills in evaluation and how to cope with a wider range of more varied types of students. Music needs to become more integrated into the school. The arts subjects still remain isolated. They have been the same for decades. The problem is, when we talk about ‘integrated arts’ then it is an excuse for everything to be minimised and then you can’t teach the skills. It is really frustrating. The common core gets reduced. Teaching hours get reduced and then you can’t attract good teachers.

A small number of music schools are physically based within the compulsory school buildings or site and pupils are able to move freely to their instrumental lessons in the music school. While this pattern has generally been well-received by all, some music school teachers have expressed concern that teaching within the general school is often poorly regarded with low levels of specialist equipment, isolation from peers and lack of genuine integration with the general school context and staff. There is a desire for collaborations between regular schools and after schools with the intention that closer links would be mutually beneficial but there is also concern that the pattern of funding for such collaborations is unclear. Where music schools are working within the compulsory school, they appear to find this way of working very rewarding with mutual benefits for all, as the following vignette (1.12.7) from a music school embedded within a compulsory school suggests:

*Vignette 1.12.7 A very positive effect on the culture of the compulsory school*

We are very lucky. This school was built around the principle that the library and the music school would be actually at the centre of the school.

We have seen a very positive effect on the culture of the school. We find that music is better organised when we are part of the school (not separate). The children have more time and it is more popular with parents.

<The compulsory school principal commented> It has a very positive social effect. It is not just in music either but in many things. The children here are not shy. They are more confident and creative and I would say there has been a positive influence on the whole system. Pupils and teachers show more initiative.

We have also noticed that those children who take the additional private music lessons are the best pupils. They achieve the best and there is not any negative effect from them missing time in school to go to music lessons. I can see only positive benefits.

We have a school of musicians, they concentrate more as audiences, they are happy to be creative and communicate. The atmosphere and culture of the school is good. I wish more pupils would continue into the private music lessons though. Only around half the pupils do.

I would say culture is the spine of the school. Not only the music school, but also the after school youth centre. I would like to do more in the other art forms. Drama and dance is done a bit, but only in music lessons. Then it is mainly traditional dances. We do offer quite a few cultural electives for older pupils and these are always very popular.

Years 7-10 do a musical theatre performance once a year. We get a professional Director to work with the pupils. We also try to organise visits about 3-4 times a year of orchestras or jazz ensembles. Children with special needs are integrated into all lessons. Percussion works especially well with special needs pupils. I notice they have a high degree of concentration when they play. When we do more of the arts in school, it encourages more children to go to after school music (less than 10% of our pupils attend after school music but this is slowly improving).

We saw music school numbers improve when the music school started to come and teach in the school. The violin teacher comes here once or twice a week. The children go to music lessons during school time and this has really encouraged them. We have not seen any negative effects. Grades 1 and 2 all come together to play the flute. The music teacher has taught them the recorder.

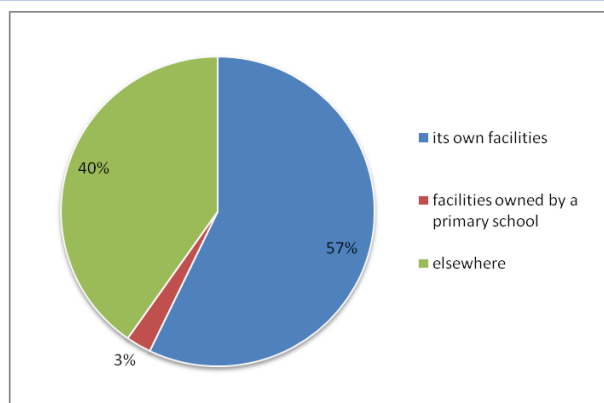
While general opinion supports the view that music schools should be integrated into the compulsory school, the official position of the Icelandic Musician's Union (FIH) is that the standard of music education is much better in the 'special' music school. They argue that in general, the facilities and conditions in the compulsory school are inferior to the conditions in the music school. While they acknowledge there are good and bad sides to music being located on a separate site or as part of a school, the overall view is one that feels that the administration and facilities are better in music schools and that, "The music school principles and environment must be maintained". They argue further, "There are too many conflicts when music is in the school. It will always be a problem. The atmosphere in schools is not right." They concede though that a well-designed music 'annex' attached to schools may be a good compromise as it could capture the best elements of both systems. They give an example, "We have a project with a public school. In this school only one pupil was playing, but now 200 pupils are playing, but ironically this programme has just had the funding removed. The FIH also cautions, "The concern in our profession is that things start to change and then there is a tendency for everything to shift downhill. This is the experience when we look at what has happened in some of our neighbouring countries. We have a fear of the system being watered down. The association further argues that if music teachers are placed in compulsory schools, they become "isolated and find it difficult." They suggest that for music in schools to work, at least 2 teachers would need to be placed together in a school. They contend that any placements of music teachers in compulsory school should not be instead of music schools but rather as an addition to the current system.

Other music schools are considering closer ties with the compulsory schools but feel that there are a number of obstacles to overcome for this to be really successful, as the following comment exemplifies:

Going to local schools... well we talk about it, but none of us do that. Newer schools have a music department. We only do 2 lessons per week in a local school. I'm not fond of doing it <teaching in schools>. If you work with children in schools you can only teach them the basics. In some ways it would be easier for all if the children could come to music lessons during school time. The child would not be so tired. It would be more convenient for the parents and the child. It would be convenient for the teacher and they would finish earlier. It might be convenient but it is definitely NOT professional. Pre-primary school classes can 'buy in' time.

As can be seen in Figure 1.12.8, the majority of music schools still operate **outside** the compulsory school, with only 3% working inside the compulsory school.

*Figure 1.12.8 Facilities in which the school operates music school*



One advantage of closer link between the music school and the compulsory school could be improvements in the compulsory basic curriculum in music. For this broader music education, the situation in compulsory school is not as good although it can vary from school to school. There is a perception that the strength of the music schools has meant that there has been a 'talent drain' (especially of teachers) away from music education in the compulsory school, as this comment suggests, "Music is like that. It is an emotional thing. There is always therefore a difficulty in discipline [in compulsory school]. Teachers are doing other things and do not see it as a priority. Visual Arts is a very solid subject in the public schools, music generally though is in bad shape [in compulsory school]."

While the salaries of the Music School teachers is paid by local government, parents still have to make a considerable contribution to the cost of music school. This cost varies from centre to centre, but the sampling suggests an indicative total would be about 57,000 ISK for the school year. There do not appear to be any special provisions for poorer families, though individual centres do make specific arrangements on a one off basis for families that may not be able to afford lessons. It was suggested that many families would be reluctant to 'admit' to needing support to pay music fees. Following the recent financial down turn, concern has been expressed over the ongoing capacity of parents to pay music fees. At this point, schools have not seen any overall reduction in families attended, though there is concern that this might change in the future. This does appear to be the case as music schools reported more people moving to 'half time' offers (i.e. one lesson per week instead of two). Other directors of music schools noted an increase in parents being late with payments or using credit cards to make music school payments. This situation will need to be monitored over the coming months and it may be necessary to provide some form of scholarship or endowment for children of low income to be able to pay for music lessons.

The teachers in music schools are very international. In fact it would appear from the visits that the majority of teachers in music schools do not come from Iceland. It is argued though that these international teachers bring high standards and international experience and 'richness' to

the curriculum. It is argued that they quickly adapt to life within the Icelandic music school and make a significant contribution. The following example is indicative of a more general picture: “4 out of 9 of our teachers are international. We have 2 teachers from Hungary, 1 from the USA and 1 from Britain. All have been here now for at least 10 years. They are much more flexible.” Music school teachers tend to rely on teaching as their main (or major) source of income, but contribute in a range of ways to the overall musical milieu of a community. The question of whether the music school teachers see themselves more as teachers or as musicians was problematic as the following quotes exemplify:

This is a very delicate question. Many would like to be fulltime musicians but they have to teach to earn money, but in this school the majority are predominantly teachers. Many of the teachers though play in the orchestra in the town. It is hard to juggle teaching and being a professional musician.

Most music teachers in the smaller towns have to do a whole heap of things just to make a living. For example, they might conduct the choir in the church, teach some students, give some private lessons, become involved in European music projects, and participate in summer music festivals.

The following example (Vignette 1.12.9) of an alternative music school presents a model of a music and ‘arts school’ where the practice is quite different from the majority of Icelandic music schools visited as part of this research:

*Vignette 1.12.9 It is very different here*

A group of three year olds with their parents are learning music together. The music school is operated in a building with a sense of the makeshift about it. The class is full to overflowing. The teacher has written a number of books on how teachers and parents can work together in introducing children to music.

The music school started 25 years ago and they do not get government funding. The parents pay for the lessons the children receive. They all work together children and parents and they offer a number of different workshops with youngest students being around three years and the eldest being around eighty years but they also receive a lot of teenagers and the teachers are active professionals in the field.

The music school is small with very little space. They are very selective of the teachers and choose carefully. They also encourage intergenerational learning, child, parent and grandparent all working beside each other.

“There are special programmes for teenagers here from theatre workshops to African dance, and these are very popular. In fact all kinds of dancing are offered hip hop, jazz and so on. We design the broadest possible programme to appeal to everybody.”

The music school also brings in foreign teachers to conduct interesting workshops. These operate only through subscription. The music school has been nearly bankrupted several times.

The children pay around 17,000 Icelandic Kroner for three months and they come around once a week for lessons. The lessons are group lessons with approximately 12 pupils per teacher. The music school has kept the same prices for several years.

In the last year, they have noticed a downturn in teenagers attending, a 50 percent downturn in fact, since the economic crash. They comment; “It is interesting; parents will not pay for teenagers but will pay for their young children. In the three, four, five, and six year old groups there is a waiting list, whereas in the teenagers they are in short supply.” Currently, they do not have enough teachers to be able to teach to the demand.

“It is very different here though, we do not necessarily follow the curriculum and our teachers have freedom. We work very closely together and can integrate across areas, dance music and arts for example can all work together. We do a lot of work with special needs children and young people. We have a Down syndrome theatre company and it is incredible what they are able to do. The dance teacher also works a lot with improvisation and she was taught in Germany. We get teachers from all over the world. Another teacher has gone off now and started her own school, she was educated in Stockholm. She specialises in creative dance. We try and get our students to perform internationally and I think we have done a lot to spread the news of what is happening in Iceland. We do lots of shows for parents but we do not focus on that as it is definitely now process not product.”

“We did a great project around Shakespeare, the 12 and 13 year olds loved doing Romeo and Juliet, it was fantastic. The guy who played Romeo was actually deaf. Out of that group many people have actually gone on to work

in theatre. The students really love what they get here; we almost feel we have to throw them out as they do not want to go home. They really want creative work.”

“We have tried to work in teacher education. I said I would go in and help with teacher education as I think this is the weakest point and something has to be done here. We have been trying to go in but they have been cutting that out of the programme. For example we used to do a five week workshop once a year but they have stopped this now they just do folk dance and cha cha cha.”

“Really we need education to do a lot more but all the creative thinking is dead, dead, dead. The old teachers are actually more creative than the young teachers and the young teachers say “wow you can do this?!”

“We tried to run a four day summer school for teachers to bring teachers from abroad to work with teachers in Iceland music movement teachers, abstract teachers, writers, play directors and so on. Every year we get 30 teachers half of them are from the pre-primary school. It is really interesting as we get more interest from the younger years. Pre-primary school teachers are much more connected to the value of the arts than the elementary school teachers. It is really funny though because the schools have money for professional development and they are looking for things, looking for inspiration but then it is hard for teachers to get funding. It is ironic we get more teachers from abroad coming to these workshops than we get Icelandic teachers especially with practical courses like ORFF. We had 60 teachers and we could not fit them all in. We did it over the weekend and it was fantastic. We had workshops with 100 people in it.”

### 1.13 Art and dance schools

- **A number of private options are also available for after school visual arts, craft and dance activities**
- **Other activities operate at the local level including amateur theatre groups, bands and choirs**
- **Other art forms do not receive the same degree of support as music, at the local government level**
- **Some music schools could consider widening their offer to include other art forms**

Despite the overwhelming quantity of music schools, there are also visual arts schools, drama schools and dance schools that operate after classes for children. The majority of dance and visual arts schools are privately run and do not receive direct government subsidy.

There are also a few examples of music schools who have expanded their offerings to include visual arts, drama and dance. Once again though, while this expansion seems popular with parents (“All children want to perform. We should be able to offer other art forms”) and children, patterns of funding have not kept pace with these changes. Only music teachers are paid from local government funding (as per the law) while any offerings in the other art forms need to be fully paid for by the parents. Some music school directors have expressed a desire to provide a broader cultural offer as is the case in other Nordic countries:

I would recommend that there should be more general arts and cultural schools – like in Finland – not just music school. There needs to be a general arts school at least one in every region. There should be equal funding for the art forms – not just funding for music. There is really very little funding for the other art forms. Children are not getting enough of all the art forms in general school. High quality teachers don’t want to teach music or dance in the general school.

My vision of the school is to give a broad education; we need to emphasis more for students about valuing the art. We’re on the committee for the music school. I’d like to turn it into an art school, to have an arts department, a dance department and a theatre department, but I do not think that will happen.

The Icelandic Musicians’ Union (FIH) is against the formation of broader arts schools covering a wider range of arts disciplines. They argue:

Children would end up doing too many things. Music is complicated and difficult. To achieve you have to concentrate on that. From the social perspective it might be good, but the quality of music will go down. All the teachers in music schools are well educated. They might not have an education qualification but they are musicians and have often studied abroad. Multi-disciplinary arts learning is a fashion or a fad passing through. Music is a specialised field and we are very old fashioned and sceptical. Music is not for everyone. It is like a mountain: if you want a pinnacle you have to have a very big and broad base.

Some arts schools are emerging from strong local demand and being developed through volunteer support and private philanthropic funding at the local level, as the following example shows:

The school pays for one art teachers (painter). The drama department is run by volunteers. The school is more or less independently run – with an agreement between them – under the name of the Art School. The school directors (or heads of each division) meet once a month and plan joint projects. This spring we were going to do a musical which will have to be postponed until next year because of the poor economy. The school has been getting support from banks and other big companies; perhaps 500.000 ISK annually from each bank or company. Production like a musical would cost between 4-5 million in total and would end with a public show, free for the public. During the last week of February we go out in the community and play for people – the old people's home, the public schools, homes for the disabled, etc. Dance is not yet offered in the school, but hopefully we'll have that soon. Next year a new secondary school will be built in the community with emphasis on the arts, out doors, nature, literature and sports.

The pattern of instruction in the private arts schools varies considerably. Some visual arts schools focus on learning formal techniques, crafts and producing works for exhibition. Other art schools offer a range of visual arts experiences including film making, drawing, painting and sculpture. Jewellery making and ceramics may be offered. Craft may also be available, especially textile. The range of offerings often depends on the interests in the community and the skills of the available teachers and volunteers. Where dance is taught, it is primarily classical ballet or jazz ballet. Some schools have tried to introduce folk dancing or ballroom dancing. Drama schools are often closely linked to amateur theatre and prepare plays, musicals and pieces for performances. The arts schools often have classes of mixed ages, including adults.

This quote<sup>15</sup> from the principal of Iceland's major art academy in 2005 points to the differences in availability between music institutions and those catering for other art forms:

The visual art schools are not as numerous as the music schools. Most of them being "course-schools" that provide courses for children and adults alike. *Myndlistarskólinn á Akureyri* is notable as it defines itself, for the most part, as an undergraduate institution. *Myndlistarskólinn í Reykjavík* ('The Reykjavík School of Visual Arts') is an all-round school that runs a robust foundation programme preparing for undergraduate studies. Both schools receive financial support from the state and their respective city councils. One film school operates in Iceland, *Kvikmyndaskóli Íslands*. The school's main source of income is from tuition. The school is privately run and operates in line with the upper secondary level national curriculum. *Listdansskóli Íslands* is the only special art school that is still directly operated by the state. The school offers both primary and secondary education. Former students of the school now form the core of dancers and dance-artists responsible for the contemporary dance scene in Iceland. Theatre arts have been left out. There is no comprehensive foundation programme in the field – despite of repeated attempts to put right.

Many of the arts schools have emerged from `grassroots` initiatives, but have gone on to have strong support in the community and offer interesting and extensive programmes. Some manage to become entrenched and are able to then leverage some level of public funding, as the following example shows:

#### *Vignette 1.13.1 We offer something that everyone*

I ran a gallery in another house. I started then to do some art lessons – painting and drawing. Then we moved in to a bigger house in 1991. We began introducing other art forms. We started with more arts experiences, like pottery. Then we introduced music and drama. My husband is a music teacher. Form there we added in ballet.

We get teachers coming to work here from all over the world. A lot of our teachers come from Finland, Denmark and Poland. We sent our teachers and some of the ballet pupils to Finland for three weeks. There were no local teachers because Icelandic teachers don't want to leave Reykjavik. The Finnish teachers are excellent. I think arts education is very good in Finland. They are quite amazing too. They learn Icelandic in only 3 or 4 weeks.

<sup>15</sup> Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson: *Menntaskóli listanna* ('College of the Arts') *the principal director of the Icelandic Academy of the Arts. Published in Morgunbladid October 2005, page 3.*

We had a great show. The teachers danced as well as the pupils. We would like to introduce a course to teach technical theatre skills, such as lighting design. One of our teachers is married to a lighting designer. In the music area we have a large number of students in the rhythmic courses, learning guitar, drums, singing and focusing on pop music. We do more traditional things too, such as drawing, watercolour and ceramics. We also do shorter term courses such as cartooning and glass. Teachers are paid around 5000 ISK per hour.

On the weekends we really aim to open our courses up to everyone. We run courses that are popular, such as salsa dance, handiwork (basket and candle making) and party singing. We also run professional development courses. For example, all the staff from the local pre-primary school came and did a course on singing. Drawing and painting are also popular. We run special class for young adults with disabilities. 16-20 year olds come and do ceramics once a week. We also do a course for woman who can't sing. It is a lot of fun and of course many of them can sing!

Our aim here is that we offer something that everyone would want. That is our main aim. Of course we will develop talent where it is there, but we do not turn anyone away. We work with retarded people and people with Down syndrome. We try to address all needs.

We are the only school outside Reykjavik that gets government support. There are 3 in Reykjavik, but we are the only school for dance not in Reykjavik to get funding. We have to keep fighting to get more dance. Our youngest pupils are 4 or 5 years old, and our oldest can be any age. There is a good mix of genders. Of course dance is mostly girls, but piano and guitar is mostly boys.

Every year we do performances. These were so popular we had to have extra shows. The parents have to pay about 10,000 ISK for eight weeks of classes. We have not had any drop off in pupils wanting to take lessons. The music school has a set curriculum and exams and the dance school might do this too in the spring, but our shows are really more important. We do at least 5 or 6 shows each year and we have an art exhibition and drawing prize.

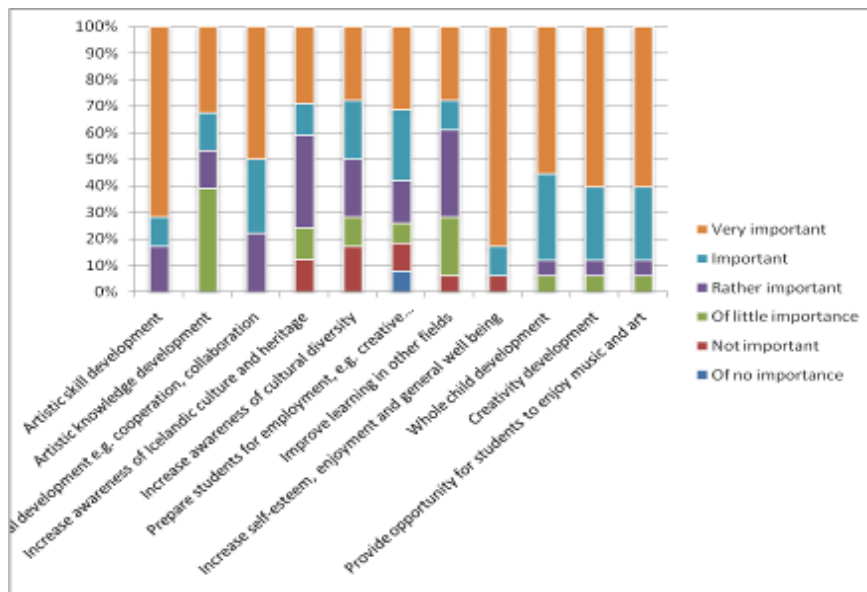
There have been some pupils with real talent. The piano teacher has one at the moment. One of our dancers is exchanging with a dance academy in Rome and later will audition for the Royal Academy in London. Several of our pupils doing draw have got into Art College in Reykjavik. We have around 160 pupils at any one time, but it can be up to 300. Some pupils do both dance and music.



Dance schools believe that their main purpose is increased self esteem, enjoyment and general well being (95%). Whole child and creative development are also important as espoused

principles as is enjoyment (89%). Artistic skill development is also considered to be important (81%).

Figure 1.13.2 Importance of various purposes (dance schools)



### 1.14 Aims: Why have the arts?

The main aims for arts education according to world studies includes cultural transmission or understanding, transmission of artistic skills, personal, social and cultural outcomes. In Iceland We believe there is a strong belief that the process is as important as the product, as this quote from a teacher highlights; “Children have to enjoy creating. You can see that the children get a

lot of satisfaction out of the process. They gain confidence. They feel proud of their work when they show it to others. Children need to be immersed in the creative process. The process is the most important. We need to educate the parents in terms of what we are doing and why.”

Members of the creative industries spoke of the importance of arts education for building the creative people Iceland needs for its future, as the following comments suggest:

The arts are many things to many people. I think in the future we need more creative pupils with more self-esteem and dignity.

I think the arts given young people vision. It makes the children more forward thinking and responsible and they have more positive self-esteem, identity and enhanced social development.

There is also the embedded assumption that arts education provides ‘more’ than just the simply the knowledge and skills of art. Because of this, the overriding concern is that every child should experience the arts so they can gain from it, even if they do not become professional artists. As one of the heads of a music school stated, “The aim is not to produce musicians but to give everybody the opportunity.” Figure 1.14.1 outlines the main aims of arts education in Iceland as suggested in the focus groups.

Figure 1.14.1 Aims of arts education in Iceland

Aim identified	Frequency
Culture and heritage	4
Quality of life	4
Social development	8
Economic development	1
Intrinsic value	5
Practical skills	1
Creativity	5
Intergenerational learning	2
Personal development	7
Visual literacy	1
Talent development	2
Educational development	1

If you examine the aims offered, the impact of the arts on personal and social development appears to be the most important. These findings are replicated in the survey findings. For example, Figure 1.14.2 shows that the espoused aim of arts education as suggested by heads of music schools is increased self-esteem, enjoyment and well being (with 72% of respondents considering this to be very important). By comparison, preparation for employment, and Icelandic cultural and heritage education appear to be of the least importance.

Figure 1.14.2 Importance of different aims for arts education (Music school responses)

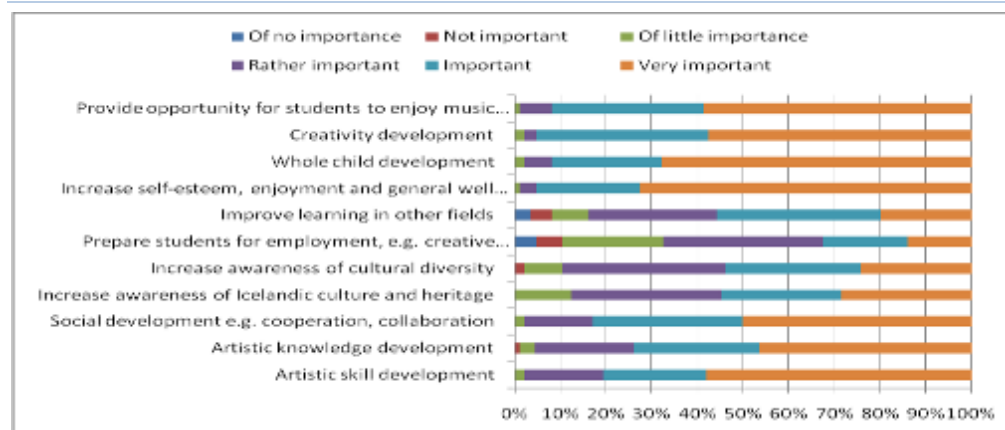


Figure 1.14.3 shows a similar pattern in the compulsory school terms of importance of various different aims.

Figure 1.14.3 Importance of different aims for arts education (Compulsory school responses)

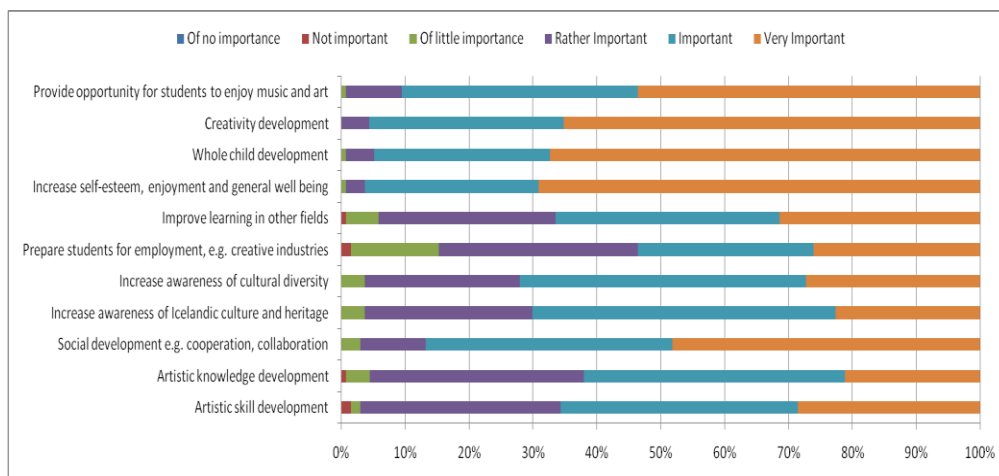
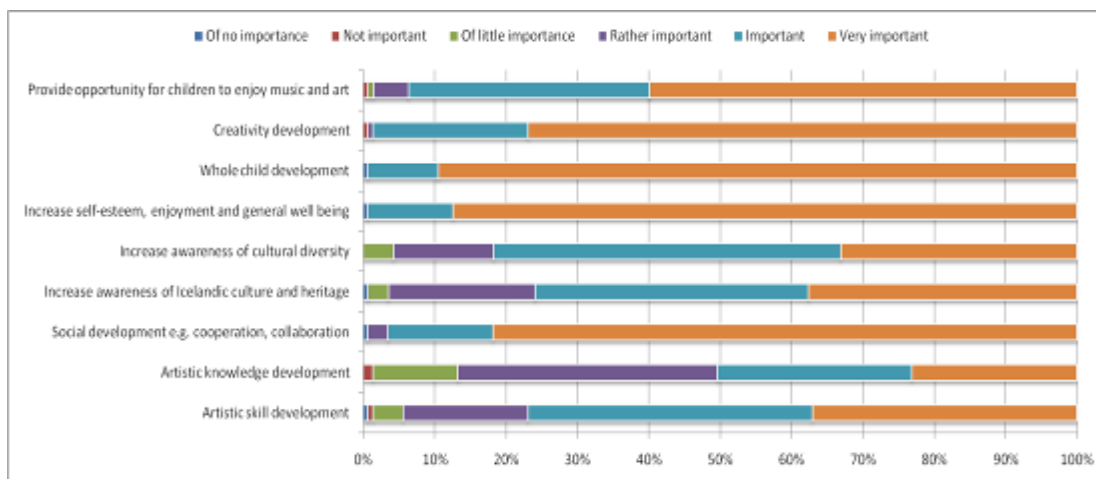


Figure 1.14.4 shows the aims for preschool arts education. As can be seen from Figures 1.14.2, 1.14.3 and 1.14.4, there is a high degree of consistency of aims across the country and between different levels of schooling.

Figure 1.14.4 Importance of different aims for arts education (Preschool responses)



# Chapter 2 World Benchmarking

## 2.1 Introduction

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For the positive impacts of arts education to become apparent, children must experience high quality arts education. The results from the global study of arts education suggest that in around ¼ of all instances of arts education, the quality is so low as to negatively affect a child's artistic and creative development<sup>16</sup>. Given this, it is imperative that the arts education within Iceland reaches certain levels of quality. This chapter outlines the basic components that together form high quality arts education.

## 2.2 World standards: Defining the alpha of quality arts education

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Art education – like health – is not a mono-causal phenomenon but one which hinges on many variables pointing in the same direction. Statisticians have developed a measure of this. The so-called *Cronbach's Alpha* (Bogt, 1993) measures the consistency between factors in a compound phenomena. The higher consistency there is between the qualities, the higher the *Cronbach Score*. Statistically speaking, total consistency equals 1, whereas no consistency at all equals 0 (Bogt, 1993).

This is certainly not to suggest that a Cronbach score can be derived for the arts by criteria, averages, and global means. Educational systems are deeply embedded in cultural and nation specific contexts. This is especially the case as regards education in the arts. More than any other subject, the arts (itself a broad category) reflect unique cultural circumstances, and consequently, so does the teaching of the subject.

So any *Alpha* developed must respect and encourage this diversity. Judd (Judd et al., 1993) refers to this more as a *gossamer concept*, where a set of abstract constructs are grouped together consistently to create a somewhat dependable phenomena. Just as 'health' may be a collection of measurable factors (e.g. steady pulse, low cholesterol and good metabolism etc), well-being comprises of a number of constructs such as happiness, contentment, power, social roles and so on.

Related to arts education, we know that quality programmes have a number of measurable characteristics in common, such as inclusion of partnerships, performances and approaches to learning but equally they depend on attitudes of risk taking, collaboration, sharing and other abstract constructs.

These together form the baseline *alpha* that needs to be considered prior to the measurement of impact.

It is possible to draw certain overall conclusions and to find common denominators, which can serve as a form of *alpha* for arts education research. Just as social science, researchers have developed community 'liveability' standards, medical researchers have developed patient well-being indicators and the legal system is continually called upon to make judgements based on precedent and statutes, the arts community can now – perhaps for the first time – have a reasonable *alpha* to use for ascertaining quality prior to evaluating impact.

Throughout the results of the global survey there is an unequivocal indication that certain structures and methods of instruction are common to all quality programmes regardless of their

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<sup>16</sup> Bamford, A (2006) *The Wow Factor: Global research compendium on the impact of arts in education*. Waxmann, München.

context, scale, scope or resources. The question now is to determine if these structures are present at the national level.

### 2.3 The nature of quality

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'Quality' here is being defined as those arts education provisions that are of recognised high value and worth in terms of the skills, attitudes and performance engendered. According to Pearsall (1998) quality implies something that has been achieved successfully.

In the case of arts education, quality is considered to exist as something that may include achievements (i.e. quality outputs), but goes beyond this to consider learning journeys, pathways, partnerships and recognition. Dewey (1934: 19) writes of quality as being characterised by a "heightened vitality." He further comments that quality signifies, "active and alert commerce with the world: at its height, it implies complete interpretation of self and the world of objects and events." Under this notion, quality is not a fixed disposition but rather as Kissick (1993: 27) notes, "quality is first and foremost an idea, its criteria are susceptible to influences from within a given society."

Quality arts education is the result of interplay of structure and method. It should be noted, that *alpha* does not specify content. This is deliberate, as content should be derived in relation to local environments, culture and resources. In this way content and context can operate independently of the quality *alpha*. Similarly, these indicators of quality hold true for both *education through the arts* and *education in the arts*. In both these complementary ways in which the arts contribute to education, the indicators of quality remain quite stable and consistent.

These quality indicators are:

1. Active partnerships between schools and arts organizations and between teachers, artists and the community
2. Shared responsibility for planning, implementation and assessment and evaluation
3. Opportunities for public performance, exhibition and/or presentation;
4. A combination of development within the specific art forms (education in the arts)with artistic and creative approaches to learning (education through the arts)
5. Provision for critical reflection, problem solving and risk taking
6. Emphasis on collaboration
7. Flexible school structures and permeable boundaries between schools and the community
8. Accessibility to all children
9. Detailed strategies for assessing and reporting on children's learning, experiences and development
10. Ongoing professional learning for teachers, artists and the community

These alphas of effective arts education will be used to organise this report and the quality of arts education in schools in Iceland will be discussed in reference to these world standard quality alphas.

## Chapter 3: Responses to quality

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### 3.1 Introduction – Overall statements about quality

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- **Arts education in Iceland is of high international standard**
- **More consideration needs to be given for out-of-school (especially music) provisions for children with special needs**
- **Arts education in Iceland receives widespread support from pupils, parents and the community**
- **There are generally adequate resources for effective, high quality arts education**

Using the approach developed in the previous chapter, the list of quality indicators could be used as an *alpha* for arts education to determine ‘a wellness indicator’ that can be used for arts education prior to impact measurement. It also acts as a diagnostic tool for improving arts education programmes.

Generally, arts and craft education in Iceland is of a high international standard. All children receive some arts education and most children receive in excess of two hours per week of arts education. Additional music education is enshrined in law and readily available across the country. There appears to be generally equitable provisions in all locations and for all children, though continuing issues remain for children with special needs.

The arts are generally taught by well-trained specialists in well-equipped and effectively resourced specialised arts studios (rooms). School principals, parents and the community support the value of the arts and they are considered as being a core part of education. The arts are a significant element of Icelandic society and are valued for their inherent, personal and social worth.

Despite feelings that the standard of arts education in Iceland may be falling, this is not evidenced in the findings and the research shows ongoing improvements in the place of arts education in schools and more generally within Icelandic communities.

While there are areas that could be improved and recommendations that would increase quality, these need to be read in terms of an overall very positive picture.

### 3.2. Active partnership

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- **Partnerships between the schools and outside agencies (artists, industry, cultural organisations) are not common in Iceland with the exception of some music schools which are embedded in close partnership with some schools**
- **Partnerships should be extended, in terms of the number of schools involved, the diversity of partnering organisations and the length of time of the partnerships**
- **Ongoing partnerships between the education, culture and creative industry sectors needs to be embedded within policy and practice**
- **“Ground up” and community partnerships appear to be very strong and effective and these could be more acknowledged in the curriculum**
- **National cultural organisations based in Reykjavik need to be supported to develop innovative models for working more closely with schools in isolated locations**
- **Schools should be encouraged to collaborate across various levels such as between preschool and the compulsory school; between the compulsory school and the senior**

**high school and with the various organisations engaged in higher and further education**

- **With a few exceptions, the role of cultural institutions in promoting and expanding arts education in schools is largely under developed.**

Active partnership involves the direct inclusion of a range of cultural and artistic organizations in the planning and delivery of arts education programmes in schools. The most effective programmes have managed to build sustainable, long-term and reciprocal associations with cultural agencies and industries.

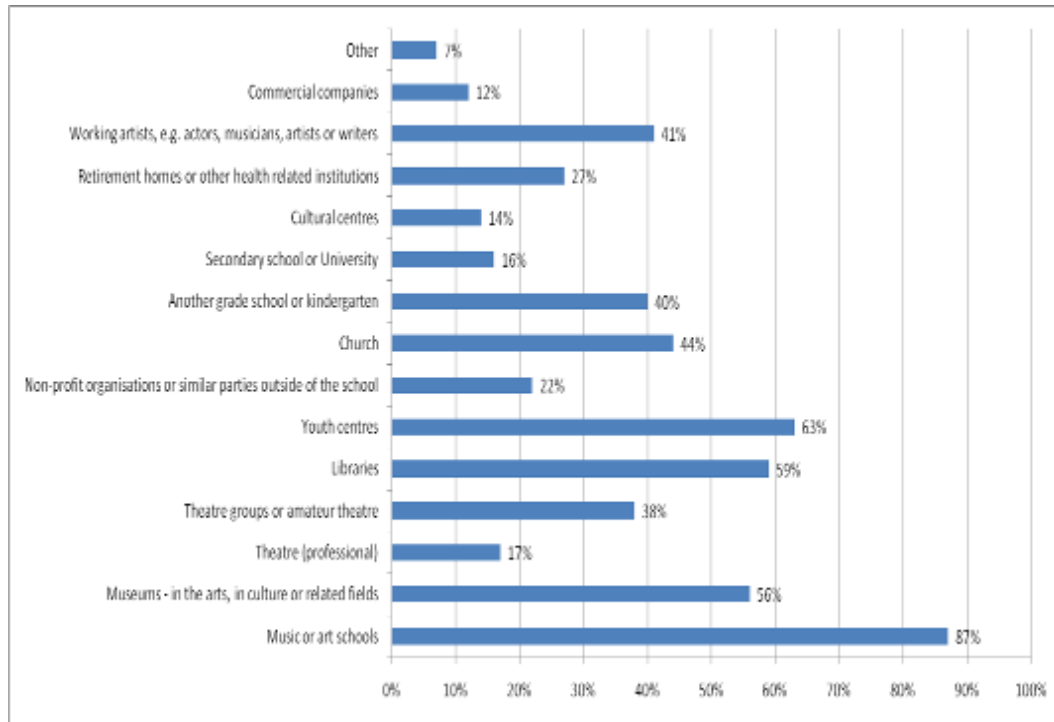
Countries that have effective arts and cultural education generally have active partnerships across sectors, disciplines and organisations. The notion of an active partnership involves the direct inclusion of a range of cultural and artistic organizations in all aspects of the planning and delivery. The best of these provide sustainable, long-term and reciprocal associations. These sustained associations are centred on shared responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating programmes.

While the most common partnerships in a world context are between the cultural and educational sectors, a number of countries have a range of agencies supporting arts education including private individuals (the most common one), enterprise, the community, trade unions and a number of other possible partnerships. These partnerships tend to encourage the pooling of financial resources, human resources and expertise to produce substantial arts education programmes.

The international research suggests that successful partnerships are sustained and involve shared responsibility for planning and evaluation. This is generally not the case in Iceland, where professional artists tend to come into the school for short-term 'special projects' or for school-based performances rather than as a sustained part of curriculum implementation. This tends to be an isolated experience, as this comment emphasises; "I have a background in theatre and I work with a lot of schools in the area of drama, I travel between schools and I am completely self-sufficient and stand alone, it really doesn't connect with what's happening in the schools" (artist in school).

The exception to this was music, where some music schools worked actively within the school. Also, by chance rather than planning, a shortage of teachers in textiles, design and woodcraft mean that these areas may be taught by industry professionals. Special occasions, such as festivals and performances also provided opportunities for partnership working. For example several schools employed professional directors, composers and musicians to guide preparations for school performances. This can be seen in Figure 3.2.1 where music schools are the most common collaborator with the compulsory school.

Figure 3.2.1 Compulsory school collaborations



Figures 3.2.2 to 3.2.3 indicate that visits from professional artists and cultural groups into the school occur frequently but that the initiative for such activities is more likely to come from the school.

Figure 3.2.2 Frequency of artists or groups of artists visiting the compulsory school per year

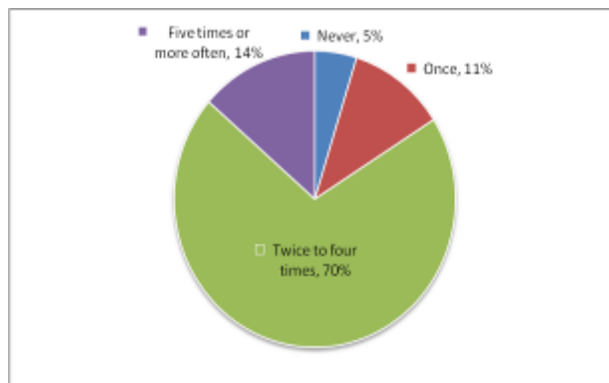


Figure 3.2.3 Frequency per year of pupils in compulsory school participating in organised visits to cultural institutions

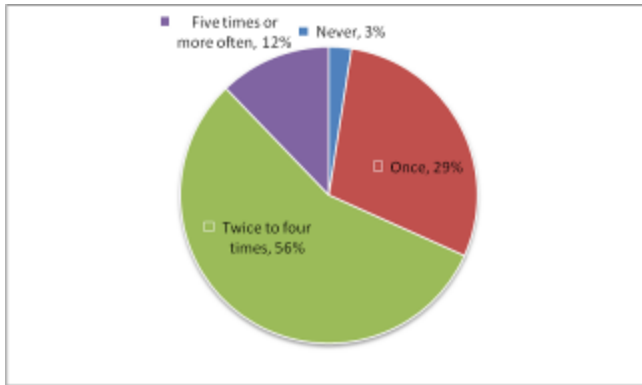
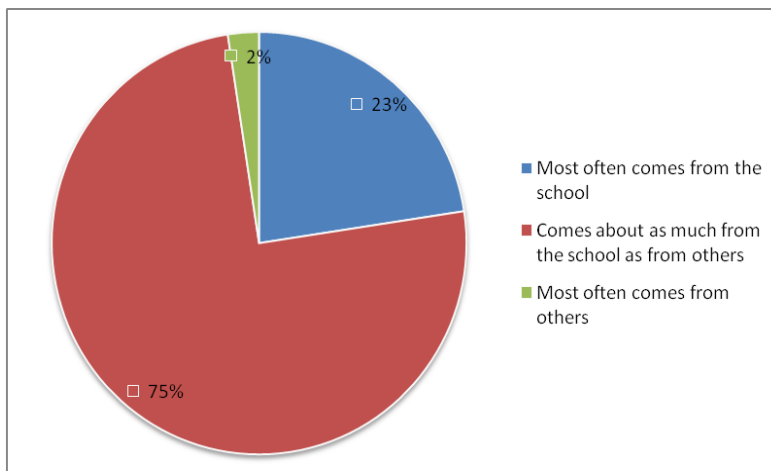


Figure 3.2.4 Source of the initiative for cooperation



The major nationally supported arts and cultural institutions tended to have programmes of outreach to children. But these were generally supply (rather than demand) driven. These were generally (with the a few noteworthy exceptions) under resourced and not adequately extending their influence beyond the capital city. Similarly, only two of the organisations that participated in the focus group had young people as part of their board or as a consultative group responsible for planning programmes for young people.

Passionate individuals have actively promoted partnership work in some instances as the following example shows:

Vigdís Jakobsdóttir manages the education department of the National Theatre. The education department of the Theatre was my idea – started 2002. The idea is to link the Theatre in an actual way to teachers and schools. The cultural fund of Glitnir [one of the three large Icelandic banks that now has collapsed] gave 10 millions ISK to start the education dept. which was enough to pay my salary and to put up the web site which is much used by teachers. We prepare brochure and materials for teachers. For the last three years we have toured upper secondary schools around the country. We had a three year support contract with Vodafone; we're two years into the contract and unsure about renewal. On these tours we travel together in a truck and stage the play in school buildings (preferably) but sometimes in the local hall. Ideally we make room for the students to engage in discussions with the actors. Sometimes the parents can come too. This is a challenge and great fun. Every second year all schools should get our visit – the schools in Reykjavík more frequently. For this we have one million ISK annually, which is just about enough to pay for the tour. It is very important to do this for free [not to charge admission].

Schools expressed the opinion that the needs of education were not being “taken seriously” within cultural organisations, as the following quote suggests: “I don’t think they take education seriously. We need to build relationships between cultural providers and schools, not just 10 minute talks about the show.”

In the survey, dance schools reported that 100% of their partnership work had to be planned and implemented by them (meaning that other groups had little or no say in the development and applicability of programmes). Such results could also indicate that in an area such as dance the expertise within compulsory schools is low and they are 'happy' to let the cultural partner 'do' the organisation.

Many respondents from the educational and cultural sectors spoke about the need for more partnership working, as the following comments suggest:

Artists and teachers should work more closely in schools. Artists could work today to integrate the arts, to make the whole curriculum more creative.

I have seen wonders when you get artists and teachers working together.

Something like Creative Partnerships <in the UK> would be good here. The schools could take a lead on pulling artists in. Instead of schools just buying shows, you could really open up ideas. Open possibilities to work together.

I think we need greater connection between things. The local theatre should work with the school. We have a youth centre on site and that works really well. We have good cooperation. It is best if schools have a flexible structure.

The criticism was also made that there was a lack of interdisciplinary partnerships and that the various levels of education rarely collaborated, as the following comment from a university academic stresses:

There is a lack of political judgement. We do not clearly define cultural and we don't define creativity. There is considerable political pressure exerted by the various arts disciplines especially music and visual arts. If you look towards what happens in Finland, especially in the elementary school, there is an overriding view of the importance of culture and creativity in education. We need to establish a dialogue between the education and the arts sector. We have tried to make contacts, but this is not easy. We are doing better in theatre than the other areas. We need partnerships between higher education and schools; between the creative industries and higher education and schools; we need partnerships between the universities and the arts academies; we need partnerships between professional artists and teachers. We need more creative research and interdisciplinary projects. The tension between teaching students and arts students: There is a perception that if you do art education as opposed to an arts degree you are not going to be a real teacher nor are you going to be a real artist. School principals think the arts are nice but not necessary. School leaders need to have guidance in how to make the arts flourish. Arts teachers become isolated. They might be the only arts teacher in the school. The specialist teachers get pushed into a corner.

Conversely, where partnerships did occur between different disciplines the results described were very positive, as the following example shows; "We operate closely together across different departments of the arts. We are also closely linked to the professional and professional bodies. We work closely with the major cultural organisations. We conduct joint research projects."

Museums and cultural institutions (such as theatres, galleries, community spaces) in Iceland generally receive subsidies from the national and/or local and/or regional government. There is considerable expertise within these museums and they make a number of outreach programmes to both schools and the broader community. They rarely conduct teacher development activities or provide introduction and enrichment orientations for teachers. Similarly, there is the impression that the role of developing learning resources has actually decreased over recent years.

While the museums offer a number of services to assist arts and cultural education, these are largely under resourced and under utilized. From the perspective of the museum, often large education programmes are run by a small staff receiving only a fraction of the global budget of

the museum. Similarly, schools see the museum as being a very marginal resource within their general curriculum. Additionally, the museums should be viewed as existing in the context of the broader arts and cultural education resources, including other after schools provisions. The size of the museum sector means that they often share collections. National cultural institutions are required to cooperate with schools and have developed projects to try and reach out to children and schools:

The opera is a small company and does not have an education department. The Operastudio is a project where student instrumentalists and singers have a chance to participate in staging an opera and work with professionals. Periodically through the years an opera for children has been commissioned and staged in co-operation with a composer.

The National Gallery of Iceland has about 40.000 guests annually and 8.000 young people. The Gallery is required by law to serve the schools. We cooperate with schools on exhibitions – teachers might call us with a specific agenda (e.g. for specific age group); there are theme days too. We tend to have the same teachers come again and again. Visits are most common in 4-8 grades. We run a new education project related to each new exhibit.

The following two vignettes show the way arts organisations can work with schools to introduce the children to wider experiences in the arts.

#### *Vignette 3.2.5 Schools pull me in with clawed sticks*

Schools pull me in with clawed sticks (artist). Real artists should be in schools. Schools should be more open. Teacher education is quite boxed. The schools don't have qualified people... Tóney is offering schools projects in music. This is the future and schools are opening up for this. We can serve 4-5 schools in this manner. People were suspicious at first but now the co-operation is good. This is how film photography, etc. should be taught. That is way it is so important that artists be active in the educational system. Introduce to the kids, open doors, and then it's up to them to take things up and do something with them. We [Tóney] are teaching in Fella neighbourhood [a less well off neighbourhood in Reykjavik], and also in Grafarholt [a newly developed neighbourhood]. Both of these areas will experience tough times in the coming months [referring to the economic situation]. Our aim should be to create with the children, to make their minds occupied; make the school attractive to them, a nice place to be.

#### *Vignette 3.2.6 Maximus Musicus is an example of a recent successful project*

The Iceland Symphony Orchestra plays five concerts annually especially for children and three aimed at young people. About 10-15% of the workload goes towards young people. Most of the musicians are teachers, so to work with young people is natural to them. Maximus Musicus<sup>17</sup> is an example of a recent successful project. In a popular quiz competition among secondary school students, they usually do poorly on questions concerning the arts. I'm frightened that education will suffer in the worsening economic climate. The Orchestra would like to do more collaboration especially with the music schools. We do a number of projects organized through Music for All where four musicians work with the kids for one week – composing. It would be great for the Orchestra to work more with schools. Iceland needs a youth orchestra. In Venezuela there is an incredibly successful programme where young people practice classical music. The project has created an amazing new culture. Children from outside of Reykjavik have to pay for the children's' program – as Reykjavik supports the Symphony Orchestra financially.

The “Music for All” programme (described in vignette 3.2.6) has successfully bridged the gap between the educational and creative workforce by bringing professional musicians and performances to schools and villages around Iceland. On average, schools would have 1-2 visits per year. While these encounters tended to be ‘one-off’ experiences where a performance or other arts group will come into the school for a single performance, they were widely remembered by children and commended by parents and teachers. At other times, local amateur theatre groups may visit a local community centre and perform a very short season (between 1 day and 5 days) in that venue, and local pupils would be brought to see the play by their school teachers. Once again, smaller more isolated communities tended to have stronger links with teachers and pupils likely to have direct connections with the local amateur groups. These encounters between professional artists and schools seemed to be well-received by the schools:

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.maximusmusicus.com>

The school is participating in the Musical Partnership (músíkalskt par), an ongoing venture which the City of Reykjavik established last year – two teachers come twice a week from the Reykjavik School Brass Band and teach about 20 students.

A famous writer visited the 2nd grade students and taught them to compose poems. The Principal proudly showed us a book that compiled the results.

Film and photography seemed to be one area of the curriculum where there was clear evidence of a closer link to the profession. In some instances, textile and fashion courses were also well linked to the relevant industry expertise. Connections with other art forms or the broader creative industries were rare. The following vignette gives the example of a private arts school that works across different levels of education and where there is a clear set of local and international partners:

*Vignette 3.2.7 We generate ideas for the community*

Children's courses started here 35 years ago. We also offer courses for adults. We run a course like a Foundation course. It is one year of full-time study. It introduces all the basics: colour, form, art history and drawing. It prepares the students for applying to the arts academy. The average age of pupils in that course is 27.5 years. We also have a special department where pupils can study for a 3-year diploma. This is available in fine arts, and graphic design. There are only two schools in Iceland where you can get this certificate – here and in Reykjavik.

We have had a close relationship with the teachers college, and they can study aesthetics or art history. We exchange both teachers and pupils under the Erasmus programme. In terms of children's classes, we run a general art programme for 6-11 year olds and a more advanced programme for 12 to 16 year olds. We also have a 16+ programme. Pupils can use their 10,000 ISK local government voucher, but the rest of the money comes from parents. It costs around 24,000 ISK per term and there are 3 terms.

We offer a range of courses. And it is great sometimes the children come in the day to painting courses and their parents come to painting courses in the evening. We have a scheduled programme of visiting tutors. At the moment we have someone from the Royal College of Art in London. They come for four weeks and we provide a guest studio. One of our design students won European student of the Year. Another won a gold medal in 2008 for product design. There is a lot of demand for young people to get into the school. We have a waiting list.

We have 2-3 themed exhibitions per year. We encourage the students to be active in curating the show. We also run a once-a-year visit to Reykjavik, where the students visit galleries and studios, advertising offices, theatres and museums. All the staff and the older students go. We always include a cultural night. We take the bus and the people pay themselves. Parents are very supportive too. They volunteer to do a lot. There is a real community atmosphere. We offer a Friday morning open studio drop in for local artists. Tuesday night we also host a group that discusses politics.

I would describe the arts institute as being little and flexible. We generate ideas for the community, and in our current times we REALLY need ideas.

It would appear that the professional teaching and artist associations in Iceland are strong and vibrant and could provide a ready access point for schools to work more closely with professional groups. Interestingly, some of the most successful links occurred in the countryside, where the smallness of the town or village meant that arts and industry professionals were often participating very broadly across the community (including the schools) and so provided more embedded professional connections.

To encourage more successful models for partnerships, an artists' focus group suggested that closer relationships between the schools and the cultural institutions was vital.

Several of the more remote schools visits commented that the situation for working with cultural institutions had become worse in recent years. For example, a number of schools commented that the national arts gallery no longer sent slides and prints to schools and that there were less visits and less availability of resources from these centres:

We talk about art. I wish we could get coloured prints from the gallery as we only have black and white photocopies. I tried to do colour copies on overhead transparencies, but they are not very good. The national Gallery used to have a service where you could borrow slides, but this service does not exist anymore.

Comments from the art though also suggest that demand for such services may be low, as the following quote argues:

The Reykjavik Art Museum is in three locations. There are about 10-12 thousand guests annually and roughly 80% of these are under the age of 25. About 80% of the work in education department revolves around young people. The Art Museum, in cooperation with the Education department of the City of Reykjavik, have recently started a "roaming" exhibit – a box that can be opened up, containing art works from the Museum, which travels between schools. Are teachers excited? Some are interested – however, I've seen teachers go and have coffee during class visitation. There is a big gap between what it says should be happening in the curriculum and practice.

At times a lack of consideration of practical processes was blamed for not encouraging more partnership. For example, the national orchestra did not have weekend concerts and this made it impossible for more isolated communities to take advantage of bringing children to performances.

Almost all the school principals interviewed felt that the situation of partnership working was likely to get worse as a result of the financial crisis. It was considered that the additional cost of bringing performers into the school or taking children to performances would mean that these activities would cease. There was evidence that this was already occurring with many schools reporting that visits and excursions had been stopped as parents, the schools and the community could no longer afford these.

There are very few examples of industry partnership in education in Iceland. Discussions regarding industry support of a specialist arts secondary school were underway at the commencement of this research. But this proposal was not seen as being appropriate for the situation in Iceland.

By contrast, some local organisations have managed to build highly successful partnerships by working very closely with schools and after school youth centres. These tended to be responsive organisations working very flexibly to meet the needs and interests of their communities. The strength of local support is apparent in the following vignette:

*Vignette 3.2.8 The local arts scene is very active*

The local arts scene is very active. It was argued that the small and close knit community supported the expansion of 'ground up' arts initiatives. Travelling around the country, these are evident, with most members of the art community working in a range of paid and unpaid roles throughout the local community.

For example, a single performer ran the local amateur theatre, conducted a men's choir and a choir of elderly people and ran a local choir festival – as well as teaching the arts in schools. This sort of level of activity was not uncommon.

Such local events were very well supported with on average 3,000-4,000 people attending but from Iceland and international visitors. Funding for such initiatives tend to come from a number of sources, including local and municipal government; local business; and individuals.

These festivals probably generate significant value added economic wealth to a community through volunteer contributions and visitor and attendance figures. This is only conjecture though, as few of these local events gather robust figures on full economic costing, the value of in-kind support and/or visitor data.

There is an urgent need to ensure funding is provided to more fully measure, record and communicate the key learning and figures from such events and local initiatives. This would appear to be a very timely recommendation as these local activities seem to be growing both in terms of frequency of events and number of attendees at events. For example, one regional music festival reported 300 visitors in the first year in 2000 and now has more than 5000

visitors. The diverse and 'quirky' nature of many of these festivals would also suggest that if properly marketed – they would have strong international appeal and could attract significant visitor numbers.



### 3.3 Opportunities for public performance, exhibition and/or presentation

- **It is important that projects and learning lines culminate in a high quality presentation of the learning process**
- **Process and product should be clearly linked**
- **Celebratory events such as performances, exhibitions and presentations act as a powerful driver of quality enhancement and also can be an influential advocacy tool**
- **While Icelandic pupils are skilled and confident in the processes of the arts, they are less confident and skilled in the presentation, description and critique of their arts making.**
- **Lack of presentational skills could make Icelandic creative and cultural outputs less competitive in current and future global markets.**
- **Greater emphasis on the importance of presentational and performance competencies needs to be given in curriculum at all levels (including with teacher education and professional development)**

Engagement in active arts creation and performance engenders particular learning and achievement embedded within active practice. The positive benefits of performance and exhibition were evident in quality arts programmes. Exhibition and performance brings kudos to the participants and promotes the benefits of the arts to a wider audience.

By contrast, in many schools and colleges visited there was wonderful practice going on behind the closed doors of classrooms, but this was not evident through displays or other presentations of work. Generally there was a lack of attention given to the value of pupils being able to present their work in a high quality and professional manner. While in the pre-primary school and primary years, this process may be led – or ideally mediated – by the teacher, in later years, pupils need to be explicitly taught how to present their work in all forms, including oral presentation.

While a number of schools had performances to coincide with festivals, it is important that projects and learning lines culminate in a high quality presentation of the learning process. In some schools this was evident.

In the performing arts, several schools visited had regular opportunities for pupils to perform in a professional or community environment. Performance and exhibition as part of a high quality arts programme build a child's confidence, dedication and commitment to the arts and are – for most pupils – memorable highlights of their school life.



It is important also, that following performances and exhibitions, pupils are given the opportunity to reflect, articulate and evaluate their learning and propose future projects. This process is significant and it cannot be assumed that pupils will do this without a process of careful facilitation. The learning that occurs within the arts must be made explicit to children and derived from their first-hand experiences so that pupils have a concrete way to connect learning. The following vignette (3.3.1) describes a performance opportunity in a compulsory school that regularly encourages its pupils to perform.

*Vignette 3.3.1 The children are aware of audience protocols*

The hall is in the centre of the school. At least once a week, a class has to perform and invite their 'buddy class' as an audience. The class I am watching is a grade 7. The children have organised the concert. Some children are signing and other dancing. There is no school band, but there are several choirs and singing groups. Despite the impromptu nature of the concert, there is a backdrop and the hall has the feel of being a performance space. There are an excellent range of good quality instruments available.

The quality of the singing is very good, and the projected words encourage all the audience to join in as well. The singing is loud and confident. The other teachers in the group are not joining in. The children are aware of audience protocols and behave well during the performances. A child compares the show. Another teacher is videoing the show. They usually document their concerts. The concert progresses and the children in the audience spontaneously join in clapping the African rhythms. The performance ends. The performers bow and the audience of younger children clap enthusiastically.

A smaller group of girls performs a contemporary song in English accompanied by the music teacher on piano. The girls have good microphone technique and have practised during their lunch breaks. The headmaster of the school watched on enthusiastically.

A group of dancing girls takes the stages. They are wearing costumes they have prepared. The confidence evident in the musical performances is not apparent in the dance performances.. Some girls are standing at the back of the dance group but not dancing. The girls look to each other rather than the audience. They had rehearsed and prepared.

The concert has many more girls than boys performing.

Figure 3.3.2 shows how often during the last school year pupils in the compulsory school perform before an audience, parents or the public.

Figure 3.3.2 Frequency of public performances in a year in compulsory school

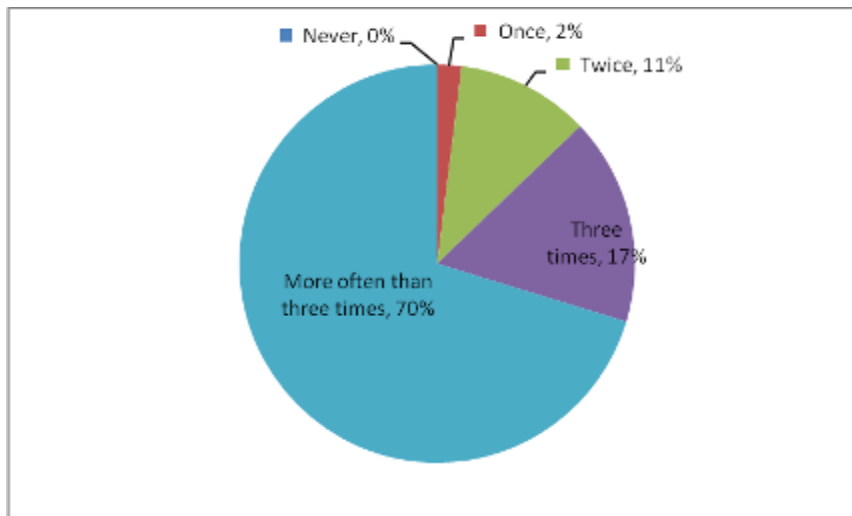
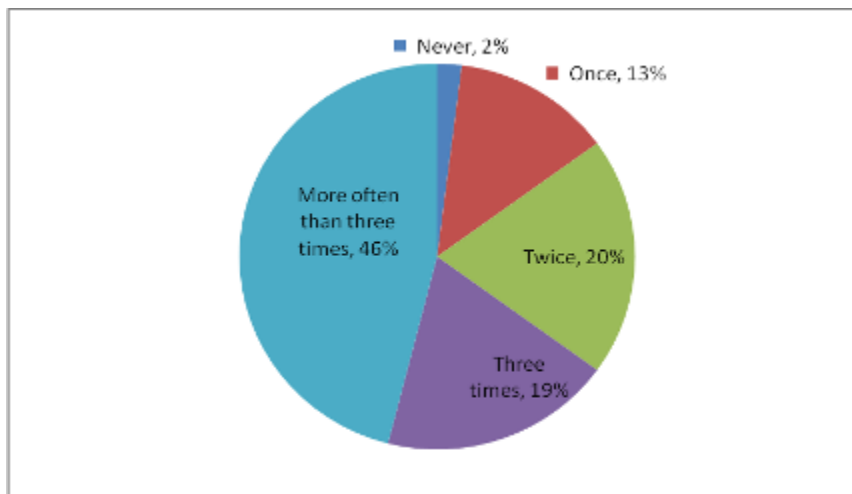


Figure 3.3.3 indicates how often during the last school year students' art works or art production was displayed for outsiders (compulsory school).

Figure 3.3.3 Frequency of exhibitions in a year in compulsory school



As would be expected, preschool children tend to perform less and exhibit their work less often, as can be seen in Figures 3.3.4 and 3.3.5.

Figure 3.3.4 Frequency of public performances in a year in preschool

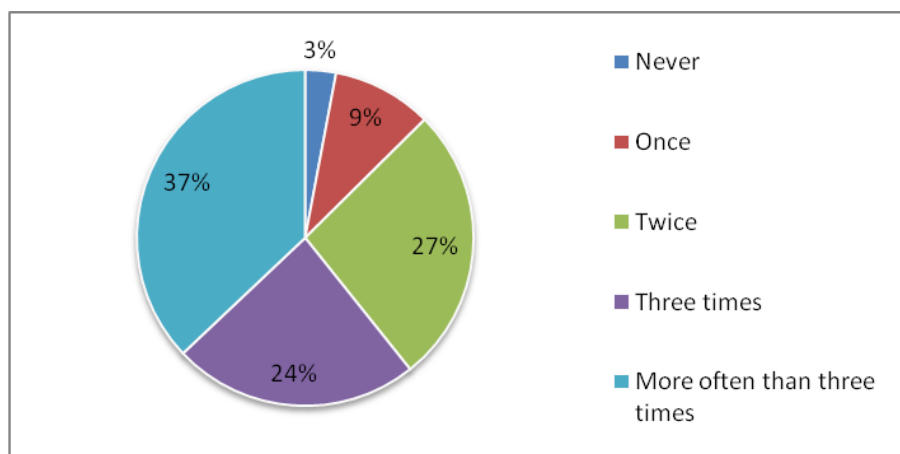
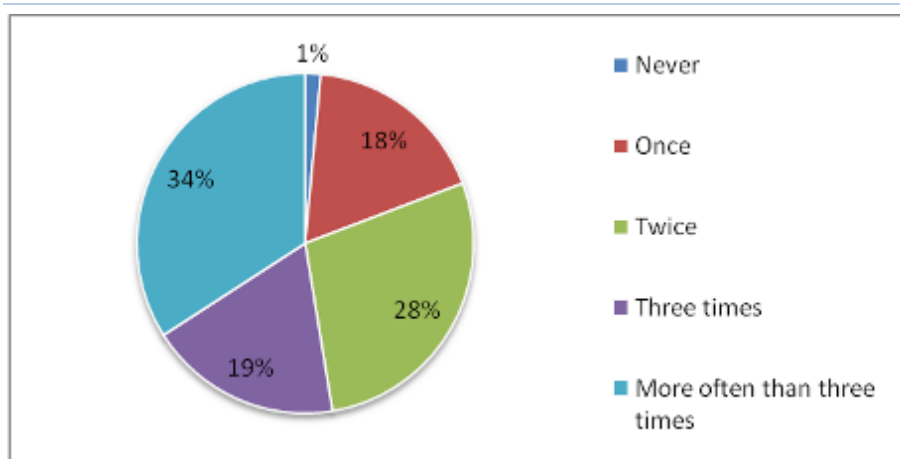


Figure 3.3.5 Frequency of exhibitions in a year in preschool



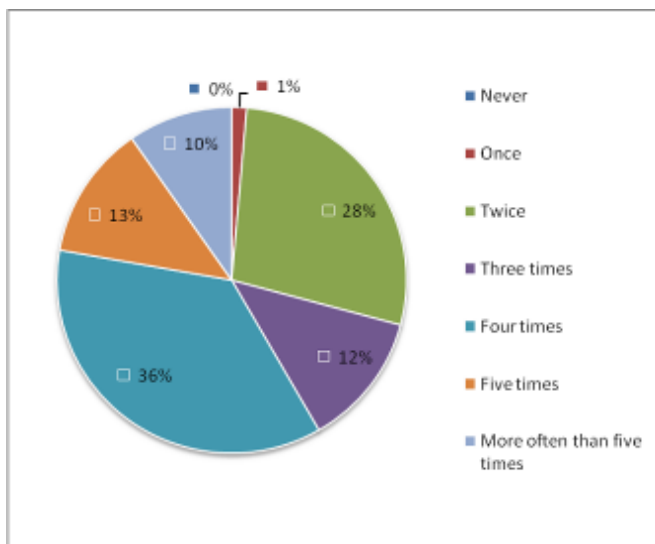
In the secondary and compulsory school, pupils may perform at festivals and other similar special events. For example, “There is an Annual Festival this Saturday – we’re preparing today. Parents will come and see their plays, etc.” In the music school, performance is more likely to be a routine and important aspect of the music programme. For example:

Each year we have 13 concerts. We have concerts every third week.

We hold ensemble performances every Thursday evening at 6pm. There is a blackboard in the teacher’s room that shows who will be performing. We sometimes go to the mall and play. We don’t take the children to concerts. There is talk that in the future we might be obliged to do that. There are enough concerts in the local area and people can go to those if they want.

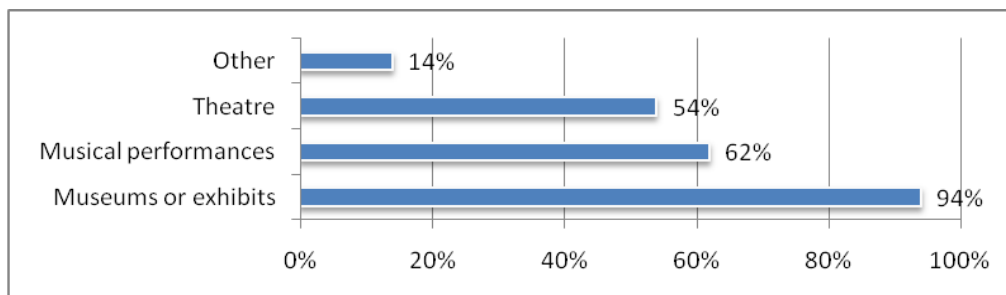
The increased frequency of performances in music schools is evident in Figure 3.3.6, where around 60% of children are performing more than four times per year.

Figure 3.3.6 Pupil performances in a school year in music schools



In addition to the pupils participating directly in performances and exhibitions of their learning, pupils can hone their performance and presentational skills through attending professional performances and exhibitions of others.

Figure 3.3.7 Places students in compulsory school visit



Opportunities to attend such events tended to be more readily available for pupils in the Reykjavik than in the more isolated locations. The exception to this seemed to be the Symphony Orchestra and Music for All programmes that ensured – through travelling performances – that children had the opportunity to attend a concert. Though these experiences may not have the same ‘feel’ as seeing a symphony playing in a major concert hall, they provide a valuable chance for pupils to be exposed to professional performance. This is exemplified in comments made by school principal in relation to these opportunities:

The musicians from the symphony orchestra came and played for all the children. The children were most interested in the classical pieces. It was the first time ever the children had heard a real orchestra live. They just don't usually get the opportunity. Two or three musicians came from the 'Music for All' programme.

Other people interviewed highlighted the structures that limit the possibility of taking children to performances. Timing of concerts and the cost were seen as major factors, as the following comments explain:

The orchestra does not have concerts on the weekend. That makes it really impossible for anyone who does not live in Reykjavik. It would be at least a 7 hour drive if we were to attend a concert. That is just not feasible on a week day. To compensate people in this area have to be very self sufficient. We have an active music society. We try to support touring musicians. We had a pianist from Italy and the teachers joined him and did a concert.

An orchestra comes into the school once per year, but they have not come for the last 2 years. We have been to Reykjavik to see things but not in recent years. It is just too expensive. I wanted to have theatre groups coming into the school but it costs 40,000 or 50,000 ISK. The parents are very supportive, but we can't be asking them for that sort of money at the moment.

Once an orchestra came to the school. They did two, 40 minute performances. It was free because the town paid. In previous years we have brought in plays too. But not recently. We try to take the children to the museum. Buses within the city are free as long as we go on visits to the museum. The teacher working at the gallery makes very good offers for children. We don't go to the theatre as it is too expensive. The theatre does a children's play but it is 1500 ISK per child. The older children might do recreational activities too such as paintballing, bowling, rafting, and cinema. But I think these things will not occur now. The school has had its budget cut. There has been a 2% cut across the board.

A few times a year there is a performance in the town about 30 minutes away. 'Music for All' comes once or twice a year and also there is a theatre performance. You have to pay. I worry now in the current situation because we really can't ask parents to pay. There should be more funding to small schools.

It is considered that the affordability of attending exhibitions and performances will become worse in the light of recent economic conditions. Consideration could be given to increasing the possibility of more touring performances and exhibitions to ensure pupils are exposed – at least a few times per year – to professional performances and exhibitions. Also, online and 'low tech' ways of ensuring children are able to experience professional quality work should be encouraged. For example, as the following comment shows, the National Gallery used to send slide packs<sup>18</sup> to remote schools and this service is no longer available.

I would really like to take the children to see art galleries and concerts. But from here <remote rural location> that is only a distant dream. We never go anywhere really. The gallery used to send slides, but that stopped several years ago I think.

Concurrently, only the minority of schools have high quality exhibitions of children's work visible ("We do not really have any exhibitions, only what we show in the corridor.") In many schools and colleges, though, work was either not display or presented haphazardly. The children were not acknowledged as artists. Work from several months or even several years ago were displayed.

It is important that the creative efforts of pupils are treated as artists being part of the broader spectrum of the discipline. In effective schools, there was clear evidence that children's art making and performance was positioned within a context of professional artists. So for example, their musical performances were rehearsed and treated as being meaningful, serious and of high quality. In best practice examples, a child's painting, jewellery making, textile work or woodcraft was carefully exhibited and treated with due respect. For example, children's paintings would be signed and dated by the pupil; be professionally mounted and framed; be attractively displayed around the room and be effectively labelled. Schools with arts-rich education regularly changed displays and there was a general feeling of liveliness and care in the

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<sup>18</sup> In a focus group in December 2008 a representative from the education department. of the Reykjavik Art Museum [www listasafnreykjavikur.is](http://www listasafnreykjavikur.is) told of a "travelling art exhibit" that could be transported between schools. This link shows a picture of this "exhibit" <http://ki.is/lisalib/getfile.aspx?itemid=5921> . Several phone calls were made regarding difficulties teachers expressed regarding accessing art works of public museums over the Internet. In short, the hurdle is copyrights - probably an international difficulty. The state (Ministry of Education and Culture), on behalf of Secondary Schools and Universities, is said to have been slow in coming to an agreement. The same is said of the Association of Icelandic Municipalities, on behalf of the compulsory schools. Work continues on this, but at the time of publication, very little progress had been made.

way the children's artworks were treated. In some best practice examples, children were encouraged to present their work and critique the work of others.



This is not to say that performance and exhibition should be at the expense of a careful and thorough creative process. At all levels of education, the creative process, risk-taking and experimentation are more important than achieving an attractive or 'saleable' end product. Furthermore, an over-reliance on producing a high quality end product may be detrimental to the children engaging in exploratory and risk-orientated processes. Despite these caveats, performance, exhibition and audience are important in the artistic process and bring kudos to the child and to the field.

At the further and higher education level the lack of attention given to marketing and presentational skills was particularly evident:

There is a lack of training in marketing of the arts and culture. The tourist office does a bit, but there is so much more that could be done. We have a heritage museum and art gallery, but the visitor traffic to these places is low. I think the school children go twice a year. The museum is free to schools and can be used so much more to integrate with other learning – like social studies. We used to have a gallery that sold works and had exhibitions.

Ironically, it was commented that several marketing courses had been 'dropped' from arts courses because they were not popular with students. As one creative industry professional commented, "Basic expressing and discussion is lacking in Icelandic schools – stand up and talk, express yourself! This is discouraged in Icelandic schools." This lack of marketing expertise is apparent in this example described by teachers of a specialist textile course:

We have been a textile department for 20 years. Before that we were part of the 'house wives' school". We have moved from a craft base to design based education in textiles. We get all types of pupils. It is still mainly girls though. We only get one or two males per year. We take in about 50 pupils per year. We cover dressmaking, fashion design, interior design, general design, textile (including weaving and knitting), history of design and contemporary design. There is an exhibition and show every semester. Pupils have to present a portfolio and at least one or two garments. They must document the whole process. We need more marketing expertise. We lack students who can take their work through to the higher levels. I would like to be able to take the students to London to show them how serious the industry is there, but we can no longer afford to do that. We encourage the students to go aboard to undertake fashion courses. The teachers here are active in the profession and in the professional associations. We used to run a business course for students in the graphic design course, but this was unpopular with the students so we have stopped offering it. Textiles are undervalued. You can live without maths or science or even art. But try living without clothes in a place like Iceland!

### 3.4 Development in specific art forms and creative approaches to learning

➤ **The arts and culture are vital languages for understanding the world**

- **Icelandic education is dedicated to building the skills and knowledge in the arts forms, especially visual arts, music, wood craft and textile and to a lesser extent dance, drama, photography and film making.**
- **Arts programmes in Iceland embed ideals of quality and this is evident in the fluency with which most Icelandic students are able to work within the languages of the arts.**
- **More focus needs to be given to developing creativity in schools through creative approaches to learning , including in the arts**

Learning the languages of the arts enables people to talk effectively about their arts experiences and express their feelings. The arts are a powerful form of communication. The development of language skills appeared to be central within the design and implementation of arts-rich education in Iceland. From an early age, the substantial commitment to arts lessons means that Icelandic children are fluent in the language of arts disciplines – such as the language of colour, movement, gesture and so on. Furthermore, the overall importance given to arts within Icelandic society means that, even if the pupils in later life do not wish to be active in expression through the arts, they possess ways to talk about arts and culture so they can participate actively in the cultural life of Iceland and beyond.

Language has an important function to perform in giving students the words to enable children to talk about their artwork, performance and the work of artists. Children will develop this vocabulary with interesting questions from the teacher or artist and by talking to each other about their arts experiences. Concurrently, both the ability to express oneself through artistic means and to be able to talk and write about artistic and cultural experiences, gives the child a greater range of ways to express feelings. In this way, the arts are a powerful form of communication. The building of the critical languages of the arts was less developed in pupils than both their generally excellent expressive (arts) languages and their languages of arts appreciation.

The arts provide a language that enables society to pass on cultural heritage to young people. Importantly, it also allows young people to create their own artistic language and to contribute to their global development (emotional and cognitive). In this way it equips young people with the capacity to develop the cultural heritage of the future.

The arts are symbolic communications that act as a cultural driving force accentuated the role of the arts in social action, social reconstruction and the role of culture in society. For this purpose alone, there is ample justification to foreground the need for systematic development of artistic languages. Effective arts education combines development in the specific languages of the arts with creative approaches to learning.

Despite the high level of discipline specific skills and knowledge within Icelandic pupils, the idea that the arts are a form of language and that ‘literacy’ in the arts is vital for contemporary and future society – especially in the light of the rapid changes in communication technologies – notions of visual literacy, aesthetic literacy, sound literacies and so on was not equally apparent in either policy or practice in Iceland. The area of integrated creative languages appears to be underdeveloped in debates and classroom practices in arts and cultural education and beyond in Iceland (see later section on integration). The need to develop broader ‘creative’ languages was seen by representatives of the creative industry sectors to be a vital and urgent role of education in Iceland, as these statements emphasise:

The focus needs to be on creativity, not just painting and putting it on the wall, but something to do with how children actually think; opening up all the areas of the arts. A lot of this has got to do with the director of the school. In Iceland we need individuals with a sense of creativity. We need these people to be strong for business and to be able to be creative. To become creative is an urgent issue; we need this. The school system is how it

has always been and it is 20 or 30 years behind. We need a system for the future. We have never had a government that has had vision.

The focus should be on creativity, to enable people to start up new things, new businesses... The school system is always old... creativity into all subjects, that will have to be a part of our revolution I'm afraid...

The final quote above – along with those that follow – show that while there is widespread acknowledgement of the vital role of creativity in economic reform in Iceland, this is not being fully developed through the schools system. A lack of creative teachers and school tradition are in part given the blame. Additionally, members of the creative professions emphasise that the arts themselves are not always creative.

Art and creativity is gaining importance – for the creative industries and the economy in general. Creative thinking is, and will be, high on the agenda. If we want good education we have to think of creativity. Local governments are responsible for the pre-primary schools, grammar schools, sports and music schools; this places hefty responsibility/difficulties on the communes. We need to focus on more diversity as to the different art forms offered.

I am afraid of skill versus creativity. What is creativity when you are seven years old? I get afraid when arts and school is mentioned, it is damaging when you talk about teaching arts.

More creativity doesn't need to be all so formal... more fusion... different art forms... Creativity is awakening in education, one sees this in the official policy here... We are doing a lot of this already... the problem has been that the professionals have not been willing to go into the schools...

The following vignette expresses the arguments for more integrated arts learning in Iceland:

*Vignette 3.4.1 People's view is very much awakening*

People's view is very much awakening. We are trying to emphasise creativity in all the planning of the school system. Then what has been the problem is the lack of professionals wanting to teach in the schools. There is a lack of the combination between the artists and the teachers working professionally side by side in the schools and I feel it more successful in smaller country schools where they have to cooperate. Society depends upon cooperation but schools do not operate in the same way. Students like coming in contact with creative subjects.

The advantage of the Icelandic system is that it is not hard to make a project. You can easily contact people and different organisations. There are good things about working in a smaller place. Visual arts are very young but it is having a bit of an explosion. We are getting fewer visitors to exhibitions than other places in the world; there are too few hours and it is getting less. They are changing it in the curriculum they are giving it less importance and less time is spent on it.

Arts should be seen to be on the top. It's the most important thing but sometimes I think it is also viewed to be too expensive. There is also this view that you can teach art just by talking, but there should be no excuse; money should not be an excuse.

You do not have to be educated in teacher training to do the arts. What would be good was if qualified artists and qualified teachers worked together. Last winter we have a collaborative exhibition with schools. It worked really well, it made a huge difference, especially if the school had arts education as part of it. We saw a big difference in the levels of the children's appreciation and also the quality of the art they produced. Society in Iceland is not being taught to appreciate the arts. We need to look at arts education, teaching art as a professional requirement in schools.

Schools do not tell enough about how importance the arts are. Most schools are based around the importance of Maths, Icelandic and English. Arts need to be very important and should be given more weight. We need more educated artists as teachers and more educated teachers as artists. You can teach a lot of subjects through the arts for example, I teach English through the arts. We are not saying just singing in a school but really deep cultural teaching.

We need more creative and cultural teaching. There is very little dance and drama in schools and they will not go outside the box. The only dance that is taught is about movement. It might be in drama or children might learn some old time dances in the sports club. There is nothing in public schools. There is nobody to come to the schools and teach these subjects. Social ability courses could be an example. People need to feel they can push themselves to be more forthcoming more confident more encouraged; this is lacking in Icelandic people. When parents see this develop

in their children they are very happy. One of the strengths of small towns in Iceland is the seasonal festivals. Everyone has to stand on a stage and there is strong tradition of this outside traditional education.

Some after school providers are also looking for more ways to introduce creative elements to their work, as these comments suggest:

We try to get the children to compose from when they are very young. We encourage them to be creative and to play by ear.

Children should be encouraged to open up. They need to realise they have the agency to be creative. It's all about working with wonder. We could think about education without schools – looking outside the classrooms as much as we look inside them.

There are examples where compulsory school reform and the building of new types of school buildings have led to highly creative curriculum structures. The following vignette shows a model of innovative school reform that is exemplifying the way creativity can be embedded throughout a compulsory school:

#### *Vignette 3.4.2 This is a school of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*

In a modern building, an artistically trained school principal leads 450 pupils and 70 teachers through a programme of innovation courses.

The school focuses on teaching innovation and teaching in an innovative way. The children learn through the design process, training the imagination, creative thinking and problem solving. Innovation is a core part of everyday.

The school does not have classrooms, but rather open spaces shared by groups of pupils and four teachers. The children work according to a theme that lasts up to a month or more. The school has a philosophy of teaching in and through the arts. All themes have a minimum requirement of 30% of the arts. They see the arts not just as content, but as a method of learning. Teachers work in groups to share the planning.

While the national curriculum is covered, themes form the mechanism for connecting content and learning. Assessment is conducted through performance-based appraisal. They use innovative assessment methods such as 'cheat tests', collaborative tests, and oral tests. There is an individual progress folder on each child and it covers learning both inside and outside the school. Evaluation is made of the whole theme.

The working strategies are directed towards meeting the needs of the individual. The teachers comment that they really like working in this school. They say that the job of teaching is improved by working in teams. They initially found the open plan of the building challenging, but now "can't imagine going back to teach in a classroom" The teachers claimed that the innovation training approach has led to them being better teachers. The open structure has provided an organised but flexible way to plan.

The school has a number of partnerships outside the schools and teachers and children try to go on a number of trips each year.

The school principal concludes, "This is a school of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The teachers wanted to make connections, now we have people from all over the world who come to see what we are doing at this school. We have a lot of international visitors."

"I'm fortunate with teachers and I look for creative teachers. We have to have creative students for the future and for the world, students who are not afraid of doing new thing with their head and their hands. Creativity is good for the morale of the school and it is important for the kids to be themselves and build personality.

### 3.5 Provision for critical reflection, problem solving and risk taking

- **Icelandic education supports research-based learning and promotes risk taking through open approaches to curriculum and planning**
- **All projects should be encouraged to embed greater critical reflection by both pupils and teachers**
- **People responsible for delivering arts education and children should be trained in inquiry processes**

➤ **Funding should encourage risk taking and experimental approaches**

Flexible, research-orientated approaches, combined with project-based methods, encourage an educational climate where the teachers, artists and pupils engage in learning conversations and test their ideas. Inquiry-based approaches enable spontaneous situations to be incorporated to create interesting and meaningful art-based learning opportunities.

It appears that as a general principle, Icelandic education supports research and inquiry into education and culture. Pupils are encouraged from an early age to be responsible and independent. The strong inclusion of environmental learning, especially in the pre-primary school and compulsory school years means that Icelandic children are confident and mature. In secondary education pupils are actively encouraged and rewarded for taking initiative and pupil-generated activities in the arts are common place.

Young pupils are encouraged to work with 'real' tools and learning experiences. Pre-primary school education in Iceland is particularly strong in encouraging problem-based approaches and in linking learning to the environment and the community.

In the areas of wood and textile crafts, considerable use is made of projects. In good practice examples, these projects are supported by building within the pupils a depth of awareness of design processes, prototyping and risk taking. In other less high quality instances, the projects are overly teacher-directed and tend to emphasise skills development without adequately challenging the pupils to engage in higher order thinking and to strive for originality. Due to the shortage of qualified teachers in these areas of the curriculum, industry experienced practitioners may teach these subjects. In some instances this has led to highly innovative and advanced practices of direct relevance to the field. Professional and educational links are to be encouraged as a way to embed more creative based projects in the classroom.

Generally, throughout the country, the wood and textiles studios are very well equipped and could be opened up to provide workspaces to professionals. This in turn could expand the repertoire of projects available within the school, especially in smaller rural and regional schools.

While the technical and skills-based training within further and higher education (college level and above) within Iceland is on a very high standard, this is not matched by a higher level *research culture* in the arts. Many of the tertiary level institutions visited bemoaned the lack of resources to support research and the lack of individuals to lead the development of a practice-led research and inquiry culture in Iceland.

The importance of research was evidenced by the unanimous support given to this study and the researchers involved. This research was not only appreciated for the knowledge it might bring to the field of arts education, but moreover was appreciated for the opportunity provided by this research to share some of the issues surrounding arts education and to be more closely connected with international research dialogues around art and culture. Staff at all the tertiary institutions visited bemoaned the lack of research and praised the ways this research was allowing the on the ground voice to be amplified. They expressed concern that a lack of time and expertise prevented them from having more opportunity to get into the field, though there was widespread acknowledgement that there are lots of good interventions at the local level.

Despite a central commitment to research and inquiry based practices, many organisations do not have any funding to complete even the smallest reflective inquiry. To do research is not easy. Many organisations are modest, not-for-profit organisations. They do all the coordination

and the teaching. It is just not possible for them to do research as well. Many schools do activities but they do not consciously know the impact of their work. This seemed to be particularly the case in heritage education, where many schools and children were initiating interesting inquiries in this field, but were not explicitly aware of the nature of their work.

Allied to the lack of research, was the general lack of sharing of good practice action models from one place to the next. This seemed to be the result both of geographical separation and of a lack of resources (time and money) to encourage sharing. The lack of research was particularly evident in relation to a number of highly successful 'ground-up' initiatives.

For example, a festival within a local community may have been highly successful, innovative and ground-breaking, but there would be no evidence gathered, research undertaken, or reflections made to ensure that learning from such successful experiences could be transferred to future events, or similar events in other locations. For example, the research team approached a cultural officer in the town where they host one of Iceland's main cultural festivals and asked him if the economic impact of culture or the cultural festival had been studied. He said that there had been talk of doing this but nothing had yet been done. There is a lack of impact research conducted around these local initiatives. No one knows how much additional income is generated, what the value is to the community. It is very difficult to get national media coverage. Publicity is done online, but there is a lack of joined up thinking. Concurrently, practitioners working in the tertiary sector were more likely to take their expertise abroad, that to other parts of Iceland.

Teachers were also keen to undertake further research study into their work, in the form of action research, but with the exception of a relatively small sabbatical programme, there were limited opportunities for research-based study in the arts (especially part-time offers that could be undertaken concurrently with their jobs as teachers and cultural workers). Those working with further and higher education are aware of the need to build a more vibrant research milieu in the arts, design and cultural fields in Iceland and plans are underway to enhance the offerings in these fields.

Quality arts programmes encourage people to take risks and allow them to make mistakes. 'Letting go' of control and being confident to make mistakes is an important part of the creative process. Uncertainty surrounds quality arts practice and this is to be encouraged.

Within Iceland there were good practice examples of projects that encouraged exploration and challenged pupils, teachers and artists to go beyond their perceived scope and ability. These were particularly evident in more remote communities where innovation and community inventiveness had led to particularly interesting practices in the arts.

Ironically, many of the more established cultural institutions – including some music schools – tended to favour highly traditional approaches to arts education. In these instances, the programmes promoted ongoing practices and traditions rather than innovation and risk taking. In some cases, the reinforcement of tradition was enshrined in their institutional culture. For example, in one music school there was a clear mandate to work in a traditional manner in private lessons and to follow time-honoured practices. This had led to a number of teenagers establishing alternative pathways in music, and as the schools openly stated, "If they don't like the way we do things here, there are other (private) music schools where pupils can do more experimental work." Primarily, the more traditional sectors receive the majority of funding and the discussion should be begun in Iceland as to the relative methods of more traditional approaches or more innovative practices. In particular, it could be argued that the after school

music sector could be less constrained by curriculum and timetables, have more expertise and smaller class sizes and so may be better resourced to engage in more cutting edge practice and risk taking. But the observations conducted in this research would suggest that in the majority of case the opposite is true.

Risk taking seemed to be most prevalent in the small, voluntary and independent arts and cultural sector. Major cultural agencies reported that in the last year they had become less 'risky' as they were increasingly having to fully economic cost their offerings so 'safe' options were seen to be better than more experimental work that may not produce a cash surplus.

### 3.6 Flexible organizational structures and permeable boundaries

- **Schools and cultural institutions have developed innovative ways to encourage more permeable boundaries around their organisations and more flexibility within the organisation**
- **Music Schools should consider becoming more flexible in response to societal and economic changes**

In general it was acknowledged that the arts provided a valuable opportunity for pupils to go beyond their direct environment and to be more creative and to expand their horizons. In a number of examples visited, the presence of greater involvement of parents and the community had meant that the school had taken on a fuller life within the town and was being recognised for its innovative practice.

Conversely, in the after school provisions the general aim appeared to be to make the pupils skilled in the status quo and so did not provide opportunities for creative expression or risk taking. It could be argued, though, that specialist settings did encourage pupils to progress beyond the perceived scope of their personal skills or talents. This was certainly true in some instances, but also as there was a very high drop out rate in these settings, it appeared that many pupils left just at the point where their personal art making might be stretched, extended or challenged. This was particularly the case in music, where the enforcement of music theory or the lack of skilled teachers led to high drop out rates in early adolescence.

Quality arts programmes flourish in situations where there is scope for organizational flexibility. In several schools visited there was a strong sense of connectivity. This was used as a strategy to enhance learning and to achieve multiple aims through the same input. In a general sense, Icelandic schools are very open. As members of a research team it was relatively easy to gain access to schools and we were greeted with genuine warmth and given access to teachers and classrooms. Similarly, parents are generally very welcome, though mainly as audience members during special performances. Children are given considerable respect and freedom and the children appear responsible and confident.

While internationally schools historically are not known for their flexibility and adaptability, it has to be said that the same criticism could be levelled at galleries, museums and cultural institutions. As the tradition of many of these is from an elitist history and a position of privilege within society, it is not surprising that people working to make these intuitions more flexible face a challenge.

This criticism was particularly levelled at music schools. These music schools have a long and illustrious history in Iceland and are highly valued by all levels of society. Yet such history has been generally built on tradition more than adaptability. As society and education changes, the challenge is for the music school sector to respond to these changes in a reflective way. There

are some notable 'best practice' models of effective working of music schools within education. In these instances, the music schools have been proactive at working with the schools, community and children and have as a result developed a core role within education and the community. A particular aspect of this permeability is the manner in which Music Schools can accommodate the access to lessons for children with special needs. This idea is pursued in more detail in the next section.

### 3.7 Accessibility for all

- **Accessibility for all is a highly prized belief in Icelandic education and arts education in preschools, compulsory schools and secondary schools are overwhelming available to all and strive to meet the needs of individual children**
- **Cultural institutions should continue to make their work more broadly accessible, especially to communities located some distance from the institutions**
- **After school arts provisions espouse accessible practices, but in reality there are very few examples of music or other arts schools that make a concerted effort to be inclusive for special needs pupils**

Arts and cultural education is compulsory in all compulsory schools under the arts education curriculum. In most instances, the children receive well over 2 hours per week with the common picture being that a child has around 1/5 or more of the school experience in the arts. In preschools this figure can be even higher. By the time the pupil reaches around 14-15 years old, it is likely that the required arts education will decrease, but be adequately replaced by a number of popular, arts-related electives.

Icelandic teenagers tend to personally choose to participate in arts activities and most schools visited had active 'clubs' pursuing arts related activities such as talent quests, choirs, musical performances, bands, theatre, dances, festivals and art. These additional activities were youth led and this had resulted in a high level of skills in entrepreneurship and arts marketing to occur as a side effect of these out of school activities. To encourage this youth generated activity, a number of upper secondary schools offered course credits for participation in extra curricula arts activities.



Quality programmes are built around inclusivity. All people should receive high standard arts provisions across the various art forms – using a range of creative and artistic approaches. This is particularly important in relation to initiatives that aim for greater inclusion of a variety of marginalized groups. In principle, Icelandic education is very accessible to all. In particular, there is a long history of making arts and cultural education as affordable and accessible as possible. Children with special needs and from different cultural backgrounds are integrated into compulsory schools and during curriculum time, they receive equitable arts provisions.

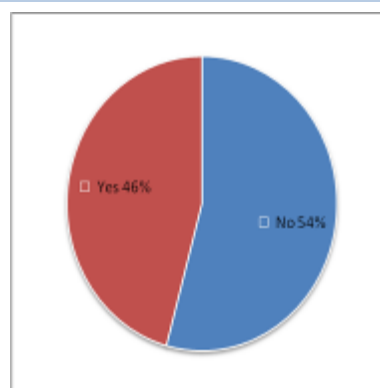
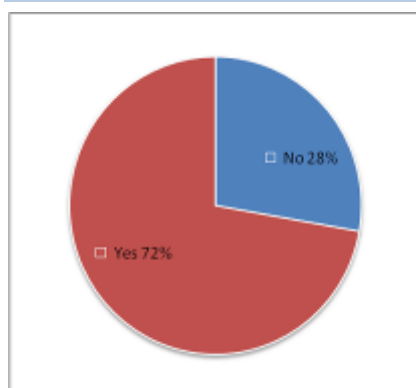


Conversely, the accessibility of out-of-school provisions is far less equitable. Children from other countries seem to be less likely to attend music school, as this comment suggests: “Polish people come to work. They did not send their children to music school. So we reached out to that community. We employed a Polish teacher. A Polish priest runs a Polish dance group. We work through the Polish Associations. The immigrants still though have a lower percent of participation in the music school.” This comment also shows the way local community groups may fill gaps to include people from a range of backgrounds. The church, community centres and the Red Cross appear to be especially active in this regard.

Similarly, very few music schools have the capability to offer programmes for pupils with special learning needs: “Does the music school have children with disabilities? No, but we would very much like to, rarely a request from parents regarding this.” There appears to be limited specific training in arts education for special needs children. For example, figures 3.7.1a and 3.7.1b show that while 72% of music schools are willing to accept pupils with special needs, only 46% of that group have any special arrangements for these pupils. In practice, there appeared to be very few music schools where pupils with special needs received bespoke programmes or were fully catered for.

*Figure 3.7.1a Accepting pupils with special needs*

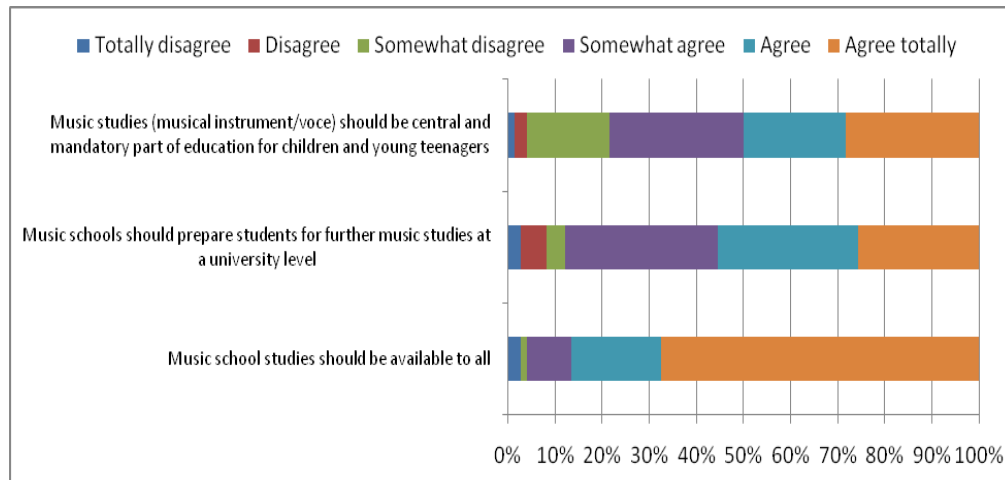
*Figure 3.7.1b Catering for pupils with special needs*



While there appears to be a high value placed on programmes in music schools being available to all, the delivery of this aspiration may need further support, especially in training

music specialists able to work with pupils from various special needs groups and from diverse backgrounds. Figure 3.7.2 shows that 86% agree or totally agree that music schools should be available to all, but as can be seen from Figures 3.7.1a and b, only 72% accept pupils with special needs and of these only 46% can provide an offer to these pupils.

### 3.7.2 Accessibility of music schools



Despite this gap between aspiration and practice (“I don’t think art is used with disabled people”), a small number of settings have shown a real commitment to ensuring that children with special needs receive adequate arts and cultural education, as the following vignettes indicate. The first (vignette 3.7.3) is where a whole community is dedicated to inclusive practice. The second vignette (3.7.4) shows a best practice music school that caters exclusively for pupils with high level special needs.

#### Vignette 3.7.3 People are very supportive

We are a village of about 100 people. Of this group about 43 have special needs. But the system is like reverse integration, we have to adjust to their needs, not the other way around. The village runs along Rudolf Steiner principles. We don’t stick rigidly to these, but take from this philosophy the things that work. Most of the adults have mental handicaps. They live in dormitories or independent housing. We have a strong culture of theatre. Handicapped and able bodied actors work side by side. We hold a major cultural feast and this attracts many visitors. It is held in the summer and includes local and international cultural acts. We also hold Christmas event. People are very supportive and we are very much dependent on the good will of politicians. We also run workshops and they generate income. Within the village, we have our own private economy. The community was started by a woman who was an idealist. The residents come from all over Iceland. We grow organic food and tend the forest. It is quite self sustainable. There are shops – a coffee house; a hotel and conference centre. We have a special church and an environmental centre.



*Vignette 3.7.4 Every day there are miniature miracles*

In what is really only one room, with a small office and waiting area at one end, is the only Icelandic music school the specialises in providing music for children and young people with special needs. There are only two and a half teachers' positions and they work long days (8:30am-5:30pm) teaching music to all the pupils in the school. They teach around 73 pupils and parents pay in the order of 7,000 to 12,000 ISK per month.

The children suffer from a range of emotional, mental and physical disabilities. Some children's health is so precarious that their parents only pay one month at a time. As the only music school of its type in the country, there is a long waiting list (more than 50 pupils are on the waiting list at the moment).

The school was founded in 1987 by a piano teacher who had studied music therapy in the USA. She feels fortunate as she has been able to "shape the music school and has had the freedom to develop ideas." Around 1/3 of the pupils are over 16 and there are some 3 and 4 year olds. The majority of pupils though are school children between the ages of 4-16. In addition to private lessons (usually 30-60minutes in duration); the school offers a bell choir. Unlike other music schools, this music school does not experience a drop off in numbers as pupils reach teenage years, in fact most pupils like to stay in music school "forever".

They teach a range of music forms including singing, piano, percussion and organ. One talented student now has a job playing the organ in the church. The bell choir performs at various public and private occasions. There are Christmas and spring concerts. The teacher comments, "These are beautiful concerts. The pupils love being real musicians"

The school runs five days a week.

"We are developing a programme called Music Caring". It is a special way of working through "*musicing*". Mothers bring their very young children with disabilities. The mothers are full of sorrow and needs. It is a lived experience, and I feel music caring could provide a framework for early intervention." "We work with the individual not the label. We take the lead from the child. The music programme is defined by participants. We understand what it is to care. Every day there are miniature miracles and moving stories. A parent will say, "She was so calm" or "She always knows when it is Tuesday". It is amazing, there seems to be no blockages when it comes to music."

The arts have also been effectively used to provide restorative care for young people who could be described as being 'at risk'. Smaller schools accepting these pupils commented that the arts made them "fit in quickly" and soon adapt to their new environment.

The best thing that can happen is to put special needs children into the arts. I could show you problem children that really shine in the arts. They need to be given the opportunity to study arts. But it is difficult to get money to do this.

The best students are the difficult children. The best thing for them to do is art. Give them more opportunity to do arts.

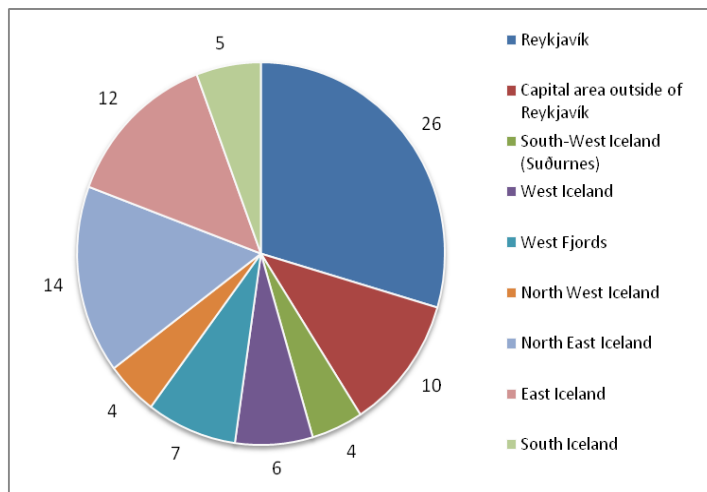
All the cultural agencies participating in a focus group had some special disability programmes. The Symphony invites handicapped people to a concert rehearsal twice a year. Hitthúsið – in cooperation with *Art Without Borders* – runs an art festival of handicapped people. The National Museum of Iceland provides educational programmes which are coordinated with the curricula of the students. All classes come to the Museum every other year. Admission for children is free. About 13.000 children come to the Museum annually. The situation has improved over the years and now students are coming much more frequently. The Museum has organized programmes for students from pre-primary school through high school. The Museum has to serve all of Iceland as they explain: "We have programmes and projects on the internet, free of charge for children and teachers. We're beginning to focus on children with special needs; for example, a touch collection where blind children can come and touch object." The Museum also has programmes for youth centres, especially during summer. The National Theatre outlined their programmes; "We want to do a co-op with the deaf community; we've already done some – done introduction a couple of times before the plays which was sufficient for them to understand the play. We also want to do a project with people who don't have Icelandic as their native language."

While Iceland is not a large country, it is very difficult to travel easily from one area to the next. Arts and cultural provisions are heavily concentrated in the capital city – Reykjavik. Consequently, this means that questions of accessibility need to also consider geographical accessibility. As has been previously mentioned, this includes the ability of pupils to travel to cultural facilities and music and arts schools and the availability of outreach activities spread throughout different parts of Iceland.

Almost all the dance schools are located in Reykjavik and the surrounding area. There is only one dance school located outside Reykjavik and its immediate environment. This would mean that dance is not generally accessible for pupils outside the capital.

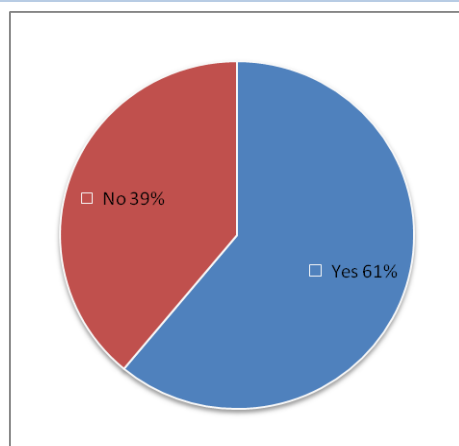
The situation for music schools (Figure 3.7.5) is much better with every area having at least some music schools.

Figure 3.7.5 Location of music schools



While music schools are spread throughout the country, more than half the schools reported having a waiting list, suggesting that the demand for places in music schools outstrips supply, meaning that music schools are not always accessible to all the pupils who may wish to attend.

Figure 3.7.6 Waiting list of students during the fall 2008 (music schools)



Despite the geographical challenges, there were a number of good practice examples where small and isolated schools and communities were engaging in innovative ways to ensure that the pupils in their areas received high quality arts and cultural education, as the following vignette from a small rural compulsory school suggests:

*Vignette 3.7.7 We are a small school*

We are a small school. There are altogether only 40 pupils.

We do singing three times a week to start the day. We are currently practicing songs for the traditional day on Friday. Every child learns a musical instrument – guitar, flute, and electric base, piano. We have a school band and the children compose songs and create soundscapes. Music teacher come to the school. It costs around 50,000 ISK per year.

All pupils get general music from pre-primary school to the 7th grade. This includes singing and listening, but it does not focus on teaching the children to read music. Some teachers travel to the school to teach instruments, like the accordion.

We have dancing classes from Pre-primary school to grade 5 and dance and drama for grades 6, 7 and 8. The older children completed an expressive dance piece about the Cold War. We combine percussion and dance. We pay for the dance teacher out of the school budget. The visual arts teacher is based here. She has a full-time job and is trained.

Each class does 80 minutes per week of visual arts. They also do 80 minutes per week of sewing and textile. She is also a specialist teacher. They are supposed to have 40 minutes per week, but we do 80 minutes a week for half a term. It is fantastic.. Art stops in the 8th grade, but we have a period once a week when the older children can choose and many of them choose woodwork or hair or make-up.

We have some children that have been placed here from other areas because they have had problems in their school. They come here and live with a family. At first I was worried, but it actually works well and they fit in and seem happy.

We celebrate lots of festivals and events throughout the year. Everybody does something, but a person with expertise will take control. We also participate in a student exchange programme with a small school on the Faroe Islands. The 9th and 10th grade raise money to go on an excursion to Reykjavik. We try to visit the gallery and take in a play. The older pupils organise a disco for the youngest pupils. They do everything – the music; the lighting, a shop and they even clean up!

### 3.8 Detailed assessment, reflection and evaluation strategies

- **All schools visited had formal procedures for assessing the arts**
- **In terms of assessment, the arts were treated in the same way as other subject areas**
- **Younger children tend to receive an assessment comment while older pupils are more inclined to receive marks and grades alongside a comment**
- **More teacher training and professional development could occur in innovative and creative assessment methods in the arts so that teachers can track pupils' learning and monitor the quality of programmes**

Formal and informal contemplative practices encourage people to view their work more critically and reflectively.

Reflection is not part of education either in policy or in practice. We need to be given the responsibility to take initiative and to be accountable. In theory, education in Iceland is a very open system, so people can just come in and have a go.

The arts teacher told us that she encouraged the children to talk about their art, what they thought was good and what not so good.

Assessment of the arts is a routine part of arts learning in Iceland. Younger children tend to get a comment based on their interest and enjoyment of the arts, while older children will get a

grade, mark and/or comment based on their artistic achievement. Learning portfolios and individual student records were common in quality art programmes.



In other instances, reflective processes were less formalised and would use conversations, images and actions to instigate and maintain the reflective processes, as these quotes show:

All areas of the arts are assessed. Older pupils get a grade but younger pupils just get a comment. We keep personal records for all students

All children get a report for the arts. The oldest classes get a mark and the younger classes get a comment. We tend to try and give more positive comments to the younger pupils.

It's difficult to measure the arts. First to 4<sup>th</sup> grade get a comment but all other grades get a mark.

There are usually no tests given in arts, but in almost all cases, achievement in the arts subjects is reported on the report card to the parents. This generally takes the form of a comment, but of older children, it can also include grades (e.g. A, B, C) or a mark (numerical).

All the children are graded in the arts. The younger pupils get a comment and once the pupils get to grade 5 they get a mark. It is between 1-10. Assessment is a topic under discussion in every school at the moment. We have a teachers meeting about assessment. Six schools all joined together and someone from the University came but they really did not talk about assessing the arts.

Other people interviewed felt that while there were assessment processes in place, these lacked the evidence and detail to make informed judgements about a child's progress in the arts:

What is being done in the schools is to a large extent not visible on the grade card. That the child might have been a part of the youth board etc. This is bad because how are the secondary schools profiling the students? Extra curricular activities are not reported enough.

Criticism was also made of the lack of assessment guidelines in curriculum documents:

The national curriculum mandates an assessment but does not say how. Last year we had a meeting with associations of arts and crafts teachers; they thought that standardised tests might raise the standards. Most of them however were sceptical of testing visual arts.

The last of the quotes above refers to the importance of training teachers to adequately assess in the creative and arts areas. Teachers were not always confident in arts assessment, but this was acknowledged in teacher education where a number of methods were being taught to students, as the following examples demonstrate:

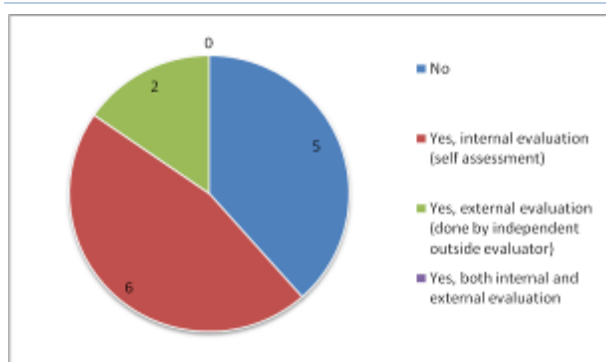
We introduce the teacher education students to many approaches to assessing in the arts. We notice there is a lack of confidence in drama. Most teachers don't have the confidence to teach drama. The common response is "I can't do it" or "I don't know how".

In music we encourage the student teachers to make learning sequences. They have to develop objectives inline with the syllabus. The national curriculum is quite broad. We ask them to design assessment related to the objectives. We try to teach them that you can assess without a pen and paper test.

In visual arts we mainly assess according to a pupils interest and progress. Teachers need to be taught more interesting and creative ways to assess and evaluate. There are new laws for assessment. Hopefully this will make assessment more meaningful.

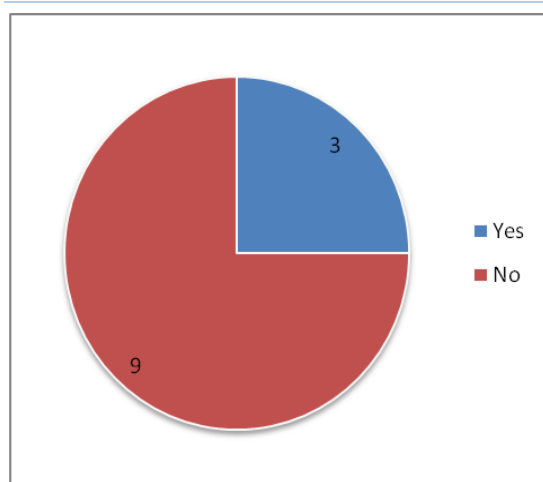
Generally in Iceland, school evaluation is an internal process. The process seems to be detailed and generally rigorous at all levels of schooling and in the afterschool music and arts schools. Parents and children are generally consulted. Interview and survey are the most common methods used in evaluation. Systemic improvements could be made with greater inclusion of peer evaluation (e.g. colleagues from other schools being part of the evaluation team) and by making summaries of the evaluation reports more publicly available.

Figure 3.8.1 Has the school been evaluated (Dance schools)?



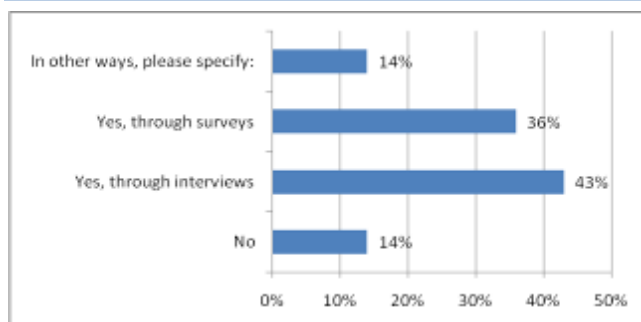
In response to the following question, “Is an official description of the school's internal evaluation publicly accessible?” the results for dance (figure 3.8.2) show that 75% is not available.

Figure 3.8.2 Evaluation data is generally not open to the public (Dance schools).



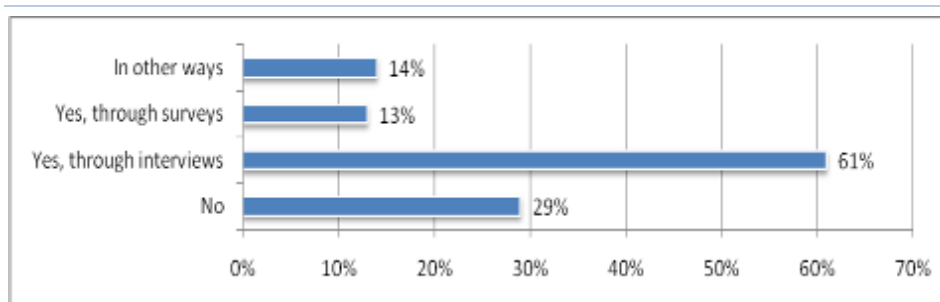
Generally, though parents do get the opportunity to be part of evaluation processes as Figure 3.8.3 shows for dance schools.

Figure 3.8.3 Do parents have the option to evaluate the school (Dance)



Similarly, parents in Music school were involved in the evaluation process, as can be seen in Figure 3.8.4.

Figure 3.8.4 Do parents and students have the option to evaluate the music school?



### 3.9 Ongoing professional development

- **Beyond the specialised teachers, teacher confidence and expertise to teach arts and creative education is low, particularly in the compulsory school**
- **Professional development opportunities can be expensive and short-term**
- **Postgraduate education is not generally accessible to teachers that are in full-time employment, except through 'sabbatical' provisions**
- **Online education has provided professional development for more isolated teachers (especially preschool teachers) but is not considered to be a successful model for arts education**
- **There are untrained teachers working in arts education**
- **More connections are needed between the various providers of professional development**
- **While the professional development of teachers is vital, the professional development of artists is also a key issue**
- **Teacher education and research expertise in arts education needs to be developed**
- **Professional development in the value of arts and cultural education is needed for school principals**

It was widely reported that there is a pattern of falling levels of confidence to teach the arts in Iceland and a lack of skill, experience and expertise. There appears to be reductions in teacher education in the arts and it is possible for a teacher to qualify without any training in arts and creative education. Similarly, specialist arts and music teachers may have expertise in their discipline field but very little if any education training or induction into how children learn and develop in the arts. In more isolated and difficult to staff areas there is a real shortage of qualified teachers especially in music and woodcraft. Internationally trained teachers fill many of the gaps. These international teachers tend to be of a high standard and appear to adapt effectively to the Icelandic system.

We try to do professional development. The municipality pays the salary of the teacher but not the fee for the course. 75% of our teachers are qualified. Only half of the music teachers are qualified. It is a problem for us as we are quite isolated and the university does not provide arts education online. In 1992 I did my training online. There were 100 teaching students all studying online that year. I don't think you can do your training online any more. You have to actually go, and that is really hard from here.

There is great strength generally in offering distance education, but it doesn't work well for the arts. We need blocks of practical time. <university academic>

Widely reported was the lack of the teacher's (or trainee teachers) own artistic and communication skills. Furthermore, it was argued that students leaving teacher education possess a lack of understanding of the creative or artistic process and an absence of awareness to the aims or benefits of artistic and creative education. There is also an absence of any notion of a theoretical underpinning or philosophical positions on the arts learning. While these perceptions are not always correct, there is a perceived need for more trained arts educators in the school system – "The need for professional education is very pressing. We dream that we might be able to prepare creative teachers. We need a sort of "open university" for the arts."

Listings of courses for the 2008-2009 school year (August - May/June) for pre-school teachers in the Hafnarfjörður municipality showed a total of 122 offers, of which only two had anything to do with the arts – a two hour lecture/discussion on music in pre-primary schools according to the official curricula, and an introduction and discussion on the teaching of the arts in pre-primary schools. Another point of interest is the number of courses (about 30) directed at pre-primary school staff that do not speak Icelandic – indicates high number of immigrants working in pre-primary schools. In the introduction, the booklet of offers points to other sources of professional development for teachers. It also mentions that teachers and staff can apply for financial support regarding professional development to their labour union.

Although somewhat limited, professional development programmes do exist in the arts and in a general sense, the professional development of teachers is well supported in Iceland. Upper secondary school teachers should use 80 hours of the summer break towards professional development. There are several funds they can access and they can apply for grants. There is also a ministerial fund that allows up to 30 teachers to have a one year sabbatical to undertake further study. In compulsory school, municipalities pay 1.72% of monthly salaries to a fund that individual teachers can apply to for their professional development. Through this system, there are many funds available. The municipal agreement states that compulsory school teachers should do 150 hours of continuous education every two years.

Early years' teachers have far less time for continuous education but tend to take courses in their own time. While in theory the options are available for teachers to decide, in many schools principals make the decision. The choice of courses is also dependent on what can be offered. Some schools subsidise the time for teachers to attend professional development while the general pattern is that the school pays for the subscription to the professional development but the individual teacher goes in 'their own time', either over the summer or Saturdays. It was also the general pattern that travel to professional development course was refunded by the school.

Teachers were generally quite critical of the standard of professional development. Professional development courses are isolated ½ or 1 day events and generally do not articulate into further learning pathways. Teachers complained that they were not always given the choice of courses to attend and that where a choice was given, there were very few options in the arts. Other criticisms included that the courses did not have a practical application or that the presenters were out of touch with the reality of the classroom situations. The courses also

seemed to vary considerably in cost with some excellent courses being available for free and other courses of lesser quality costing considerable amounts of money.

It is very difficult to make generalisations about teachers' access to professional development in arts and cultural education as funds for professional development are largely distributed at the school level and grants can come from more than one source. It was argued that this decentralisation, with the schools being responsible for selecting courses had contributed to the reduced priority given to professional development in arts education.

The teacher's contract says that there are 90 hours to do training. But the focus of training is often decided by the region. For example, the education committee will say we want mathematics, and then only courses in mathematics are offered. So we all have to go to that course. You can talk to the union and get special funding. The list of courses is rubbish. In the end the school pays to do something in the school. These courses cost something like 13,000 ISK per teacher. There are supposed to be 8 pupil free days for professional development throughout the year.

All teachers must do professional development at least twice a year as part of their contract. The teachers might go off to something or we might get someone in to the school. The principal sends out an email of all the things that are being offered. If I ask to go to something the principal almost always says 'yes'. But not many of what is on offer relate to the arts. Usually there is only 1 or 2 – and that is all over Iceland. If it is in the summer I might be able to go. We need a more unified offer for professional development. They are also very expensive. I think the whole area needs to be reviewed.

The high cost and lack of arts choices was a common complaint amongst the teachers and school principals interviewed. This perceived lack of arts choices in the range of professional development offers has led to some schools and local areas developing their own courses.

We have started to do our own professional development. One of the teachers did a great unit about Vikings. They made skin bags and jewellery. It shows how you can use the arts. We linked the unit to poetry and the music teacher worked together with the class teacher. The children planted a little forest, and then they created a tree book. This is linked to science. During 'friendship week' we all focused on drawing. Even the staff joined in. It really encouraged the skills to develop. I am too far from a museum here, but I use lots of pictures and show them contemporary Icelandic art. I think you need to introduce children to skills and build the language – foreground, palette. But make sure they enjoy art. We teach children to write even though we know they are not all going to be writers.

There needs to be much more offered in terms of professional development in the arts. There is nothing much available. I try to run things in the school but we need more than just what is available locally.

Where teachers have had access to qualifications and continuing professional development, they spoke highly of the value of such opportunities. This was particularly the case amongst preschool teachers:

By going to college and learning, it opened up a whole new perspective and really changed practices. (Her colleague agrees, "yes it opened a whole new world for her"). I think it is a real pity but there has been a cut in opportunities for professional development. It has become more expensive to do things.

Conversely, from the universities, colleges and other providers there was the point made that professional development offers in the arts are made but that these are not sustainable for a range of reasons:

We run a preschool training line where we look at ideas from the Reggio Emilia approaches. We focus on the connection between play, art and learning. We view research as being at the centre of all learning. I think it is a real pity what has happened in teacher training. You could go through the whole programme and never do any arts education. All teachers need to learn about doing art. At the beginning of every teacher education programme we need to ensure teachers understand about the value of creativity and culture.

The university has offers but there is almost nothing in the arts.

We tried to do a weekend course for the piano. Many of the teachers go abroad. The Union pays for that. You can get up to 200,000 ISK over 3 years. You can spend it on professional development, either as an individual or as a group. It's funny, but the majority of teachers don't use it.

This vignette from an academic in the university gives insight into the concerns from the suppliers of professional development:

*Vignette 3.9.1 We used to have a system for offering in-service education*

We used to have a system for offering in-service education. But now schools can choose for themselves. In 1996 the municipalities took over the responsibility of in-service education. I think since then the offerings in the arts have been gradually getting worse. There are very few opportunities in the arts and only a few teachers from a school can go. I think everyone is unhappy. I think sometimes even the principal chooses the courses. They have to find something that is relevant. The offers have decreased drastically. We offer courses through the university but these now have to be fully economically costed and that makes them expensive. We have tried offering courses such as “Music and movement for the whole school” but there was very little response. It ended up not running because there were so few attendees. The unions and civil authorities also offer courses, but overall I think it is quite disjointed.

I think we need to rethink the whole approach to recurrent education for teachers. If we think about it another way, a pre-primary school asked for a course about visual arts and then too many people came. We offer teachers the opportunity to do a one year course, like a sabbatical year. But they have to come here to study. Each year about 20-30 teachers take up that offer. Teacher education needs to be planned as a lifelong project. There is interest for courses related to the arts and technology, like how to use ‘Garage Band’. But these are mainly offered by the labour unions and I think that money becomes the motivation. We have had a 10% cut back in our funds so I guess making money will be even more vital. We worry a lot as the university says courses with less than 15 people will be cut and many of the arts courses have less than 10 people. Numbers generally in teacher education are declining. It will be a difficult few years.

The notion of practice-based degrees – and professional learning pathways – for people in education, the arts or creative industries is only just emerging. Most postgraduate programmes are full-time, or are conducted during school time and so therefore are not accessible for teachers who are teaching full-time. It has also been considered that ‘distance learning’ does not provide an acceptable model for further education in the arts because of the inherently practical nature of arts education.

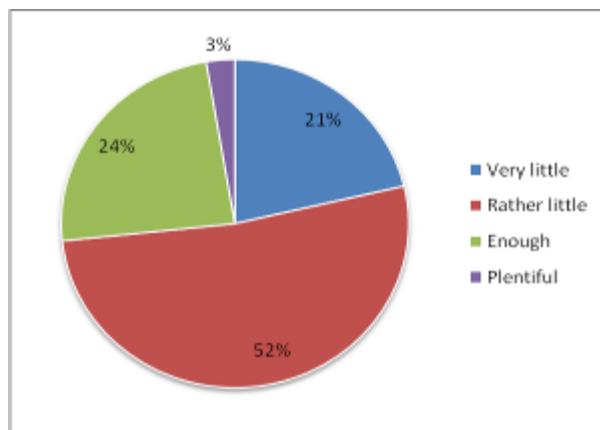
While the vignette (3.9.1) was critical of the move to more local control of professional education, other respondents spoke highly of the quality of some of the offers made at the local level, as the following example shows:

A lady came in to give a course. The City Office organised the course. The City Office is very good. Each municipality provides offers. She came from the Centre for Research in Early Childhood. The courses offered by the City Office are free. She talked about the Penn green approach to early year’s education in England and I feel in love with that approach. The course was a collaboration of 80 city schools. Since going to that course we have become fired up. The teachers learnt that they can do art from nothing. Every day we are trying to put more art in. Instead of the teachers making things, we learnt that children need to take ownership and do it themselves. It is a method that works and is for everyone. I have been a classroom teacher for 45 years, but you can still learn something new. I learnt that you can hang everything around a little seed of an idea. We made maps of high and low places and that then lead to making models. Everything came from the children. Everything we needed was at hand. Children learn things by thinking about it and by doing it themselves. You need to share something of yourself.

Within the music schools, special provisions exist for continued professional education. In 2001 there was a wage agreement that included a 0.5% addition to cover professional development of teachers in the music school. There is also music teacher association money that can be applied for, as the following example shows: “We try as a whole staff group to go abroad every third year. For example we all went abroad to do a course on using Sibelius software. We have also been to concert series in Berlin and Italy. The next staff day we are doing a topic on working with music and people with disabilities. The local authorities really only offer general courses like health and safety and these are less relevant so it is really on us to be proactive and build something relevant.” The Association of Music School Teachers has a fund that offers each teacher support for professional development cost of up to 200.000 ISK every three years. In addition, the support for a group educational trip is 60.000 ISK per teacher every 3rd year.

Even in music schools – where the offer is comparatively strong – there is a need for more offers. As can be seen in Figure 3.9.2, nearly 75% of respondents felt there were inadequate offers.

Figure 3.9.2 Availability of professional development (Music)



An arts college supplements the offers within Iceland by bringing in additional expertise; “We seek a small grant each summer. We bring in a teacher from abroad (e.g. New York). They can work in the textile museum. We ask them to give some lectures. We also try to attend the Nordic conferences. We also do other general education courses about twice a year. For example the last one was on using Photoshop.”

Professional associations play a valuable role in the educational life of Iceland and in the care and development of teachers. The service provided by professional associations is vast and the increasing numbers of members in these associations is testament to their value. They provide everything from practical discipline support (such as professional development, specialised staff, specialised resources) to more pastoral care of the teaching workforce (such as summer houses, teacher networks). Some of the professional associations offer high quality professional development courses around practitioner sharing with ‘guest’ speakers providing valuable extra input. These were inexpensive and the associations tried to host the meetings in the different municipalities to assist to get services to more outlying areas.

The age of members is young by international standards averaging only 45 years. Many associations have more than 2000 members. Primarily the funds received through membership subscriptions are ploughed back into making the professional robust and supporting individuals and networks. In addition, the professional associations tend to have strong links with similar associations within the Nordic countries and strong international links.

The connection between Icelandic institutions and professional associations with their Nordic counterparts adds to the richness of offers available to teachers and artists. The Nordic associations and broader international links provide access to high quality congresses, seminars and workshops. Once again though, most of these are targeted at professional artists and are less accessible to teachers. Many of the topics covered could be very applicable as part of a structured professional development programmes. In particular, focus days on arts research, performance and exhibition development, and skill enrichment.

Most trade unions offer their members a range of continuous and re-education opportunities. There is a long tradition in Iceland for the involvement of employee organisations

in offering adult education. Other associations, such as the Red Cross, youth associations and environmental associations also offer adults (and children) a variety of courses.

Adult education and training within the system and outside it has played an important role in Iceland throughout the years. To date, it has not been included in discussions on the development of education at a national level. There are 40 colleges of further education in Iceland. Of these there are nine specialised colleges, for ballet, visual arts, art and domestic science. There are eight universities in Iceland. Most of them have departments that are run as lifelong learning centres for adult education. Their offer can be roughly split into two categories: on the one hand a broad selection of courses in computer skills, languages, literature, design, art and, on the other, an offer of longer or shorter courses of study that lead to a diploma, e.g. in marketing and in project and staff management. This research has not examined in detail the impact of adult education.

## Chapter 4: Other factors

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### 4.1 Education in and through the arts

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- **There is a difference between, what can be termed, *education in the arts* (e.g. teaching in fine arts, music, drama, crafts, etc.) and *education through the arts* (e.g. the use of arts as a pedagogical tool in other subjects, such as numeracy, literacy and technology)**
- **Schools need strong programmes in the arts AND artistic and creative ways to learn in an integrated way across the curriculum**
- **Teachers are unclear about the aims and specific learning embedded in the arts**
- **Continuity is vital if arts education is to have an impact especially between the various levels of education**
- **The creative industries in Iceland are calling for more creative approaches to education**

There were very high quality examples of schools that adopted flexible approaches to the delivery of curriculum. In these situations, learning philosophies were grounded around connected learning. Adopting meaningful thematic learning, they tended to relate learning across curriculum areas. This approach was particularly strong in the pre-primary school.

A comprehensive study conducted in 2004<sup>19</sup> implored schools and the broader educational sector to commence arts education early in a child's life and ensure there was continued development of creative and cultural competencies throughout the entire school programme. The report cautions strongly that "Within the entire educational trajectory the concept of creativity must be central" In some schools in Iceland learning has effectively been mapped across the school and within particular school years. Consistent and continuous experiences are vital if a child is to develop fully their artistic languages. This is mainly achieved through using education through the arts in an integrated way, as these quotes from a range of schools suggest:

Whenever there is an opportunity to use the arts or teach through the arts we use it.

Need to integrate the arts (why don't we draw mathematics?)

This school is a boarding school located in an isolated part of Iceland. It was just under 200 pupils from pre-primary school to secondary school. Adults also have the option to study in the school.

The arts are seen as the element to connect people together. They have dance, music, visual arts, textile and woodwork. The teachers are encouraged to work across disciplines at least a few hours per week.

We are trying to make this offer. Really though it is only done in special weeks such as the annual festival, then everything is integrated.

We have a new principal that really encourages integrated learning. For example, the Icelandic teacher is working with a poet. We are looking for professional development courses in this way of working.

There was a need expressed for not only more education **through** the arts, but also for the walls between disciplines of the arts to be removed, as this quote from a parent indicates:

I would say we have good education in the arts, but we don't have education through the arts. There should be more of that – integrated teaching, learning through films and so on. This way pupils, teachers, and artists can inspire one another. We need to build happy children who are open to anything. We could do more teaching around themes that cross all curriculum areas. Walls need to come down. We don't have flexibility in the system. School is like a separate world. We are losing site of why we are educating our children. We need to be

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<sup>19</sup> Devos, 2004) p 2

demanding more of our schools and teachers <creative professional> The idea of 40 minute lessons ruins education. The arts become restricted to week by week lessons that are not connected to anything else. The barriers are strong and high. It won't be easy to get these barriers down (either in schools or in cultural institutions). Yet we have to change schools. We are entering a creative age. We need to change schools – 40 minutes is a state of mind not a rule. The schools are so focused on timetables and regulations. We need re-education. What is my child supposed to know?

Many interviewees pointed to a number of structural elements such as curriculum and timetabling that actually prevent integration. Competition between the arts disciplines was also identified as being a problem that reduced the likelihood that there would be greater integration of the arts:

We (textile) want to connect more to visual arts but there is always some competition there. We are both electives and the clever students want to take visual arts, but we can see that they would also be very good at design. There is a false assumption that textile is easier, but to be good at design takes a lot of work and very creative and innovative ways of thinking.

We need a new vision for the compulsory school. Subjects are still isolated. The curriculum is still subject orientated.

The curriculum is too square. We need more flow between subjects. We need to activate the pupils more. In all subjects, we need to put in creativity.

Integration? We've talked about it, and the philosophy, but not done much... I will do it in the future, also more art history mixed with regular history.

There is little or no integration of subjects. The reason is probably the subject-oriented curricula.

A lack of integration was seen as a factor that limited the “full” benefit of the arts being felt more broadly (especially in the economy).

Isolation between subjects means that we do not get the full benefit of the arts. We need to use arts more in all subjects. Learning how to integrate is a major shortcoming in our education system.

Figures 4.1.1 to 4.1.6 show the differences in subject distribution over different grade levels and the reduced presence of integrated learning by comparison.

Figure 4.1.1 Art subjects are compulsory in grades 1 – 4

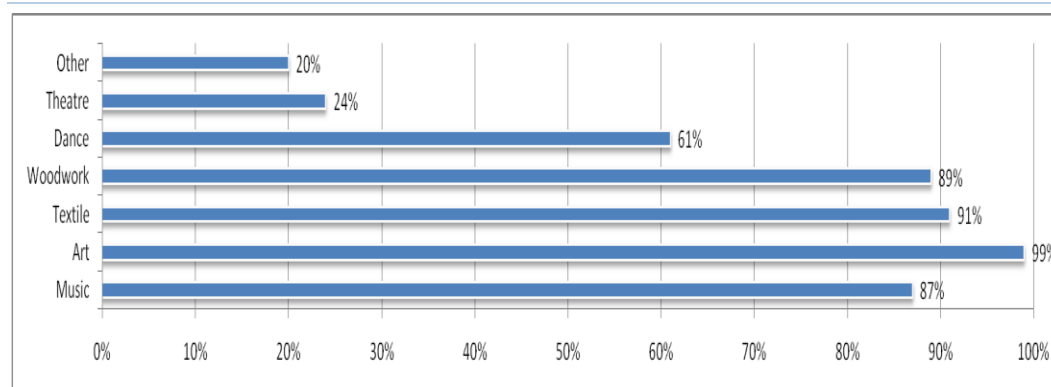


Figure 4.1.2 Art subjects are compulsory in grades 5 - 7

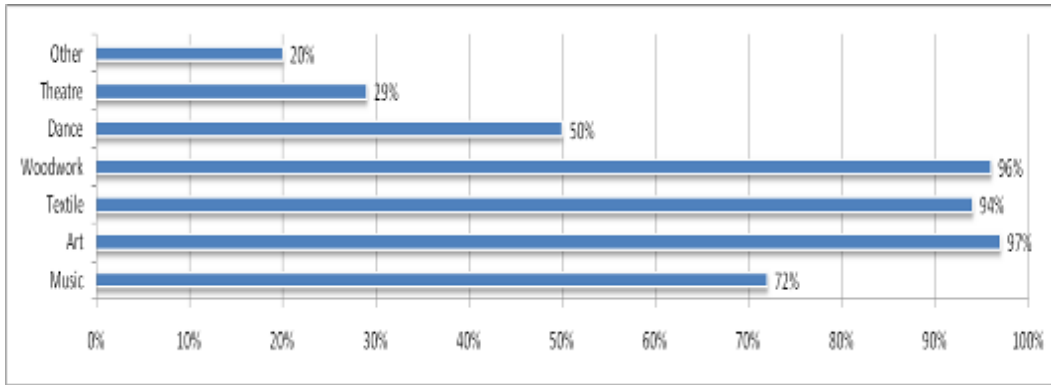


Figure 4.1.3 Art subjects are electives in grades 5 - 7

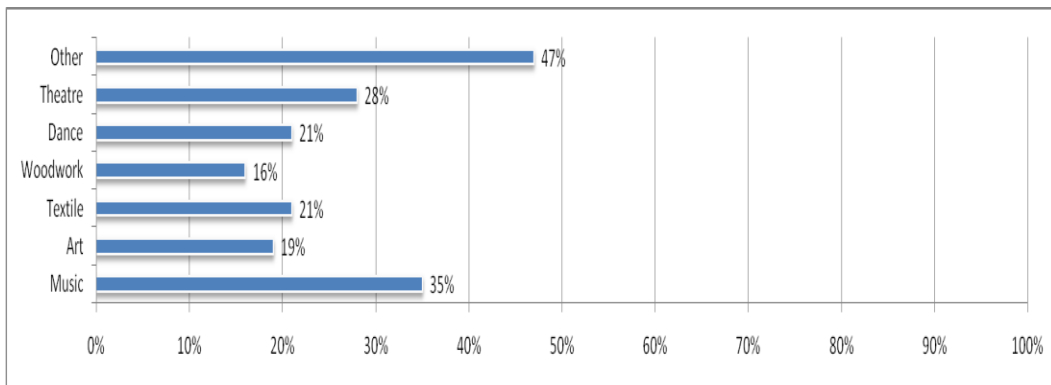


Figure 4.1.4 Art subjects are compulsory in grades 8 - 10

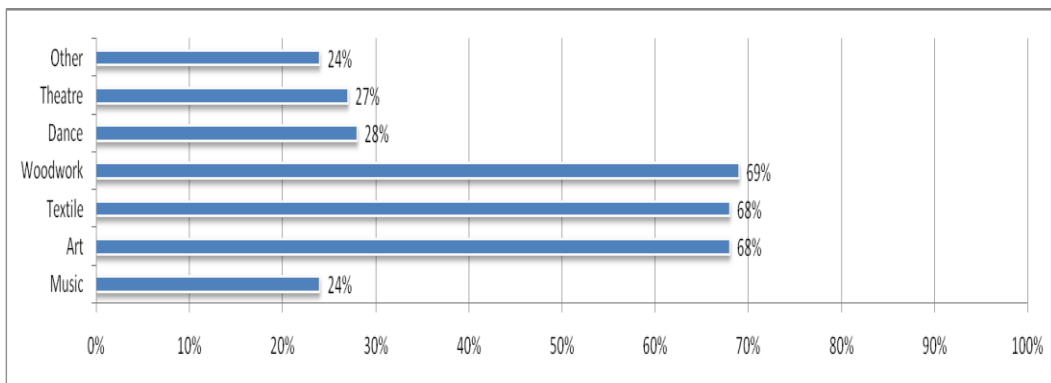


Figure 4.1.5 Art subjects are electives in grades 8 - 10

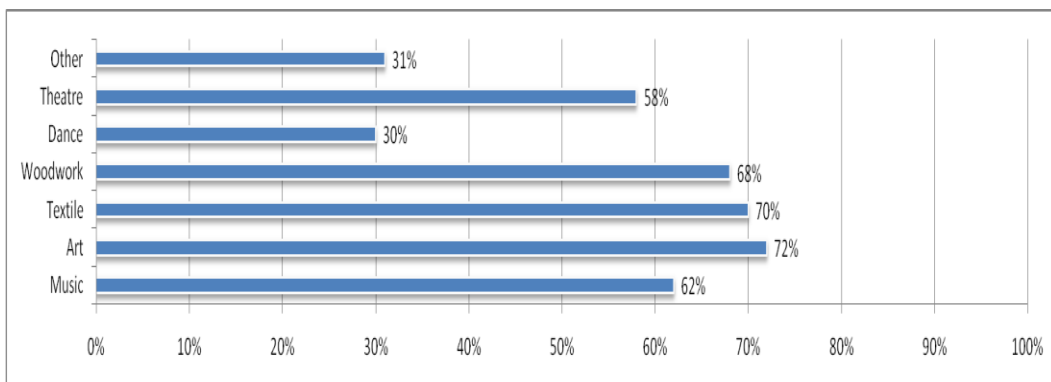
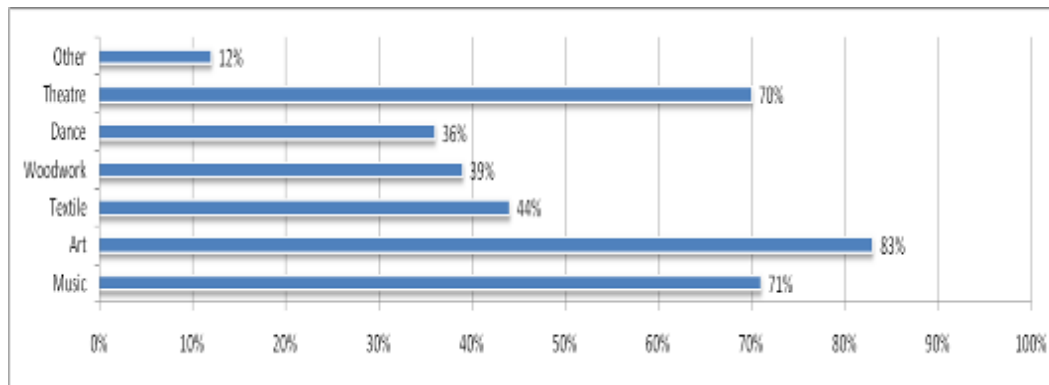


Figure 4.1.6 Art subjects were integrated into other subjects



It was argued that the arts may not have the same level of importance in the school as other subjects. In particular, the argument was made that more attention needed to be given to creative subjects as a way of building a robust future economy in Iceland.

Art education should be the same level as other subjects. It is very important for the future of our country that the arts are equalled to other aspects of the curriculum. It is very important to teach initiative and to find individual talent. The last few months have shown us just how important arts and culture will be to our economy. We should establish a scholarship fund for children with talent that can't afford private lessons.

<School principal>We are taking steps to improve the status of the arts. We are taking steps but they are very small steps. I am trying to pull the arts from the basement.

A few schools in Iceland have undertaken curriculum reform and moved towards new, and more integrated ways of teaching, as the following vignette (taken from a press release<sup>20</sup>) indicates:

*Vignette 4.1.7 Ulfarsardalur – Future vision*

The four compulsory schools in the newest district of Reykjavík, Ulfarsardalur, will collaborate tightly. The overall focus of these schools will be within the field of *creativity*. The schools' proximity to nature will allow and require them to become leading in the area of environmental studies. The 21st century is the century of creative and diverse employment industries. Therefore, *human rights, human resources and respect* will be key aspects in the agenda of all four schools. Furthermore, the students' individual strengths will be identified, respected, and supported. Each of the schools will be encouraged to employ a creative approach in highlighting its particular area of interest. Teaching and learning is an inherently creative process. Icelandic compulsory schools have a longstanding tradition of teaching arts and crafts to their students, but here, for the first time, the notion of creativity will be an overarching theme in the work and teachings of four elementary schools. "Quality education can therefore generally be understood as being education that provides all young people and other learners with the locally-relevant abilities required for them to function successfully in their society; is appropriate in terms of the students' lives, aspirations and interests, as well as those of their families and societies; and is inclusive and rights-based."(UNESCO's Road map for Arts Education, Lisbon 2006). UNESCO'S Road Map will be a reference point in creating the curriculum for all four schools and creativity will be an underlying theme in all student work. Working with a creative approach, each school will then specialize in a certain field. Examples of these could be; health and physical activity; nature and the environment; reading, reading comprehension, and literature.

Principals pointed to the importance of the teacher as an agent of creative catalyst in the schools:

It all depends on the teacher. The pupils say that creative teachers give more freedom and that their lessons are more fun. But it all depends on what the teacher brings.

I'm not teaching art, I'm a teacher of the arts.

The principal director<sup>21</sup> of the Icelandic Academy of the Arts outlined the main opportunities and advantages of establishing *Menntaskóli Listanna* (an integrated arts learning environment) arguing that:

<sup>20</sup> Oddný Sturludóttir, City Councillor and former head of Reykjavík's education board. Press release 2008

Such a school the students would belong to a community in which the arts are the first point of reference, and in which they can work together across the boundaries of their respective specialization. The students would receive all their education in a single institution and would not (as is currently the case) have to travel between distant places for classes. *Menntaskóli Listanna* would be a desirable place to work and would be staffed by qualified teachers and active artists. It can be assumed that in a concerted effort, students will join hands in performing works of large-scale proportions and they set up extensive exhibitions that require specially designed housing and advanced equipment. Above all, *Menntaskóli Listanna* would foster creative and inquisitive minds, a place in which a single community – comprising the various art forms – concerns itself with projects that require insight, originality and technical know-how. *Menntaskóli Listanna* would be in high demand as a school in which young people can envisage creating their own particular culture and prepare themselves for engaging fields of work.

## 4.2 Profiling the school and the importance of school leadership

### ➤ Arts and cultural education in schools need the support of a determined, passionate and inspiring school leader

Innovative, creative and inspiring school leaders encourage and promote the arts. During the course of the study, a number of these passionate and committed leaders were interviewed. In each case, their determination and commitment had been inspirational to the staff and had led not only to an improved profile for the school, but to the development of enthusiasm, collegiality and professional development among the teaching staff.

These high quality leaders are courageous and perseverant. They are reflective and value the individual talent and collective wisdom of their staff. All the school principals interviewed were very supportive of the value of the arts in education. In most cases, they not only wanted to retain the provisions they had, but also expressed a desire to actually extend the experiences as this quote demonstrates: “I would choose to do more art in the school. Pupils need rich and diverse experiences. The arts build confidence, enjoyment and allow individuals to shine. I think there should be more arts education in teacher training as there is not much now. The arts must be included. Teachers don’t have the confidence to teach the arts. The general teacher does not know how to programme the arts.” In addition to the benefits for children, the support of school principals’ was particularly important to “the teachers’ working environment and to their sense of well-being” according to an interviewee.

Schools with a strong arts focus were popular with teachers and parents and had a positive and supportive atmosphere. This case study from a school shows a typical pattern in a school with a commitment to the arts:

#### *Vignette 4.2.1 We have good support from the parents*

We are visiting a large compulsory school (520 students) in Reykjavik. It is a school with a strong arts focus. The school won "Skrekkur", the annual talent competition of compulsory schools where students themselves design their entries. The typical time for arts education is as follows:

##### Grades

- 1 - 60 minutes a week in music
- 2 - two weekly classes in music and a split class in art / textile
- 3 - two hours in music
- 4 - two hours in music and a split class in art / drama, and woodwork / textile
- 5 - two hours in music and a split class in wood work / textile, art / drama, and domestic science / computer
- 6 - three classes split into 6 groups: wood work / textile, art / drama, domestic science / music
- 7 - same as 6th grade which is even mixed with them
- 8 - two big classes split into 6 groups: computer / art, cooking / drama
- 9 - the arts are electives and a popular choice: cooking, wood work, textile, music, film making, photography

<sup>21</sup> Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson: Menntaskóli listanna ('College of the Arts') the principal director of the Icelandic Academy of the Arts. Published in Morgunbladid newspaper, October 2005, page 4.

(teacher a professional photographer)  
10 grade - same as 9th grade.

The general view of the school, and of the principal, is that everyone is good at something. The school gets excellent math results – not quite as good in the sciences. When asked about the PISA score for Iceland: “I think it's fine; we have good support from the parents. If they are pleased, we must be doing something right”.

Vignette 4.2.1 underlines the value placed on the arts in the curriculum. As the next section (4.3) outlines in more detail, parents are supportive of the place of the arts within the curriculum.

### 4.3 The role of parents

#### ➤ Parents are very supportive of the value of the arts in education

Parents play a crucial role both as political advocates for the arts and as supporters of their children's art learning. In Iceland parents are very active in relation to their children's arts learning. While it could be argued that Icelandic parents are not greatly involved in formal school processes (apart from being active audience members for performances and festivals), they are very active in supporting after school activities. Parents regularly transport children to music schools, amateur theatre and dance classes. They are keen too on sport but see the arts and sport as offering different benefits to children. As the following quotes for the parents' focus group suggest, parents are keen for there to be more of a focus on arts and creativity at all levels of the school curriculum:

There can never be too much art in schools.

In my child's school they get art for 2 months, then textile or computer. This is really bad.

Children need longer classes in the arts so they can go deeper.

We need better arts in day care.

The arts are not taken seriously enough in Iceland. It is like they are a hobby. You don't really start doing 'real' art until you are 15 years old.

School is nowhere near creative enough. I don't think that teachers have the background to do it. They are just not cultural aware. Teachers need better education in creative and cultural ways to teach.

There are lots and lots of learning in the arts.

The following notes from a parents' focus group conducted in Reykjavik as part of the research evidence the high value placed on the arts by parents:

#### *Vignette 4.3.1 A focus group with parents*

There are seven parents in the focus group (five women and two men). The focus group was conducted in a meeting room with afternoon tea provided. The atmosphere was relaxed and encouraged free exchange of ideas. The participants were as follows:

Ásdís: mother of an 8 year old autistic child who does not go to school.

Helga: mother of two children, 9 and 17 years

Jóhanna: mother of two children who study ballet and music

Kjartan: father of two children that participate in sports

Lára: mother of four children, including one who has Down syndrome, one who studies music

Rannveig: mother of three children who study dance and music

Þorlákur: father of two children

The comment was made around the table, “There can never too much art! The art course is the only course that my 9 year old talks about... It is bad that they don't have anything in the older grades.”

Parents wanted sustained engagement in the arts as part of school, as this comment suggests; “One bad thing schools are doing is swapping between art forms e.g. art for 2 months, singing for 2 months... always changing, that's bad.”

**The following questions were asked, “Is school in Iceland creative enough?”**

- NO !! (Echoed from around the table)
- We need broader education...

**“Are schools improving?”**

- They are better than 10-15 years ago, we are thinking about it so we must be better...
- They are pretty much the same...
- It depends on schools...
- When a school wants a boast it shows off the art...
- A compulsory school in Reykjavík has lots of art. They are doing a class night for the parents and the kids show what they are doing. It builds confidence...
- There is a beautiful tradition in my children's school. They do singing every morning...

**“If school was more creative, would that help children get a job later on?”**

- To think out of the box...
- Changing your own thoughts, dreams, will lead to something...

**“Arts outside of school - what are your comments on that?”**

- It is too expensive. It costs me 500.000 ISK per year for 2 children...
- Schools have to do more, or else kids will not go there after the financial crash...
- The change of scenery is a plus, to be in school all day is not good... We need to link it more, not necessarily geographically but somehow...
- Convenient to be all done around 4 or 5 in the evening...

**“Would you like a broader choice? Is there enough choice?”**

- I wish there could be more choices, acting, films, etc...
- We need more variety of choice, needs to be something for them to try...
- Much easier to get into sports than arts... Sports are cheaper...

**“Availability of arts education for children with special need?”**

- With a disabled child you're burned out when the child is 6 years old, especially if trying to have a career at the same time...
- I've tried football, and gymnastics, but he doesn't like it... possibility of drama, that's new...
- General education for disabled children is good in Iceland...

**“Anything else?”**

- There is a gap after basic education...
- You have to search out actively the schools that are teaching art... There is nothing going on at the secondary school level...
- The technical school should be changed...

While the parents were chosen to participate in the focus group as they were members of a parents' association (not because they had a particular interest in the arts), it could be argued that they were a group of 'keen' parents whose views may not be representative of the broader parent population. This however did not appear to be the case as the level of interest of parents in the arts was widely reported from a number of sources. For example, these comments from school principals show the genuine interest of parents in arts learning:

We use the school website to communicate the arts to parents. We put up photos with explanations. This opens the awareness of the parents.

There is a lot of respect amongst parents for the music school. This is engendered through a strong sense of community and also regular concerts. For example, one music school held more than 10 concerts a year for parents.

It was perceived that the arts promoted broader parental involvement in schools, even where there was a lack of general connection between parents and school learning, as the following two quotes suggest:

Parents need to be more involved in education. They need to understand how their child functions at school. Schools need to involve parents more systematically. For example teachers should visit every home and get to really know the children. More education needs to connect with the arts and nature. There is a trend for more outward facing schools that is developing.

Parents come to performances but don't otherwise involve themselves in the school.

The value that parents place on the arts within education is effectively summarised in this comment from a teenager who was interviewed; "My parents think I learn things from doing the arts. My parents are happy to pay. <For anything to do with arts and cultural learning>"

#### 4.4 Youth centres and the views of children and young people

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- **Icelandic youth have an international outlook**
- **Icelandic youth show high degrees of initiative and leadership in setting up and running youth led arts activities**

Young people in Iceland are very proactive at establishing and sustaining a range of youth led and focused arts opportunities. The most common of these is the locally based 'youth centres'. Youth centres provide an important venue for creative and artistic activity. It is common that the youth centre is a place where children and young people sing, play guitar, dance, watch movies and network. Some of these informal youth centres have gone on to become an established part of the arts and cultural life of Iceland, as the following vignette describes:

##### *Vignette 4.4.1 Hitthúsið*

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Hitthúsið was opened 1991 by the City of Reykjavík as an activity centre for people age 16-25. The Centre has initiated numerous successful projects that have contributed greatly to the culture. Hitthúsið aims at training children and young adults by assisting them in organizing events and projects themselves. In general, arts teachers deserve a credit, considering the situation they have to work with in the schools. Hitthúsið is a project minded organization. For example, kids can apply for summer work; we provide the salary, they finance their own projects. International cooperation has been a regular part of Hitthúsið – first time this year that no international projects are on. The Ministry of Education and Culture has not been helpful enough – the prevailing opinion there is that the City should pay.

In the upper secondary school, pupils can gain credit for organising and participating in youth generated arts and cultural activity. This leads to a number of extra curricula offers, such as plays, choirs, bands, dance groups and others. This means that even in secondary schools where children are not taking art electives, they are likely to be part of a richer cultural milieu, as the following quote demonstrates:

Arts in the High School is all extra curricula (no art line), after school. Films and theatre also taught; courses go for a semester (14 weeks). Students get credit for participating in plays. For the last 12-13 years (since 1996) plays have been staged in co-operation with the Youth Association. All the schools participate, children did the decoration. The play was "Fiddler on the Roof" last time.

Despite the evident ability of young people to organise and sustain youth-generated arts and cultural activity, their ability in this area is rarely acknowledged within more mainstream arts and cultural providers. For example, A focus group of cultural agencies was asked if there were any young people on the management or advisory Boards of their institutions. None of the

centres had this, but all found this to be an excellent idea but one they had not thought about before. Hitthúsið was an exception, where young people were heavily involved in all aspects of management. In the case of Hitthúsið, it was stressed that all the ideas should come from young people. Despite the lack of representation on boards or management groups, the cultural agencies focus group unanimously agreed that the situation regarding young people and art education had improved considerably over recent years.

Icelandic youth are highly international in their focus and are more likely to aspire to international art forms than those associated specifically with Iceland, as these comments exemplified:

Icelandic music is bad, weird, boring.

Icelanders like to be like Americans. They are no different.

What do young people like doing?

I like going to the cinema, playing football, being on Facebook and generally on the computer.

I like techno and hippo. I am getting into some tribal music and old rock, like Cold Play.

Of the young people interviewed, most preferred international music to Icelandic music, citing the following sorts of reasons for their choice:

Icelandic music is weird.

Icelandic music is sort of too creative and different.

It sort of sounds strange.

Most of the young people interviewed felt they would leave Iceland for their future education and careers. Of the group interviewed, 60% said once they had studied overseas that they doubted they would come back to Iceland to live. as these sample comments indicate:

I think I would like to work in property in the USA.

I would like to be a doctor and travel in Canada.

I will do pilot training in Germany.

The young people interviewed found arts education in secondary school to be:

A bit babyish and boring.

A lot of hard work.

Makes me nervous.

Lots and lots of learning is different.

Unlike many of their European counterparts, Icelandic young people are not worried about tests or exams and are generally happy with where they have grown up, as this quote typifies; "We live in the right size sort of place. School is really good, but we are sometimes a bit isolated."

Despite the overwhelming preference for international culture, some young people did comment (almost with surprise) that when they had tried some of the more traditional Icelandic culture, they had actually enjoyed it.

We have a disco once a month. Different kids do sets as the DJ. We all try to be like everyone in America and Europe. I really liked it when we did the old time dancing in school. It was actually cool. I would like to do more of it. We do things for the Talent Quest, and the winning group gets to go to Reykjavik."

I don't agree <that all Icelandic music is boring>, Mugison, Múgsefjun, Emiliana Torrini, Reykjavík, these are quite good...

While the earlier section on the music school shows a quite traditional choice of music, instruments and curriculum, some more progressive music schools are seeing a rise in demand for pop music and more international music from adolescent pupils (who may have pulled out of more traditional music lessons). In the case of these pupils, it is self-generated interest that brings them back to the music schools, as this comment from a music school director outlines:

“The popularity of pop music is growing. Young people like to be in a band. Of course they learn notation too. These students come however late to the music school, about age 12-15 perhaps...”

#### 4.5 Creative Industries

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- **While the creative industries form an important and expanding part of the Icelandic economy, this fact has not been taken-up in actions at all levels of education, including professional education**

In general terms the cultural and creative sector includes all those who work in the creative occupations across the wider economy.

The United Nations estimates that the creative and cultural industries account for about 7% of the total GDP of most economically developed countries and that this sector is growing at 10% per year, which is more than double general economic growth. Furthermore, democratic trends, such as higher levels of education, longevity and increased consumer spending are likely to continue growth in the cultural and leisure activities into the future. Icelandic creative industries have a wide reach internationally, but this link is not always fully exploited. For example, designers such as Guðrún Sif Jakobs<sup>22</sup>, while Icelandic, studied in Sweden and later worked Italy. She has designed for Dorrit Mussaieff (the wife of the Icelandic President) and markets her design as Icelandic, despite her international training.

It is difficult to determine accurate figures for the contribution or otherwise of the creative industries to Icelandic economic growth. Statistics Iceland predominantly reports on export of goods resulting from primary production. The few exceptions that may give a glimpse into trade in the creative industries are the clothing and footwear section where the trade for 3 months was 66.6 million ISK. By comparison, this is roughly half the income earned by dairy products<sup>23</sup>. Figures related to tourism and trade for the first quarter show this as a strong area of the economy (10,687.8 million ISK) but, while this is encouraging, the importing of travel services exceeds those services exported, resulting in a net deficit. In the year 2000, tourism only accounted for around 4% of GDP<sup>24</sup>. Concurrently, the potential for the development of 'high tech' creative industries is very high. With a highly educated workforce and 97% high speed internet connection, this area offers enormous potential for growth. Unfortunately though, this is an area of the creative industries not apparent to a significant extent in the school curriculum with visual arts, textile, woodwork and design and music all favouring more traditional approaches<sup>25</sup>.

Cultural employment in Iceland as a percentage of total employment in 2005 was 3.8% of the total workforce. This was equally top with the Netherlands and compares with the European average for 2005 of 2.4%. Nearly 20% of the total workforce of under 24 year olds are employed in the cultural industries and this is the highest in Europe<sup>26</sup>. In the European Union, 29% of cultural workers usually or sometimes work at home. This is significantly higher than the rate in the total workforce, which has no more than 13% home-workers. This proportion among cultural workers ranges from 3% in Cyprus to 41% in Austria and the United Kingdom (up to 46% in Iceland). These figures indicate that Iceland has the highest percent of creative industry workers working from home.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.sifjakobs.com>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.statice.is/pages/2269>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Tourism,-transport-and-informati/Tourist-industry>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Tourism,-transport-and-informati/Telecommunication>

<sup>26</sup> Eurostat cultural statistics 2007.

In 2007/08 season, there were 78 professional theatre productions. The total audience for the season was 275,207 people. This figure is equivalent to 1/3 of the entire population of Iceland attending. While a larger number of amateur productions occurred in the same period (457) these were far more about involvement than audience with only 29,669 people attending these performances. Interestingly, 81 of the amateur productions were by children. During this same period, there were 10 professional dance productions, but a break down of audiences of dance is not available. During this period, only 3 theatre groups reported that they had toured abroad but they claimed a relatively high audience reach with nearly 25,000 reported.<sup>27</sup>

In 2002 there were just fewer than 200 exhibitions by visual artists in Iceland. Of these, around 1/3 of the exhibitions were abroad. If these figures are compared to 10 years earlier, there were 320 exhibitions, with 150 (or just under 1/2) of all the exhibitions being taken abroad. This indicates a declining picture for visual arts.<sup>28</sup>

None of the top 10 DVDs in Iceland for 2006 were Icelandic in origin, with all the top 10 coming from the USA. The picture is slightly better in film with one of the top ten movies shown in cinemas coming from Iceland, while once again, 8 out of the top ten movies were from the USA.<sup>29</sup>

While there are creative success stories in Iceland, the explicit connection between high quality arts education and economic and commercial developments have not been effectively articulated or communicated, by business, education or culture. Iceland has one of Europe's lowest levels of students in the arts in higher education (only 2.6 %) not counting those that study abroad.<sup>30</sup> This is only around 1/3 of the percentage of students in the arts in the UK. There is a real bottleneck. It is difficult to get entrance into further education in the arts in Iceland with many having to seek education in the arts abroad It is particularly hard for people in small towns; "Many of our good students end up going overseas and may or may not come back to Iceland. Most people tend to come back, but only when their own children are school aged."

Despite the lack of places in higher education for the creative industries, members of the creative and cultural industries in Iceland are highly qualified. For example, 54% of cultural workers in Iceland have higher education qualification (compared to 28% for the overall workforce). However Iceland has the highest % of cultural workers needing to hold a second job (18.2% compared to a European average of 6.7%).<sup>31</sup>

A law was passed 10 years ago (1999) stating that upper secondary schools should have departments of arts and design. This has improved the situation for training the potential creative industry workforce. Design for example has come to be because of this law – in addition to textile and craft that had dominated before. Thus – it was argued in a creative industry focus group – it is not a coincidence that Icelandic Design is now flourishing. While many of the creative industry members felt that there was more and better quality arts education in schools in recent years, others were critical of what was taught:

What my children are studying in the compulsory schools is in my opinion not art.

The situation is not good... textile and wood work (perhaps ceramics) is taught.... What is being done is more crafts and skills teaching, not design... In general, the quality depends on the teacher...

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Culture/Arts>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Culture/Arts>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Culture/Cinemas>

<sup>30</sup> Eurostat cultural statistics 2007

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

Others would argue that the connection between the development of creative industries and the arts and cultural sector is somewhat unclear in Iceland. There is also no overt acknowledgement of the role of education and training and development in expanding and enriching the creative industries. Similarly, despite being active in school-based programmes, there have not been sufficient discussions between members of the creative industries and the educational and cultural community.

There is some indication in Iceland of what is often described as the Florida<sup>32</sup> effect in terms of the way building arts and cultural facilities change and enhance the urban environment, promoting more 'high end' economic activity. The following quote describes a small scale change that had a marked impact in a regional centre:

I think having the art academy encourages business to come to Akureyri. For instance, a computer design company has set up here. We have really influenced this street. If you look at it now, it is full of artistic possibilities. When we moved in there was nothing. Now there are commercial galleries, an art museum and studios for artists. Even the shops and restaurants have an artier and design feel. I would say we have changed the cultural life here. We have caused creative businesses to cluster around the arts school. It is like a cultural quarter and now there is also a music school and cultural centre. The money for our school comes jointly from the national government and the city (23 million ISK from the government, 20 million ISK from the city and 16 million ISK come in fees). Our evening courses are the most popular.

This comment was similar to a number of comments that highlighted the economic value of a more creative industries orientated economy. It was acknowledged that these changes may have in part occurred as the result of reductions in fishing and the current economic conditions: "I think things are changing towards the arts." Despite the overwhelming view that Iceland is a good place for creative industry growth, the creative industries focus groups and interviews identified a number of areas where improvements were needed to expand Iceland's creative potential.

There were a variety of criticisms of the standard and approach of further and higher education for people in the creative industries. Shortage of places was a major concern, as was the lack of marketing and development support given by government:

There is a real shortage of opportunities for young people in the arts once they leave school. There is basically only Reykjavik or they leave and go overseas. In some ways this is healthy because they get exposed to new ideas and some come back especially when they want to have their own children. I think it is too hard to make a living from the arts here <in Iceland> but in other ways it is good. You can get a crazy idea and realise it.

We need an institution to promote international support and marketing

Many professional artists want to work. I hope your report changes government opinion. The government should be helping to build a professional life for artists. We need to use people's skills and not be too precious about the 'arts'.

While there was overall majority support for more marketing and promotional expertise, a minority of respondents felt that such a commercial focus could be to the detriment of the unique nature of Icelandic arts: "You are all talking about commercialization of art and that scares me. I think that we learned that good art survives and promotes itself."

The demand for creative employees is high and increasing yet it is questionable whether the graduates from the arts specialist training will fill this void. There was the criticism that higher arts education was not developing the skills base of Icelandic arts:

The Arts Academy was too rigid. They promoted only one way of thinking. It was a school of conceptual art. Actual skills and crafting was discouraged.

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<sup>32</sup> Richard Florida is best known for his work in developing his concept of the creative class, and its ramifications in urban regeneration. This research was initially expressed in Florida's book *The Rise of the Creative Class (2002)*



The following vignette from a professional art dealer explains the changes within the visual arts industry over the years:

*Vignette 4.6.1 The quality is both better and worse*

I have been in the industry for 50 years (art dealer). The quality is both better and worse, but the quantity is much more.

When I originally trained (as a painter) there were 15 graduates from Art School. Out of that 15, 8-9 are still in the fine arts. It was harder then. If you wanted to make a living you had to want it so much. Some of the best Icelandic artists are 50-60 years old. They have changed themselves over the years and kept open to new ideas.

Some of the younger graduates are too fixed in their ideas. They say 'It is my style' and that is all they do. They seem to be missing the same openness of the earlier artists. But I think that might be a global problem, not just in Iceland.

In Iceland, the arts community is a small community. The cliques run the shows. These cliques are all the same age; have all been through the same education; educated at the same arts school. The broad perspective is missing. I feel so frustrated.

What we need are some good critics who know what they are talking about. But everyone knows everyone so no one says what they really think. That means we are missing the critical depth that you get in London and other places. We really need writers who know what they are talking about.

The arts school now is missing the point. It is all about ideas. You absolutely need skills. When I was educated, you had to draw and draw. If you can't read you can't write a book! The lack of skill down grades the art. The young artists graduating in Reykjavik come with ideas and creativity.

Art is like a barometer of the world. A few artists on the tip understand the time and great works happen, then the others follow. Most of the paintings in the gallery sell to Icelandic people. It is interesting, because when it comes to art on the wall, for Icelandic people it must be real. Even poor families have real art on their walls. Even the taxi driver has original art on his walls! We do have other customers from around the world and they tend to be very knowledgeable of Icelandic art. Around 10-15% of work purchased goes overseas, but the rest stays in Iceland. If I was to say what was special about Icelandic art I would say it is the painters interest in the landscape, and its

interrelationship with nature and culture. Pioneer work is popular. Icelandic painters lift the environment onto a pedestal. It is a symbol of nationhood and the soul of the place. Yet few young artists work with the landscape. Mostly our successful artists are over 50 years old. Maybe that is because it takes you 10 years to shake the Arts Academy teacher off your back!

I went to the graduate show to look for artists to represent, but the work was so bad. Only one artist showed potential. We have wanted to go to the Art Academy and talk about the commercial side of the art industry, but we have never been invited. We used to go to international art fairs and be very successful, but we are an independent gallery and so don't get grants to do this work. Icelandic paintings generally sell well with average prices around 400,000-600,000 ISK. But then we take a commission and there is tax so the artist gets 57% of sales.

Where creative industry courses are available, these are popular, especially when they relate to unique aspects of Icelandic culture such as bespoke adventure travel and fashion and textiles:

At the department Rural Tourism in Hólar University College a range of Icelandic specific cultural tourism courses at the Bachelor and Masters level are offered, such as horse tourism and traditional cultural handicrafts.

#### *Vignette 4.6.2 The demand for our courses is very strong*

We made our own curriculum. It includes printing, weaving and fabric design. We currently have 76 students. It is hard for our pupils to find a career pathway in Iceland. Only about 15 students end up in Iceland. The rest find places overseas. Some become textile teachers in Denmark or Spain. We have a few graduates that have gone on to create their own label. One is a jewellery designer for H&M. Others work in London or New York. There are factories in China making Icelandic jewellery. Our textile course includes a lot of fine arts and drawing. This is the basis for everything. Then we cover textile painting; weaving; tapestry; dyeing; pattern making and cutting; embroidery; and mixed media. We have a final exhibition. It is open to the public but students are not allowed to sell their work. We do studio visits whenever possible, but there are not any work placements. We try to get key speakers and industry people into the classes too. We expect the students to visit a gallery at least once a year and write a paper on it. We have done a number of collaborative projects with other arts schools throughout Europe funded from Nordic Council money. The students come to us with very, very different skills levels. So much depends on the quality of the teacher they had in secondary school. The demand for our courses is very strong. We have to turn away about 80-100 students each year. The best thing is that all the lecturers are also practicing artists and this makes it a much stronger course. Most of our staff have masters' degrees. We make full use of new technologies (and this is evident as you walk around the school)

Similarly, tourist initiatives that combine culture with the unique natural features of Iceland appear to be particularly successful. For example:

The whale watching industry only began in 1995. We now attract over 40,000 visitors per year. We see our role as education and research as much as tourism. Once again, there is a lack of market research too. We have done some and shown that the travellers are mainly independent travellers (come of their own), but there is a lack of accommodation and that is a problem. We are looking at developing a tourist shop. Last year we tried it and the local craftspeople and handicraft people made things. It was very popular but we ran out of stock. We do an exhibition during the whale festival, but this is not a chance to sell things. Some local performers also perform in restaurants during the whale season.

In terms of government policy, grants for the arts are allocated on a regional basis through Cultural Agreements, as the following information shows:

#### *Vignette 4.6.3 About Cultural Agreements*

Cultural Agreements have been signed between 7 areas, covering all of Iceland. The agreements are between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Communications, and between the municipalities comprising these 7 areas. The gist of these agreements is that each area agrees to fund culture and cultural tourism in the area to no less than the agreed amount (matched funding). In turn, the ministries agree to fund each area to a particular amount. For example, the Cultural Agreement was signed with the West Fjords on June 10, 2007 and it will last until Dec. 31 2009. According to the agreement the two ministries agree that state funding to culture and cultural tourism in the area will not fall below the following:

2007: 30 million ISK  
2008: 32 " "  
2009: 33 " "

The municipalities agree that their total funding for culture and cultural tourism in the area would not fall below:  
2007: 85 millions ISK

2008: 85 “ “  
2009: 85 “ “

Comparable agreements were completed during the first half of 2007 with North East-, North West-, South- and the South West-Iceland. Earlier, agreements had been signed with municipalities in East Iceland (2001, has been renewed) and West Iceland (2005).

The Ministry's Newsletter, February 12, publishes an article on grants issued by the Cultural Agreement of East Iceland totaling 30 million ISK. Out of 140 applications received, 100 grants were issued. The largest amount given was 1.000.000 ISK and the lowest one 100.000 ISK.

While this represents laudable intentions and a clear commitment from government to creative developments, there is a lack of research on the impact of arts and creative industry policy and a lack of clear, internationally benchmarked and comprehensive data. Other respondents pointed to the value of creative professionals beyond the usual boundaries of the creative industries:

I think there should be a creative person on the Board of every company. People are afraid of the creative world; creative people are so weird. The fear is also the other way around...

I want to create a creative revolution in Iceland...

The amateur arts scene is a key feature of the cultural milieu in Iceland, as this quote suggests; "The amateur art scene is really expanding. It is very active and often the driving force for the arts in small towns." This is particularly the case in theatre, with many towns having well established local theatre groups. As can be seen in the following quote, these theatres do not only provide a pathway for young people interested in theatre, but also provide performances including and for young people and children:

Amateur Theatre is about 100 years old, one or two productions a year, all generations. A theatre group in the Junior College does one production a year – they are having a play written for them now by a professional writer. There is a strong tradition of acting in the schools here, one production in the pre-primary school and also in the compulsory school.

In 2007/08 there were 6.9 concerts per 1000 population in the capital, 3.6 per 1000 people in the West, 4.1 in the east, 7.1 in the north and 4.4 in the south. While concentrated in the capital and the north, there appears to be a relatively equitable spread of concert offers around the country.<sup>33</sup> In a general sense, members of a creative industry focus group were asked to comment on whether they felt that the quality of arts education in Iceland was better or worse than 10 years ago. The following is a summary of their responses to that question:

It has staying the same (stagnant).

The curriculum is OK but we need to focus on monitoring of quality.

The situation is getting worse.

The quality of teaching in the arts is getting worse.

Theatre and dance are getting worse.

We are very afraid that as the economy tightens, schools will only do what they have to do and the cultural life for children will die – they will not visit museums, theatres and galleries.

Things have got better in music.

The arts scene (especially at the alternative and grassroots) is flourishing.

I think the banks might have had too much of an influence on the art scene so it is actually good that they have pulled out.

Passion and vitality is there and it is getting even better.

There is a lot going on and it is improving.

The crisis has actually been a good thing, especially for festivals.

We will start to use what is ours. What is our strength and that is a good focus to take us forward.

We have attracted a lot of support from abroad. A German baroness is going to donate to the arts and is auctioning some of her art work to give to Icelandic art.

We hope that all the grass roots things will grow up in these difficult times.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Culture/Arts>

From this summary, it can be seen that the majority of respondents felt the situation was better and were positive about the future. A smaller minority were concerned about the future and the quality of education in the arts and culture.

# Chapter 5: So? Taking the longer view

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## 5.1 Introduction

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Generally, Icelandic schools are of a very high standard and education is highly valued. There are many examples of world leading practice in arts and cultural education in Iceland. But even the best of systems have room for improvement. This chapter examines some key areas for development and the attempts being made to address quality learning.

## 5.2 Teacher education

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- **Innovative, passionate and committed arts teachers are needed if arts education is to reach a high standard**
- **While there were concerns about falling standards of arts education within teacher education numerous instances of high quality teaching were observed in Iceland**
- **The aim and vision of teacher education is unclear and mixed**
- **There is insufficient time given to art and culture within teacher education**
- **Many students are leaving teacher education without having the skills and knowledge need to be effective arts educators**
- **Knowledge and skills of evaluation, research and reflection are lacking in teacher education**
- **Teacher education providers could become important in lifelong approaches to teachers' professional development**
- **It is reported that initiatives in teacher education have been reduced, rather than increased**

Above all, it is the quality, enthusiasm and skill of a good teacher that is at the heart of all successful arts programmes. Throughout the research, many of these wonderful teachers have given generously of their time and expertise to contribute to this research. High quality teachers are a powerful intangible resource that ensures the quality of arts education for children. The majority of schools visited have specialist teachers for the arts.

Despite this, major concerns were raised about the overall quality of teachers with teacher education being seen as a major challenge. Teacher education was identified as being a major factor leading to lower quality of arts and cultural education. It was widely felt that standards in teacher education were falling. There was less time and emphasis given to arts and cultural education within initial teacher education; and, that teachers especially in the compulsory school lacked the basic skills to be able to teach arts education. Comments such as the quotes below were made on a frequent basis throughout the research:

Most teachers are not able to teach art. They simply do not have the confidence. Their own knowledge of and education in the arts is so limited.

We need more basic training for all teachers on how to teach creatively [This point received a lot of support and agreement].

Teachers need broader education to open minds and learn to cooperate.

We need new teachers to open their minds to the arts and to respect and believe in the art.

We need artists to become school leaders. When we see this happen, the whole school will change.

Teachers need to be taught how to communicate with parents.

Teachers need good access to current research and how they can use this to improve education.

Teacher education needs to take a serious look at itself.

The vision and aim of primary teacher education in the arts is unclear. The majority of primary teacher education in the arts is very practical and students learn very little theory or about research in – or approaches to – arts and cultural education. Conversely in the academic

training of senior secondary arts teachers, the opposite is true, with the students mainly receiving theoretical training with limited or no practical classroom application.

The reductions in the time and scope of arts and cultural education within general teacher education have made the teacher education institutions have to develop a sharper focus for their courses. There has been a steady decline in the amount of arts and cultural education received by trainee teachers. For example, for pre-school teacher education, the total number of compulsory ECTs (credit points) for the arts in 2000-01 academic year intake was 27. By 2009-10 this had fallen to 23 ECTs. While this drop is regrettable, the picture is even more pronounced in the compulsory, compulsory school training. In this course, there were 8ECTs compulsory for all trainee teachers for arts and cultural education but no compulsory units by 2009-2010. While it could be argued that the compulsory units have (at least in part) been replaced by more optional units (up to 20 ECTs open choice for general teachers and 80 for specialist teachers) this falls short of a uniform cultural education for all teachers (as is increasingly being considered a requirement for teachers in the EU).<sup>34</sup> Some respondents blamed the high cost of preparing arts educators as the reason why courses had been reduced, as is evident in the following comment:

The answer is better education for the teachers... but this is changing fast, to get the artists in the schools costs money... we should discuss how to do this in a cheaper way... people don't know what were doing, think perhaps we're only decorating... it's not the conditions only but the mind... They [University of Akureyri] shut the music teachers dept. down 2006 because of cost. Only three people were allowed to finish the programme... only 2 general music teachers with education, 2 others interested.

It was widely reported that there was a shortage of qualified teachers in the arts, especially in the woodcraft and music areas. As stated by the General Music-Teachers Association; "There is a lack of qualified teachers. Teachers need to be qualified." And the following comment from the arts academy; "The most important thing in Iceland is to improve the general music teacher education". In music particularly, this shortfall of teachers is being relieved by international teachers, as the following examples shows:

Music school teachers are very international. For example, 3 teachers come from Poland; 3 come from Estonia; and one comes from Hungary. It is more difficult to get teachers in the regional locations and this is where teachers are most likely to come from any part of the world. Icelandic music is built by foreigners e.g. Austrians, Czech, Hungarian, Finnish musicians. The rock and pop music area seemed to be one where there was a particular shortage of teachers. Pop and rock music is a growing area. Every child wants to be a star in a rock band.

Compulsory schools do not have enough music in them. No one wants the hard job of teaching music in the compulsory school. These precious music teachers will not do it; nobody wants to do it. There is also a lack of dance and drama and this is a big problem. Singing is also a problem though it depends on the individual school and their individual system. Music schools should be made to have to teach in the compulsory schools.

We would like to have more dance, but it is difficult to get a teacher...

70% of teachers are foreigners – from Scotland, Finland Spain, and Lithuania. This is however changing now. Five Icelanders have called for a job this fall. This has never happened before.

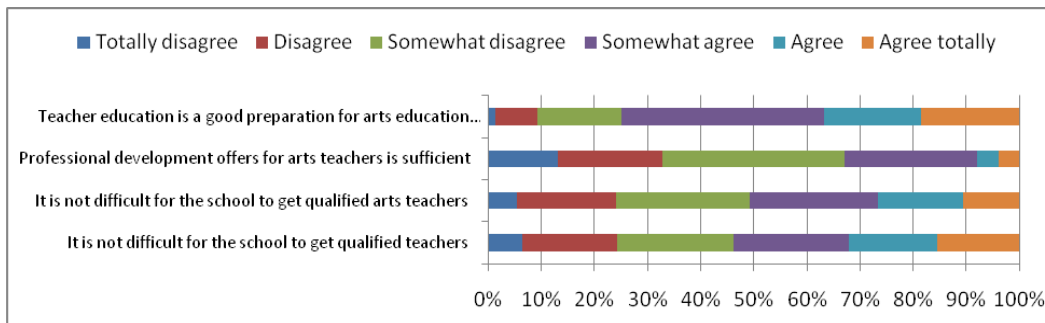
Pop and jazz has been getting more popular, but difficult to get teachers in these areas. Two dance teachers live in Ísafjöldur, one from Boston and one from Finland. The American can't teach all styles like the Icelanders or the Fins.

Figure 5.2.1 shows that 68% of respondents felt that there was insufficient professional development. Similarly, 25% had difficulties with recruiting qualified staff, while 25% felt that teacher education did not provide 'good preparation' for teachers.

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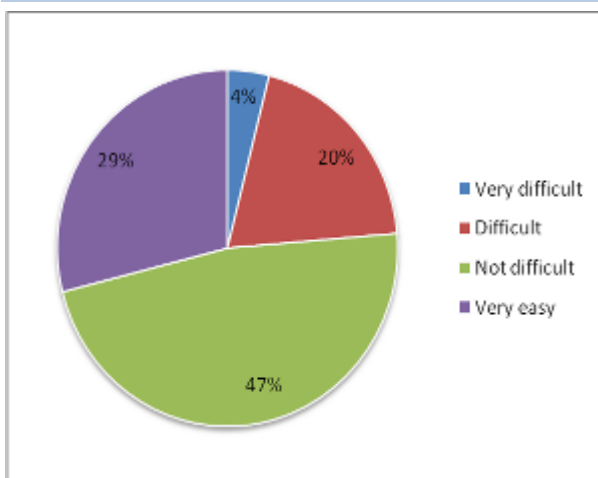
<sup>34</sup> Based on figures provided by Anna Kristín Sigurðardóttir Head of the Faculty of Teacher Education at the University of Iceland, February 2009.

Figure 5.2.1 Availability of qualified teachers



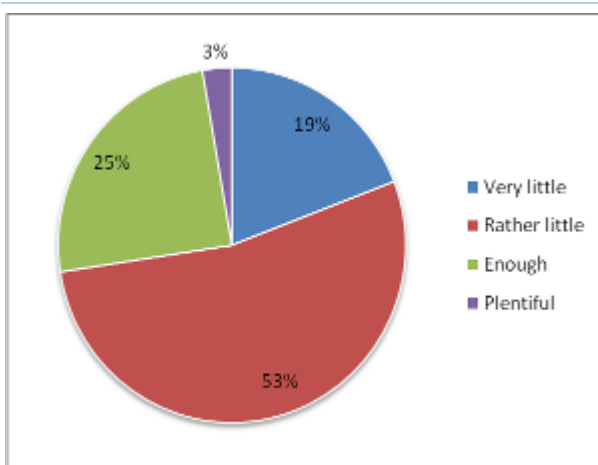
These findings were also replicated in terms of the degree of difficulty of hiring teachers with 24% of schools reporting it as being difficult or very difficult (Figure 5.2.2).

Figure 5.2.2 Difficulty of hiring teachers to the music schools



In music schools there was widespread reporting of a lack of availability of teachers, with 72% reporting either very little or rather little availability (Figure 5.2.3)

Figure 5.2.3 Availability of music teachers



It would appear that the lack of availability of teachers may also be due – at least in part – to policy which limits the number of arts places available within higher education and perceptions within higher education about quality and selection processes, as the following vignette (5.2.4) indicates:

*Vignette 5.2.4 Our selection process might be tough*

This is an independent institution under contract to the government. The process is very selective. Around one in five of the valid applications get into a course. There are government quotas. For example, there are only 10 places in theatre every year. The academy argues "there is not much more talent than that each year". They further add, "Our selection process might be tough but 97% of students compete within the 4 years".

The Arts Academy has cooperation with the 2 universities in Iceland in relation to art history, art theory, business and marketing. There is no cooperation in relation to education or arts education. The institution is growing its research culture, but at the moment does not have any research degree students. They contend in relation to arts education that they focus on discipline methods and hope to produce "terrorists in the school system".

They acknowledge that there is a growing demand for a broader vision of arts education. In response to what they perceive as being a need for better quality, they are introducing a Masters programme: "The most urgent thing is better qualifications for teachers and continuing education. Teachers need better grounding in the art form before they can teach it. Generally the teachers in the compulsory school have not had enough training in their discipline...We are developing a Masters level course for leaders and entrepreneurs working in arts and culture. We need good leaders in the field and best practice models. You might say we want to train the super teachers. We have a strong desire to strengthen leadership."

Certain groups seem to be particularly effected by a shortage of suitably qualified teachers. For example, there was a lack of special education trained music teachers: "There is a serious lack of teachers trained to teach special education pupils. Most music schools will not accept these children. We could easily fill at least 150 spaces per year, and that is only in this area." Teacher recruitment in rural and isolated areas was also perceived to be particularly difficult: "Arts and cultural education teachers in Icelandic schools are generally well qualified and professional. The exception to this is the lack of trained arts teachers in more isolated rural and regional locations. This is particularly the case for woodcraft and music teachers working within the compulsory school environment."

The training of teachers appears to be a contentious issue within Iceland. Most people interviewed had strong opinions on teacher education and saw the research as an opportunity to reflect on the current state of teacher education. A similarly open attitude to revision and review of the current situation was displayed by some of the key providers of teacher education as the following vignette indicates:

*Vignette 5.2.5 This is a contentious area of investigation*

This is a contentious area of investigation in Iceland. Compulsory school teachers require an education diploma. This is currently under revision, but is currently made up of 50% field work and 50% free choice of didactic courses. There is no compulsory arts and cultural education for compulsory school teachers and comments from teacher education staff indicate that the majority of early childhood teachers have some compulsory arts education but it appears that arts and cultural education for the compulsory school teacher would depend on their level of interest and thus elective chosen.

For example, in early years a typical pattern might include 2 courses in visual arts, 4 units in music and 2 units in both textile and drama for all students. Conversely, only small number of compulsory school teaching students (generally less than 10%) choose the arts based electives. For example, only around 8-10 students graduate as trained wood and metal work teachers despite a shortage of teachers in this field. For example, a school told me "We do not have a trained woodcraft teacher. We have not been able to get one for two years. We have someone who comes in from the local community." Actually, this school is lucky compared to others. "The untrained staff we have all been here for several years and they are good"

In the major teacher education provider in the country, selection of the arts specialisation is much lower than most areas (for example, home economics is more popular than the arts). If students choose arts electives or to 'major' in the arts, it is possible that up to 1/3 or even more of their course could be in the arts. Even then, this is all discipline-based training with a lack of general education in creative and cultural education and the ways in which arts-based pedagogies can improve overall school performance.

Some subjects, such as music in general education are changing. While the majority of music teachers in the system train as music specialists (not teachers), music in teacher education is being expanded to include aspects of dance and drama and to build possibilities with connections to other subjects. Unfortunately only around 7 teachers are graduating every second year from this programme, and will not redress the shortage of music trained general teachers in basis school.

There is a general feeling that the situation in teacher education had become worse in recent years. Conversely, there appears to be a genuine interest to improve provisions in the minds of the deans of the various training organisations. As one dean commented, “We are looking to the report to provide inspiration on how we can do things better. I am adamant that art, culture and crafts needs more support and we want to make strides in that direction.”

Concerns were also raised about the quality of teacher education received. A generally held perception was that teacher education had become too narrow and that there was significant general educational benefit in all teachers having some quality arts education as part of their training. These comments from school principals are typical of many opinions expressed:

I think teacher education needs to be better. Some teachers are very good with the arts but others have not got any confidence. At this school we try and target creative teachers and especially seek out teacher trainees with a special interest in the arts. We are not systematic about teaching teachers to be creative. We should change all the names of the subjects. Good arts education can open your mind to creative pedagogy. It's not about the arts; it's about helping the child to learn through their senses. Instead we train teachers to be blinkered <makes a blinked action with his hands around his eyes> Teacher education neglects arts education.

Teacher education is getting too narrow and too much based on lecturing. There is not enough time experimenting and working with children. It is too academic and all from the book. The university forgets the children and it all should start with the children. They are no longer experimenting. It is just theoretical. There is a trend towards specialists rather than training all teachers to be creative, to work with the arts, to be part of their community and to talk with children and other people. I find I have to teach some of the student teachers that come here to talk. They are so used to being on computers they have lost the ability to communicate. They would rather be teaching in distance learning.

No! No! No! There is certainly not enough teacher education. The teachers need to do much more. (Pre-primary school teacher)

A similar level of concern was also expressed from higher education as this comment from an academic explains:

I am very worried about the quality of teacher education. Teachers need more compulsory training in using creativity and culture in schools... and get further education in creativity. Upper secondary teachers have to have more specialized training. The problem is that teachers don't get enough preparation... there is isolation... Teachers don't get training in mixing arts with all subjects... Teacher education needs to be broader with more emphasis on cooperation – teachers don't have to know everything...We have to broaden education and respect for the arts. Teachers make a difference... strong teachers can do wonders...

Over specialisation within the training of arts educators was also widely criticised by school principals:

As the head of the school I place the emphasis that our staff are teachers first and musicians second. I am not so pleased with teacher education. The academy trains musicians not teachers. We need people who feel confident to work with 8-14 year olds. We need people willing to work in schools and with groups of children. Teachers have to feel confident with ensembles. I know this is controversial. I even have to be careful saying this at my own staff meetings. Very few of the teachers here actually have a teaching qualification. The majority are conservatorium trained or are professional musicians without training. 75% of the teachers here are foreign and 20% are trained abroad. That means only 5% are Icelandic and trained in Iceland. Teachers are very conservative and tend to teach as they were taught.

By contrast, a focus group representing arts and cultural agencies including galleries, theatres and museums felt that the situation had improved over the years and that teachers were much better educated today – relatively recent though that teachers received education in drama.

There is a lack of connection between the teacher education provisions in the university and those in the conservatoire and art academies. In a smaller national system closer collaboration between the arts training and the education training could encourage more streamlined opportunities. This area though is not without tension as discussions are largely unresolved between whether arts experts, with some education, or education experts with the arts make the best teachers. The following vignette<sup>35</sup> (5.2.6) reveals the complexity around these issues in Iceland:

*Vignette 5.2.6 Two different kinds of musician/teacher identity.*

Revolutionary changes have been made over the last decades in the education of music teachers in Iceland. The Music Conservatory used to have an education department until 2001. In that year a new school was founded in Reykjavík, the *Icelandic Academy of the Arts*. As a university, it took over the music education programme – as all teachers' training in Iceland is on University level. The teachers' programme at the *Icelandic Academy of the Arts* is now a one year programme after B.mus degree on instrument and is still developing ways in which it will be organised and delivered.

At the same time the music teachers' programme in the University of Education initiated major changes in their curriculum where future teachers now have fewer lessons on instrument such as piano and focus more on group teaching and teaching methods. If students' knowledge in music is good before they enter the programme it is all very well – but often it is not, and therefore their overall knowledge of music is at minimum when they graduate. The result is that they do not have the capacity to perform what is expected of them as music teachers in public schools.

These two institutions appear to reflect respectively each of the two different kinds of musician/teacher identity. On the one hand the Academy emphasises the 'musician' and musical development, whilst the University of Education is widely seen as neglecting the continued musical development of students and places a significant emphasis on pedagogical issues and the making of 'teachers'.

It could be simplistic to blame only pre-service teacher education. Such an idea fails to recognise that professional development of teachers in service (especially in the middle years of their teaching career) might provide a better key for unlocking the potential within schools. The UNESCO report suggests that while initial teacher education is beneficial, more overall impact can be achieved in changing attitudes and structures within schools by focusing on mid-career teachers.<sup>36</sup> As the following quote suggests, teacher education needs to be thought of as a lifelong process, rather than something that occurs only in the first few years of training: "It's important to me how you plan learning as a life long process... learn, teach for a while, then back to school..."

As noted in earlier chapters, the ongoing professional development of teachers is vital for high quality arts and cultural education. As was indicated in detail in earlier sections, the current opportunities for Icelandic teachers are generally expensive, limited, not practical and lacking lifelong learning pathways. To counteract that, teacher education could play a vital role in professional development. But instead of this being a focus area requiring significant expansion, there has actually been a contraction of available offerings in these. Several of the providers also commented there was a lack of demand and attendance at professional development offers: "We have tried to make offers to teachers and the union of textile teachers in compulsory school wants this but then no one comes and every one says that time is too short."

There are also a range of smaller providers that offer courses in the arts for perspective teachers. For example, The Icelandic Musicians' Union (FIH) has an 'Academy'. This training prepares teachers, but it is not officially recognised as a teaching qualification. This teacher training is an extension of previous programmes. It covers working with ensembles; teaching

<sup>35</sup> This vignette is based on an unpublished paper provided by Kristín Valsdóttir, February 2009 p7

<sup>36</sup> (Bamford, 2006) p 74.

beginners; pedagogical training; communication and observation of teachers inside and outside schools. This course started 2 years ago as extensions of the music programme, but less than 50% of the students take this pathway.

It was also argued that the lack of distance education courses in the arts limited professional development.

To get qualified the music teachers have to go to Reykjavik for qualification. Why can music teachers not get qualifications without going to day school in Reykjavik? This appears really important point. This has been an option for general teachers so why not in music?

The counter position though argued that a distance mode may not work for the arts, as the following quotes suggest:

We don't do distance learning. I don't think it works for this type of learning <arts education>. I am personally into it <distance learning> but it's no good for arts education. We tried it and student evaluations were very low. We have given it up in music.

Distance education is good, but difficult to do in the arts – getting the students for 2-3 weeks a year for 2-3 hours, otherwise the only contact is through the computer.

While there is a commitment to research at the policy level, there is less current research activity from the teacher education sector itself. Within the teacher education institutions for primary teachers and the early years of high school, research appears to receive little priority.

### 5.3 Quality monitoring

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➤ **The arts educational community in Iceland needs to consider methods of quality assurance that are appropriate in this context**

Within Iceland there are claims of good quality and equally strong claims of falling quality. The contention of this research would be that in a general sense and compared to other countries, Iceland has a strong commitment to the arts and the quality is strong.

To ensure this continues to be the case and that areas that can be enhanced receive adequate attention, ongoing systems of quality monitoring should be considered. Peer evaluation and international benchmarking should become a regular part of Icelandic arts and cultural education.

There are laws that say that every school should be doing the arts but there is so much decentralisation that we do not know if everyone is following it, are they implementing it; there is no monitoring. The law needs to emphasise checking a lot more. We are waiting for the new curriculum.

All types of arts education should be evaluated, including what occurs in after school activities. Importantly, young people need to be involved in quality monitoring and the results of such monitoring need to be shared with service users and parents. Informally, especially in smaller communities, a great deal of informal evaluation does occur and pupils and parents will make choices in terms of perceived quality, as the following quote suggests:

The parents wouldn't know, but people do ask around. The policy is that the schools should have self evaluation policy in addition to the external evaluation that is done. Annually, we can only externally evaluate few schools – e.g. sample 4-5 preschools and 3-4 compulsory schools. There is no official ranking of schools. There is however more student evaluation in the compulsory schools (standardized tests).

Parents in the focus groups were keen to gain more information about quality and saw quality as being an important issue:

We should focus on the main things and make sure students get quality teaching.

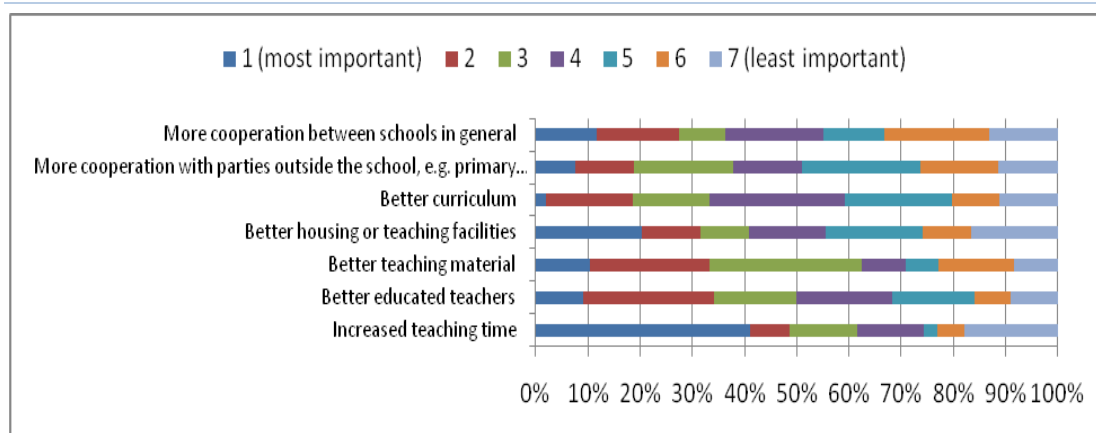
I want my children to have a choice and be taught properly

During the research, various school types were asked about the areas they thought needed improved quality.

In dance schools, the major improvements that were felt to be needed were more cooperation between schools and with parties outside the school, especially compulsory and secondary schools. Only around 60% of dance schools had any level of cooperation with other schools. Other levels of cooperation were similarly quite low. Better teaching material and increased teaching time were also key priorities for improvement. Of lesser importance – but still a priority – were better educated teachers.

In music schools, increased time was seen as the major area needing improvement (see Figure 5.3.1).

Figure 5.3.1 Improving arts education in schools (Music)



There are many assumptions about the quality of music schools in Iceland but these are largely made without reference to external benchmarking. It is argued that “Our music programmes are a very good system and have produced many good professional musicians. We are good compared to the Scandinavians.” An FIH staff member argued that the music schools in Iceland offer good value for money stating that; “Finland has a very high standard but they put a lot of money in. Norwegians are also putting a lot of money in.” As comparative statistics are not available at this stage, it is difficult to ascertain the veracity of this claim.

There is also opinion expressed about quality that counteracts perceptions of quality:

The system of music schools is not changing. Schools are in a dead end. Iceland has the reputation for having famous and well-respected systems, but really music schools are like independent kingdoms. No one is speaking to each other.

Some of the foreign students we reject are better than the local students we accept. We need more dialogue with the colleges informing them about the requirements for entry.

We need to build a lot of bridges. Senior high schools promote the idea of theatre being fun but they do not instil the discipline of the theatre. The standard of knowledge is very rocky. They do not cover enough theory in the high schools... They do not have technical skills.

Similar complaints about quality are made from other art forms:

Applications from abroad are of a better quality (visual arts) Students need more focus on what a good portfolio should look like. We are looking for different students – students with a strong vision. We take no notice of the documents that come from the schools as they are fictional. The preparation they have had at school is often useless. It is usually an insider who determines quality.

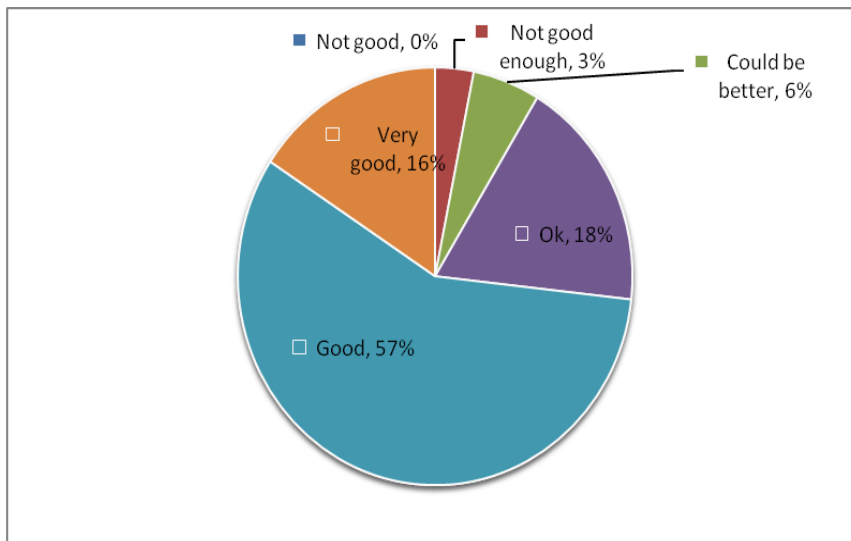
The pupils have had 6 years of textile in the compulsory school but don’t even know how to thread a needle. I think all children should be introduced to the various crafts, but then pupils need to be able to choose. We also need more links between the fields of design. It is a problem, we always try to make things fun. The level of

teachers' preparation is getting so much less and many crafts teachers are not even qualified. It depends so much on the person in the school, so there is such a difference from pupils from one school and the next.

It was not within the scope of this research to 'test' pupils' achievement in the arts nor was it within the remit of this research to pass judgments on the outputs of the arts education in terms of quality. These are however important questions and the arts educational community in Iceland needs to consider methods of quality assurance that are appropriate in this context.

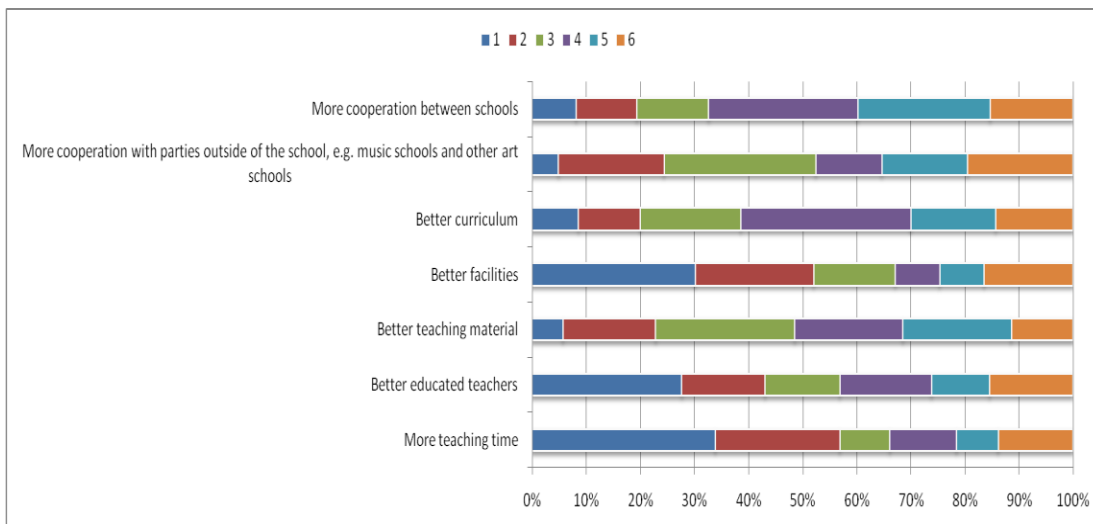
Within the compulsory school, the majority of respondents to the survey felt the quality was good or very good (73%, see Figure 5.3.2)

Figure 5.3.2 Perceived quality of arts education in the compulsory school



The following improvements were suggested for the compulsory school (Figure 5.3.3).

Figure 5.3.3 What could improve the arts education in your school?



# Ranked from 1 to 7 where 1 is most important.

## 5.4 Other matters

The following sections are other aspects of Icelandic arts education that arose in the research. These issues have not been fully researched but may signal areas that will require more sustained inquiry in other related evaluations and/or in quality monitoring.

### 5.4.1 Gender

Anecdotally, there appeared to be a bias towards more girls than boys in a number of arts and cultural areas, especially in music and textiles.

Some of our music courses are only girls. Most courses have at least 60-70% girls

The students in our music school are more than 2/3 girls and only 1/3 boys. The boys are clustered into 2 instruments, guitars and percussion

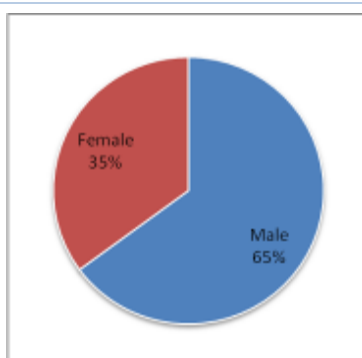
This may be explained historically, as the following vignette suggests:

#### *Vignette 5.4.1.1 This is a complex issue in Iceland*

This is a complex issue in Iceland. Traditionally, girls did cooking and sewing and boys did woodworking. But in the 1970s the women's revolution came to Iceland. Then boys and girls became mixed in those classes and then I think for 30 years we have been trying to work it out. The textile teachers and the wood teachers have to dumb down what they do to try and please everyone. The boys are not interested in textile so you have to do something like making fishing flies to keep their interest. What then happens is that pupils entering college know only a recreational view of textiles. It is undervalued.

While girls may be over represented as participants in arts and cultural activities, the reverse is so in the management of arts schools. For example, 65% of music school principals are male (see Figure 5.4.1.2)

*Figure 5.4.1.2 Gender of the school principal (music)*



### 5.4.2 Talent development

Arts and cultural education is generally held in mixed ability groups. The exception to this rule is music (as taught in music schools) that is predominantly individual lessons. Children in music are taught in three main ability bands and there are a range of extended opportunities for pupils with talent, such as ensembles, master classes and enhanced provision (extra classes, extended aural or theoretical training). A relatively small number of students do more than one instrument. This has fallen more since the economic downturn. For example, in one music school, only 12 out of 300 pupils did more than one instrument. Consideration could be given to a scholarship programme for talented children in the arts.

There has been an argument that a special 'school' was needed in Iceland for elite talent development for 14-16 year olds. This would not seem to be the best option at this stage as there appears to be adequate opportunities for talented individuals to continue to develop their talent in a more connected and socially embedded way. As one respondent highlighted; "This

argument for an elite talent school is the wrong way around. You don't start with the building. It is not the way to do things. You need schools that are socially involved and connected."

Within the general arts and cultural provisions in schools, there are opportunities for pupils to initiate a range of extended experiences. These are common in the secondary school and at the college level. These can range from talent quests to 'clubs'. For example, pupils with interest and talent might collaborate on making a short film or producing a play. There are national contests that are popular and promote this kind of initiated activity. Many schools have contributed additional funds from the school budget to employ professional artists, performers and directors to work alongside groups of talented young people. This embedded catering for talent is a strength of the Icelandic system and should be encouraged.

### 5.4.3 Rural locations

While mentioned in the section on accessibility, several people in more isolated rural areas of Iceland made detailed responses to the special challenges (and sometimes benefits) of such a location. In a general sense, the comments were often similar to the following quote: "There is a lack of respect for arts in the countryside. The government think it is only what is done in Reykjavik that is any good. It is very hard to build something. The money is always short term and then you get it only once and never again. Everything is like that in Iceland." While the results of the survey and research visits tend to indicate that per population density, regions of Iceland outside the capital are quite well served for arts and cultural provision, feelings of being a 'special case' were often expressed. Once again, a more detailed analysis of this position fell outside the scope of the study, but to be inclusive, these views have been presented as a series of vignettes in this section. The vignettes reveal some of the practical problems, special benefits, achievements and beliefs on the ground in rural areas and may provide insight to those charged with implementation of policy. The submissions presented in the vignettes are complete narratives covering a number of points, so they are presented in their entirety and not analysed.

#### *Vignette 5.4.3.1 Both policy and neutral forces are causing a stronger focus on Reykjavik*

There is always a tension between what happens in the capital and the activity in the regions. Both policy and neutral forces are causing a stronger focus on Reykjavik e.g. financing, support systems. You are also affected by the perceptions of credibility. If you are in the capital you are seen as being more credible, but in fact some of the most interesting work is going on in the regions. In these areas, they uphold the professionalism of the artists. It is a feasible place for artists to live and work. You can develop ideas. We have so many artists for a small place.

This school is a relatively new school. It is set in a town where fishing is the major industry. The population is relatively young. The school is attractively designed and well equipped. The school has specialist arts rooms set at the front of the school. These rooms are well equipped and the school walls have well presented displays of children's creative efforts. The school has a strong arts focus.

There are three choirs in the school and a brass band. They hold regular concerts and have a big bands concert before Christmas. Over one third of all pupils attend music school which is located in a newly built wing attached to the front of the school. All pupils in grades (1-7) sing in choirs. There is compulsory music up to grade eight and after that time there are several electives in music that are popular with the students.

All pupils in grades 1-10 learn dancing. Dancing is taught by a trained dancer.

The school does not have a hall, but a cleverly planned 'open' foyer space provides a great venue for the dance lessons. The school does major performances three times a year in an adjoining sports hall and both the parents and community attend.

In addition to music and dance, pupils get 2 x 40 minute lessons per week including graphic design, textile and metal work. They have not had a wood craft teacher for the last 2 years as they have not been able to find someone to do the job. The principal said, "We have tried a lot. Maybe a carpenter could come. Maybe the recession will make it easier to get a teacher as some will come back to the profession".

For older pupils, there are electives in photography and film making. Pupils from the school won a small photography and short film contest for 66° North. The filmmaking elective is more popular with boys, whereas most other electives in the arts are more popular with girls.

Assessment of the arts is done in the same way as all other assessment. The pupils receive a report twice a year and the arts teacher writes a comment and can give a grade. The arts teachers also participate in the parent teacher interviews. Drama is not taught but twice a year the school pupils put on a play. The principal of the school is a committed amateur actor and so takes the 3 oldest classes to make a play. He says, "The pupils really love it. It is a big production".

Class teachers are also encouraged to use creative ways to teach. Twice a year they get a visit from the "Music for All" programme. The school also pays for a small theatre group to visit the school once or twice a year. The principal comments, "The last group dealt with social issues. They were excellent and suitable for all ages. Even the teachers learnt from it."

The theatre groups charge between 40,000-60,000 ISK to come to the school. The school takes the pupils every second year to Reykjavik to visit the national gallery, art gallery and museums. The parents' association pays for the pupils to go to an evening at the theatre during their visit.

The pupils usually prefer to see a musical. The school is also actively involved in the national talent quest competition and do a series of in school 'talent quests' as a lead into the bigger event.

The principal comments, "I am quite surprised when I describe it how much we are actually doing in the arts. We have quite a lot of foreign students, mainly Filipino and Polish and we cater for them through the arts. The arts really work as they connect people. It is a common international language. All students love dance and music. We try to integrate creativity into all things that we do, but it is not always a success. The principal finishes, "Parents say they are very happy with the school".

#### *Vignette 5.4.3.2 Everyone sings along in the school*

The small compulsory school is erected by the banks of a frozen river. It has 36 pupils between the ages of six and 16 years and seven pupils under five. They are mostly from the three towns that used to exist and come from a radius of about 40 kilometres, to get to the school. School buses go out each day and pick the children up.

Art is in all grades. There are four groups across the whole school. Group one has students in grades one to three, group two grades four to six, group three grades seven to eight, and group four grades nine to ten. Group one gets four classes in art and one in music, each class is 40 minutes long. They also have two classes in wood and textiles and they swap around having half a year of wood and half a year of textiles. They also have cooking but the Principal said he was unsure if it is part of the arts or not. In the second group they do two classes in art, one for music, and one also for textile and wood which once again is spilt across the year. They do two classes in cooking. In the grade five they also have two classes a week, additional, in Lego building and can choose this and other subjects over the three semesters. Group three has one lesson a week in music, and four lessons where they can have electives. Most have to choose one elective for one semester then move to the next. The most popular electives are wood, textiles, digital photography, sports and cooking.

A quote from the school principal indicated that "the pupils are doing a lot of integrated learning, there is a lot of working together, the art teacher and the regular teachers work together. For example we are learning about wind, so what we did was we integrated this with history and with art, we work on related theme topics.

We do have specialist teachers, a specialist wood teacher, a specialist arts teacher who comes from America, a textile specialist and a music specialist. But the music specialist has 30 years of experience but not formally qualified. Most of our teachers are not officially qualified because it is hard to attract teachers in this remote area.

We are also a base for a music school, which we hold in the basement of the school. About 80 to 90 percent of our pupils do extra music. There are two teachers, and very high amounts of our students go. The parents have to pay for the instruments.

Once a week the whole school and the teachers meet together and sing a song. We make song books for the school, including some popular Icelandic folk songs. This was a new initiative in the school and they all liked it. Everyone sings along in the school even the older children sing along.

We've also started a dance group, someone came from the cultural museum and they taught dance, it was linked to history as it was all about eating traditional Icelandic foods and showing the old dances. We all danced and it was

fantastic and I'd like very much to be able to continue dance. I'd like to have dancing for all students in the spring and we are working hard to get a dance teacher as I think dance is very important.

Because we are so isolated, I tried to bring in visiting performers. Every class group does a theatre production or small play before Christmas and everyone goes on stage and everyone is in the performance. It's a great family occasion, we drink cocoa, dance around the Christmas tree, and share a meal. We also have an annual festival on March the 20<sup>th</sup> or sometime usually near Easter. We put a lot of work into that and once again we do one large play where everyone is on stage, everyone has to say something. Teachers help too, they sew costumes and so on. It's really not normal lessons in the lead up to that; it is all centred on the arts. This is very popular and everyone wants to go to it. Parents pay to go and that is great as it helps us to do a school trip. Last year our trip went to Denmark.

We try to do a trip every three years but I do not know if we will be able to do that in the future. The parents also support the trip by raising money. We also try to go to the larger town nearby, definitely to visit the museum and art collection. We try to go on Thursday and come back on Friday, but once again this is paid for by the parents and I'm not sure in the future we will be able to do this. We usually do it in the spring when the weather is better, but we have to get a bus and pay for food and accommodation. We try to subsidise it but we have to pay for teachers and extra parents to come too as young children must have their parents with them. We try to work with the parents association. The budget has not changed so far.

There has always been a lot of art here, we are very rich in culture and we have well educated families to support the arts. We try to develop the children's talents as we think the arts are very important. It's interesting because the maths teacher even says the arts are really important. The teacher in the highest grade is teaching history and Icelandic but she is actually a trained arts teacher; that is how we integrate things. We work a lot on the arts in all lessons, some teachers are better at working with the arts than others, but still, all teachers have something to do with the arts. The parents are really supportive and I am really supportive of the teachers.

I'll try to take some of the teachers' lessons so they can finish their qualifications. We are working on assessments; we take notes and evaluate the children. We do reporting in November and February and this is through a parent teacher meeting. All classes get a grade in the arts and we also give them a comment or special words and we try to find something for everybody. Parents are very supportive and in a recent survey we were found to be very good and very few children have left. Some people even come to this area because the school is so good.

#### *Vignette 5.4.3.3 Rural music school*

We are a very established music school. We have been running for over 35 years and have 150 students who are learning instruments or singing. We have a connection to the general school in the first and second grades, where they get lessons in an introduction to music. This is paid for by the community. Pupils can also start coming to our classes privately from seven years of age onwards.

In the music school, 85 percent of our pupils are under 18 years of age. They can choose any instrument and specialise in either pop or classical music. We have 12 teachers but four of our teachers only work part time most of which are working in the elementary school.

It is very hard to get good Icelandic teachers to come to this part of town, 70 percent of our teachers are foreign. We hope that we will have more Icelandic teachers in the future because of the economic situation. Our teachers currently come from all over the world Scotland, Finland, Lithuania, Spain and Germany. They don't have courses in pedagogy as teachers, most of them are musicians but they have quickly become part of the local music scene. Some of our courses are also taught by our secondary students they get credit if they come and work with us.

We have four official concerts per year and a chamber concert once a month. We also do impromptu concerts such as playing for the pre-primary school or at the old people's home. We try to be accessible for all pupils, some people haven't been trained. We had one child last year who had hyperactivity and previously we had one with down-syndrome, but this year we have no children with special needs.

We do not have a waiting list and everyone can come if they want to come. About one third of the town's children do attend the music class. The music school is in the new building as the previous one was affected by an avalanche. It's interesting in the beginning it would mostly be just music and everyone would think it to be positive.

The pupils pay around 45 thousand ISK per year for one instrument if they do a full programme of study. It is one hour of private tutoring which is usually taught as two 30 minute lessons. They also have to do a theory class and oral training. Some additionally participate in a string orchestra or a brass group, we do not charge anymore for that.

Before I came here no-one was doing theory classes but now it is like a rule. If you are over 10 years of age you have to do a theory class. Some of the pupils are not happy with that, they do not want to take the exam as they do not want to do theory. I think this is a real issue about theory and practice. The pupils have to take an exam and get a certificate; some just get a certificate with a grade and comments. The letters with the grades and comments go home to the parents. We have external examiners that come to the school.

We want more cooperation with the compulsory school and we would like to work during school. I think it would be better for everybody if the music lessons were during school as by the time the children get here they are very tired and do not want to learn their instrument as they have had a full day of school. But we need to plan a new music school that would go alongside the elementary school. Many students have gone abroad once they have finished their music studies to continue it further. There is an art academy for music but it is quite difficult to get into that.

Music lessons in school have been in good shape but it is still difficult to get teachers as there are not enough teachers able to teach music in school. Teaching music in the elementary school is very difficult as you have 26 lessons a week and a new class every time. More people become teachers in compulsory schools as opposed to music schools. Music teachers are not qualified as public school teachers and this is a problem. The compulsory school is taking good care of the arts but music is still ignored; "It's the belief that you guys in the music school can do it, it's easy to skip it if you do not have a qualified teacher".

## 5.5 Market research

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In the process of completing this research, it became apparent that some areas of arts and cultural practice lacked sufficient available data to make informed conclusions. This was particularly the case (as previously indicated) in terms of impact data of cultural activities at the local level, especially for events and festivals. Festivals are a very strong feature of Icelandic culture and the number of these and the attendance rates appear to have risen sharply in recent years. Starting from Easter, there are festivals everywhere. They are generally free and cover a broad spectre of cultural activities. There have not been studies of the effect of all these local festivals – on the economy, on tourism, on creativity. As one cultural official commented; "You never know actually what is going on. I think there is a website, but Iceland should be marketing these festivals to the world. The open homes festival was an example of outstanding 'ground up' initiatives. Professional programme 800 people attended." In another example a cultural officer at the town of Ísafjörður was contacted and asked if the economic impact of culture or cultural festivals in Ísafjörður had been studied. The research team asked particularly about the highly successful "I never went south" festival. The officer stated that; "There had been talk of doing this but nothing had yet been done." It is important to track impact and change over time and to account for this in terms of economic, social and cultural value added.

Concurrently, statistics on the creative industries should be collected in Iceland under the same categories as these are more generally collected throughout Europe to make benchmarking and tracking more effective. For example, in Iceland, statistics could be gathered under the following industry headings: advertising, architecture; arts and antiques; crafts; design; designer fashion; film and video; interactive leisure software (e.g. worth £503 million in 1998 in the UK); music; and performing arts. The use of these more global categories would enable swifter international comparisons and better national tracking; they would also represent closer alignment with more 'cutting edge' future practice.

The shortcoming in the collection and reporting of cultural data is well summarised in this quote; "Policy level and organizational level... Lots of good ideas... The evaluation should come afterwards... Total lack of methodology and evaluating... so we can learn and have a background of ideas..."

## 5.6 Other challenges

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At the end of each interview or focus group conducted over the course of the research, participants were asked to identify the one thing they would most like to see changed or

improved as a result of this research. The following is a summary of responses (note: these are not presented in a priority order, but simply ordered to represent a similarity or theme).

#### Music schools

- Music schools tend to work in isolation.
- Music schools should be expanded to cover all the arts forms.

#### Integration

- Stronger arts line as standard.
- We definitely need more drama and theatre.
- Creative learning should be more integrated.
- You need both education in and through the arts.
- Every teacher should be able to use drama.
- Every art form can be incorporated.
- There should be art in every room in schools not just the art room.
- The most interesting art can occur when the art forms work together.
- The arts need to be combined more into regular school.
- The structure is not working. We really need to open the doors
- Need more art appreciation.
- More cross disciplinary teaching.
- Need to promote idiosyncratic aspects of culture.
- Need to encourage fearlessness... trying new things.
- A creative revolution.

#### Partnership

- More funding for collaboration.
- More funding to work across communities.
- Connecting art more closely with heritage and community centres.
- Greater connections (e.g. an online catalogue of festivals and events around the country and searchable by date or area or art form).
- If we had teachers and artists working side by side, that would be the best possible world.
- There are systems of binaries. No one is prepared to cross the lines between disciplines.
- It is very hard to change people's thinking. You almost need to re-programme them.

#### Research and evidence

- We need to be collecting better evidence of impact (all types of impact including economic).
- We could be getting far greater value added from our festivals.
- We need to strengthen and market the identity of arts in Iceland.
- Reporting needs to be greatly improved and should be linked to funding.

#### Funding

- Funding need to be bigger amounts for a longer time (rather than lots of little pots that are not connected).
- The grants are spread too thin.

#### Accessibility

- People with special needs need far more support. There is no equality for this group.

### Creative and cultural industries

- More developments could happen in the area of cultural tourism.

### Teacher education/professional development

- Teacher education is not good and needs to improve.
- The teachers coming out of the academy are not good (they are taught composition but not how to teach). They only do 5 weeks of teaching in total. There is only one specialist training academy and it is just too specific.
- A lot of the arts education in pre-primary school teaching is being reduced and this is a serious problem.
- There are 150 professional development courses on offer but only 2 were in the arts!

### Quality monitoring

- There is not any monitoring of quality.
- The idea that anyone can teach in a music school (arts academy).
- The atmosphere for the arts (arts academy).
- Very little serious critique (everyone gets 4 stars even if it is not good – the system is too small and too personal).
- Basic drawing skills are hopeless.
- We need to take our art to the next level.
- We do not want the standards to go any lower (professional associations).

### Improved implementation

- We need new ideas and a stronger identity for the arts (arts academy).
- More long term partnerships between artists and schools (arts academy).
- Better business processes.
- Good ideas flourish but the process of implementation and evaluation lags behind.
- There is a lack of follow-through. Good ideas emerge, but that is where they stop.
- There is a lack of connection between schools and the creative industries.
- Don't change the amount of time given to arts education within teacher education (actually need to return to previously higher levels) (professional associations).
- We need a stronger focus on cultural education (professional associations).
- We are afraid things are going to be reduced (professional associations).

### Pay and conditions for teachers

- There needs to be salary parity for all teachers and for outside teachers (such as music teachers) working in the school (professional associations).

### School leadership

- Principals need more education on the value of arts and culture (professional associations).
- Principals play a major role in improving the vision of a school (professional associations).

# Chapter 6 Recommendations

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## 6.1 Introduction

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The invitation to conduct this research is reflective of the openness of the Icelandic system. Throughout the research, the respondents at all levels have been welcoming and honest and have shown the highest level of motivation to ensure all children in Iceland receive the best possible education in the arts.

It is hoped that this research report presents an authentic picture of these voices and that as it is read, arts and educational colleagues can feel a strong affinity with the strengths, challenges and recommendations being highlighted.

This chapter succinctly presents the main recommendations emerging from the report.

## 6.2 Recommendations

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There are 5 major recommendations from this research:

### **1. Policy and implementation**

**1.1 Media education should be further developed**

**1.2 Clear lines of learning need to be developed for the arts to cover all a child's education**

**1.3 More integrated, creative learning through the arts be promoted**

### **2. Collaboration and sharing**

**2.1 Moneys should be specifically tied to sharing good practice**

**2.2 Stronger partnerships with the creative industries should be developed**

### **3. Accessibility**

**3.1 A committee should be formed with the specific task of encouraging diversity and monitoring issues of accessibility**

**3.2 Music schools need to more specifically address children with special needs**

### **4. Assessment and evaluation**

**4.1 Strategies for assessment and evaluation are very limited within arts and cultural education and this area needs further research and development**

**4.2 Simple models for determining quality in arts education need to be developed and applied**

**4.3 Data needs to be collected on the economic, social and cultural impact of the creative industries in Iceland**

### **5. Teacher education**

**5.1 A review of teacher education is currently underway and the results of this research and other research needs to urgently be enacted to improve teacher education in the arts**

**5.2 Closer monitoring of the quality of arts and cultural education within initial teacher education is required**

**5.3 More post-graduate places need to exist for professional degrees for practicing artists (across music and all the art forms) and teachers (at all levels) to enhance their qualifications in creative and cultural education.**

## 6.3 Areas requiring more research

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While the previously listed recommendations are based on detailed evaluative research, there are areas that will require more research. These include:

- Teacher education
- Impact of creative and cultural industries

In addition to these areas, media education, links with creative industries and gender equity in the arts should also be further investigated.

A committee should be formed to oversee the responses to the recommendations. Actions emerging from these responses should be evaluated to determine their success.

#### 6.4 Conclusions/Future directions

Quality arts education programmes have impact on the child, the teaching and learning environment, and on the community – but these benefits were only observed where quality programmes were in place. By world standards, Iceland has very high quality arts education that is valued by parents and pupils and is given a core position within Icelandic society and education. Given the level of support for this research and the open and enthusiastic attitude and dedication and determination of the Icelandic education and arts community the future looks very promising.

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