Icelandic Education: Tradition and Modernization in a Cultural Perspective

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In Memory of my Mother

VIGDIS GUDMUNSDOTTIR HANSON

December 9, 1896-April 10, 1978
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful acknowledgment is extended to many—-in the United States and in Iceland—who contributed to this study and made it possible. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Rosemary V. Donatelli, my major advisor, as well as to Dr. Gerald L. Gutek and Dr. John M. Wozniak who also read this paper and made valuable suggestions.

I also acknowledge the assistance rendered my by Mr. Vilhjalmur Bjarnar, Curator of the Fiske Icelandic Collection at Cornell University and to Dr. Finnbogi Gudmundsson, Director of the National Library of Iceland.

Numerous individuals in the Ministry of Culture and Education in Reykjavik were always willing to assist me in my research. Special thanks is due Hordur Larusson, Director of the Division of Educational Research and Development. I am also indebted to many principals and teachers in Iceland.

Special thanks is due Joan Allman for patience in typing the manuscript.

My greatest debt is owed to my mother who always encouraged me in my endeavors and in whom all the best of Icelandic culture was found. Shortly before the completion
of this study, she died. To her memory this work is dedicated in grateful thanks for the heritage she has passed down to me.
PREFACE

Materials for this dissertation were gathered at Cornell University where the resources of the Fiske Icelandic Collection, the largest library of Icelandic materials in North America, were made available for my use.

Additional research was conducted in Iceland. Materials were gathered at The Ministry of Culture and Education, The National Library of Iceland and various educational institutions. This was my fifth visit to Iceland, or perhaps more correctly, my fourth visit, because during the academic year 1961-62, I resided in Iceland as a teacher at the school operated by the United States Naval Station at Keflavik. During that year in Iceland, I visited numerous schools and made the acquaintance of several educational leaders and teachers. This dissertation is the result, therefore, of a long-standing interest in education in Iceland.
VITA

The author, George Hanson, is the son of George William and Vigdis (Gudmundsdottir) Hanson. He was born in Chicago, Illinois.

His elementary education was obtained in the public schools of Chicago and secondary education at Lake View High School, Chicago, Illinois, where he graduated in 1952.

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While at Loyola University, he was selected a Loyola University Fellow for the 1977-78 academic year.

From 1957 to 1961 he was a teacher in the public schools of Chicago. During the 1961-62 school year he was a teacher in Keflavik, Iceland. In 1964 he became a librarian at Mayfair Junior College (now Truman College) in Chicago. He currently is chairman of the Learning Resources Center of Truman College.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For over eleven hundred years Icelanders have lived in Iceland--far to the north at "the gates of the world." They have preserved through centuries of poverty and great hardships in a land "... only just habitable"\(^1\) a cultural heritage going back to the age of settlement. They created and preserved a literature which, according to Dr. Gabriel Turville-Petre of Oxford University "... became the richest and most varied of medieval Europe."\(^2\)

The cultural heritage which has come down to this generation is primarily a literary one. Painting and music are only recent developments. There are no ancient buildings in Iceland, the oldest being only a few hundred years at the most--and they are very few. Yet almost every farm in Iceland has a historical heritage. Many such places still bear names which go back a thousand years and are often associated with figures mentioned in the sagas.

\(^1\)Sigurður Thorarinsson, Island/Iceland (Munich: Hannes Reich Verlag, 1955), unpaged.

Dr. Gylfi Th. Gislason, Minister of Culture and Education from 1956 to 1971 and one who has been deeply concerned about the preservation of the cultural heritage in an age of rapid social and technological change, has summed up this heritage as follows:

The history of Iceland is unique in the history of western nations. It is not special because it is the history of one of the smallest nations inhabiting an independent modern state in our world. What makes it unique is the alteration there has been between splendor and humiliation, destitution and prosperity. At one time Iceland enjoyed freedom and self determination, while at another she had to suffer oppression and loss of liberty. The nature of the country, which enchants the people with its beauty and majesty, has at times been its most sworn enemy. But what is most remarkable about the history of Iceland is that it is not solely one of colonization, the establishment of an unusual state, its fall and restoration, a struggle against foreign domination and for improved welfare. It is primarily a story of spiritual aspiration, of the splendid medieval culture of an independent and prosperous nation, of centuries-old juxtaposition of poverty and poetry, of amazingly varied modern culture in a small, sovereign technological state.

The most notable thing about Iceland's history is that early in the Middle Ages there should have arisen in the country a special national identity, that there should have been preserved a special language and created a culture, which is Icelandic and has for nearly a thousand years had its own special characteristics.

From all of this has arisen a culture, which is part of the flesh and blood of earlier generations and of themselves, and which affords enjoyment and happiness. 3

The keen awareness of the cultural heritage is further appraised by Dr. Kristjan Eldjarn, President of Iceland

In their isolation in the northern seas, the Icelanders preserved the cultural heritage of the North-Germanic peoples better than their neighbors. And from this heritage sprang that remarkable culture of the Icelanders in the Middle Ages which is so apparent in their literature, poetry and historical writings. The Old Icelandic sagas are a contribution of the Icelanders to the culture of the world. They have a deeply ingrained awareness that they have preserved a significant cultural heritage, and they have a strong desire to guard it at the same time that they seek to establish a culture both international and worthy of modern life in that hard, magnificent, majestic and wonderful land which they own and inhabit.⁴

This cultural heritage has always been the possession of all Icelanders through the centuries. Few nations, as has observed a current writer on Icelandic culture, ". . . are more historically conscious or have closer links with their past than the Icelanders. . . ."⁵

Dr. Sigurdur Nordal (1886-1973), an eminent interpreter of Icelandic culture, has written: "The destiny of the Icelanders has been strongly influenced by traditions of their origins and earliest history."⁶

Lord Bryce, the distinguished ambassador to Washington and interpreter of the American constitution, visited


Iceland in 1874 on the occasion of the country's millenium. He wrote, as quoted by Helgi P. Briem, that the Icelandic people have been

... from the beginning of its national life, more than a thousand years ago, an intellectually cultivated people which has produced a literature both in prose and poetry that stands among the primitive literatures next after that of ancient Greece if one regards both its quality and quantity. Nowhere else, except in Greece, was so much produced that attained, in times of primitive simplicity, so high a level of excellence both in imaginative power and brilliance of expression.  

Societies are never in equilibrium. They are constantly in the process of change and this change has been more rapid in the modern era. This is especially true of Iceland which during the present century has experienced a very sudden transition from poverty to prosperity and from isolation to contact with other countries of the world—an isolation which has not been broken since the time of the settlement and the republic when Icelanders were possibly the most traveled people in the world. This social change from an almost medieval world to the modern world of the twentieth century has been so rapid that centuries old traditions have been challenged and have been in the process of being adapted to a modern world.

Professor C. E. Black of Princeton University in writing about "the agony of modernization" has concluded that of the problems of modernization, "... one of the

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7Helgi P. Briem, Iceland and the Icelanders (Maplewood, N.J.: John Francis McKenna Co., 1945), p. 82.
most fundamental has been that the construction of a new way of life inevitably involves the destruction of the old. Modernization must be thought of, then, as a process that is simultaneously creative and destructive. . . . 8

This problem in the Icelandic context has been stated by Gylfi Th. Gislason as follows:

Concern has been expressed at times in recent decades lest elements of Iceland's ancient cultural heritage be lost, or at any rate endangered, in the confusion of the affluent society. There is no doubt that young people in Iceland, as in all neighbouring countries, are growing up under conditions dominated by the cool and impersonal spirit of technology, by the influence of the mass media whose methods are sometimes less than honest, and by an alluring entertainment industry. Yet these are world-wide phenomena. 9

Then the former Minister of Culture and Education asks the all-important question—"But how does the Icelandic cultural heritage fare in such a world?" 10

Education, in one form or another, has existed in Iceland for almost as long as it has been inhabited. The purpose of this study will be to investigate the impact of modernization and outside influences on education in Iceland and the attempt on the part of education to preserve traditional cultural values. Special consideration will be


10 Ibid.
given to the last decade during which considerable changes affecting education have taken place. During recent years important legislation regarding education and the educational system has been passed by the Althing (parliament), and currently several bills pertaining to education are before this body.

Several writers have written about education in Iceland. The most important work is "Education in Iceland: Its Rise and Growth with Respect to Social, Political and Economic Determinants."\(^{11}\) This comprehensive work covers the history of education in Iceland from the beginning to 1966. The only other work in English is History of Education in Iceland\(^{12}\) which covers the history of education to the World War II period—just short of 1946 when educational legislation of major importance was enacted.

A very reliable and important source in Icelandic is Stutt Yfirlit um Skolamal a Islandi, 1874-1944\(^{13}\) by a former Commissioner of Education and a very important figure in recent educational affairs. Saga Althydufraedslunnar


\(^{13}\)Helgi Eliasson, Stutt Yfirlit um Skolamal a Islandi, 1874-1944 [A Short Survey of Education in Iceland, 1874-1944] (Reykjavik: Rikisprentsmidjan Gutenberg, 1945).
a Islandi\textsuperscript{14} is an excellent history of public education written on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Icelandic Primary School Teachers Association. Um Menntamal a Islandi 1944-1946\textsuperscript{15} deals with the important education act of 1946, but it includes in an introductory chapter a summary of the history of education in Iceland. Several very important figures--Jon Sigurdsson (1811-1879) and Gudmundur Finnbogason (1873-1944), to mention only two--have written on education. Their works will be mentioned later.

In English there are, among others, three books of importance on the history of Iceland. History of Iceland\textsuperscript{16} is an authoritative and scholarly work and in English it has no equal as a source of historical information relating to Iceland. Iceland, Old-New Republic; A survey of Its History, Life and Physical Aspects,\textsuperscript{17} written by a former teacher, is a very reliable source. Northern Sphinx; Iceland

\textsuperscript{14}Gunnar M. Magnus, Saga Althydufraedslunnar a Islandi [A History of Public Education in Iceland] (Reykjavik: Samband Islenzkra Barnakennara, 1939).

\textsuperscript{15}Gunnar M. Magnus, Um Menntamal a Islandi, 1944-1946 [Education in Iceland, 1944-1946] (Reykjavik: Menntamalaraduneytid, 1946).

\textsuperscript{16}Knut Gjerset, History of Iceland (New York: Macmillan, 1924).

land and the Icelanders from the Settlement to the Present, written by a literary and drama critic for Iceland's largest daily, Morgunbladid, and the principal of one of the largest correspondence schools in Iceland, is the most recent account of Icelandic history and culture.

Of the works in Icelandic relating to the history of Iceland only a few major sources will be mentioned. Saga Islendinga is a multi-volume history written by scholars. On the occasion of the eleven-hundredth anniversary of the settlement of Iceland, a new history, Saga Islands, was published as a multi-volume set which is still in progress. The most comprehensive and scholarly account of the history of Medieval Iceland is Islandinga Saga which has been translated into English by Professor Haraldur Bessason, Chairman of the Department of Icelandic Studies of the University of Manitoba, under the title, A History of the Old Icelandic Commonwealth.

Of works relating to the culture of Iceland, Islenzk

18 Magnusson.


Menning\textsuperscript{22} is the authoritative work. Another scholarly account of Icelandic culture is Gullold Islendinga; Menning og Lifshaettir Fedra Vorra a Soguoldinni\textsuperscript{23} by a Professor at the University of Iceland. In English one of the best accounts of Icelandic culture, ancient and modern, is The Problem of Being an Icelander; Past, Present and Future.\textsuperscript{24} Because of the valuable insights provided by this work written by a former Minister of Culture and Education, reference will frequently be made to this book.

Iceland, 874-1974\textsuperscript{25} is an extremely valuable handbook. The various sections about the history, life, culture and physical aspects of Iceland are written by nearly fifty scholars, teachers and writers. The section on education, for example, was written by Andrei Isaksson, Professor of Education at the University of Iceland.

Material relating to recent developments in education in Iceland has been gathered at the Menntamalaradu-\textsuperscript{Nordal.}

\textsuperscript{22}Jon Jonsson Adils, Gullold Islendinga; Menning og Lifshaettir Fedra Vorra a Soguoldinni [The Golden Age of Iceland; The Culture and Living Conditions of Our Forefathers During the Saga Age] 2nd ed. (Reykjavik: Steindorsprent, 1948).

\textsuperscript{23}Gislason.

\textsuperscript{24}Iceland, 874-1974; Handbook Published by the Central Bank of Iceland on the Occasion of the Eleventh Centenary of the Settlement of Iceland, eds. Johannes Nordal and Valdimar Kristinsson (Reykjavik: Isafoldarprentsmidja, 1975).
neytid\textsuperscript{26} (hereafter referred to as The Ministry of Culture and Education) and various educational institutions in Iceland. Because this material is too numerous to enumerate here, reference should be made to appropriate footnotes and the bibliography. Such materials include, among others, recent educational legislation and bills before the Althing, as well as directives, syllabi, statistics and other publications of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

A very complete bibliography of works relating to the history of education in Iceland to 1966 is found in the dissertation by Dr. Bragi Straumfjord Josephson.\textsuperscript{27} The Catalogue of the Icelandic Collection Bequeathed by Willard Fiske at Cornell University\textsuperscript{28} is the primary bibliographic source. The yearbook\textsuperscript{29} of the National Library of Iceland contains the national bibliography until the 1975 yearbook. In 1974 the national bibliography was separated

\textsuperscript{26}See Glossary of Terms.

\textsuperscript{27}Josephson.


\textsuperscript{29}Landsbokasafa Islands [The National Library of Iceland], Arbok, 1944- [Yearbook, 1944- ] (Reykjavik: Prentsmidjan Hólar, 1945- ).
from the yearbook and was issued as a separate publication.30

Any consideration of recent developments in education must consider the historical antecedents. This is especially true regarding Iceland where cultural traditions have been so much a part of the national life. The first part of this dissertation, therefore, deals with the historical background, with special attention directed toward a survey of the development of early cultural traditions.

30 Landsbokasafn Islands [The National Library of Iceland], Islenzk Bokaskra, 1974- [Icelandic National Bibliography, 1974-] (Reykjavik: Rikisprentsmidjan Gutenberg, 1975-).
CHAPTER II
FROM THE AGE OF SETTLEMENT TO THE REFORMATION, 874-1550

Iceland is a large island in the North Atlantic. Having an area of about 40,000 square miles, it is the second largest island in Europe and the third largest in the Atlantic ocean. Geologically it is a young country where the forces which have shaped and still shape the world may be observed—a land which geologists have called "... the most interesting laboratory in the world."¹ Iceland has rightly been called the land of "frost and fire," and these forces which have shaped the land have also shaped the lives and destiny of the Icelanders.

Only about one-fifth of Iceland is habitable and these areas are along the coast and fjords and in the valleys. The northern tip almost touches the Arctic circle which runs through the small island of Grimsey off the north coast. The eastern coast is 180 miles from Greenland, the closest neighbor. Most of the land is covered by lava, glaciers (among them Vatnajokull, the largest glacier in

¹Evelyn Stefansson, Here Is the Far North (New York: Scribner, 1957), p. 82.
Reykjavik, place where the first settler of Iceland established his home and now the capital of Iceland.

Skalholt and Holar, ancient episcopal seats and centers of learning.

Thingvellir, the ancient seat of the Althing.

Fig. 1.—Map of Iceland
Europe) and mountains, as well as the uninhabited high interior. There are numerous waterfalls and rivers, as well lakes, but there are few trees. Until recently the only crop grown was grass, but the rivers and ocean abound in fish and during the summer the island is the nesting place of many birds.

Despite its northern latitude and cold sounding name, Iceland has a climate—thanks to the Gulf-stream which nearly surrounds the island—far less cold than might be expected. The temperature during the summer months is usually around fifty-five degrees, while during January, the coldest month, it is around the freezing mark. During the month of June there is continuous light, while during December the sun shines only a very few hours.

The Greek historian, Polybius, told of a Greek sailor, Pytheas, who, sailing from Marseilles visited a land after a six day voyage from the northern British Isles in 325 B.C. This land, known to the ancients as Ultima Thuse (the most remote place in the world), has often been associated with Iceland.

The first historical mention of Iceland was made by Iceland's first native historian, Ari Thorgilsson (1067-1148), called "the learned," who wrote that at the time of settlement

... there were some Christians here ... whom the Norwegians called papar (priests). Because they would
not live among heathens, they went away from Iceland, leaving behind Irish books, bells and croziers, all of which goes to show that these men must have been Irish.  

Although no extant copy of Ari Thorgillson's Islendingabok (Book of the Icelanders) has survived and what he wrote has come down as quoted by other writers, it is generally accepted that his information is correct.

Three names are associated with the first recorded voyages to Iceland. According to the Landnamabok (The Book of Settlements) a viking called Naddodd, along with others, was driven off course when he set sail from Norway for the Faroe Islands and "came to a vast country." He stayed there a short time, and upon sailing away, he noticed that snow had fallen on the mountains; therefore, he called the country Snowland.

The Landnamabok also relates that a Gardar Svararsson, of Swedish stock, went out in search of Snowland, and upon arriving there, he sailed around the country, concluding that it was an island. Gardar sailed back to Norway--"full of praise for the new land"--which he named after himself.

Floki Vilgerdarson--"a great viking"--set off in

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search of Gardar's Isle and spent the winter there. He was ill prepared to spend a winter there and his cattle died of starvation because of lack of hay. He did not feel well disposed toward the land as the following account from the Landnamabok relates:

The Spring was an extremely cold one. Floki climbed a certain high mountain, and north across the mountain range he could see a fjord full of drift ice. That's why they [Floki and his followers] called the country Iceland, and so it's been called ever since.4

The first permanent settler of Iceland was Ingolfur [Arnarson] who arrived in 874. Casting the pillars from his heathen temple in Norway into the sea off the coast of Iceland, he found them later at Reykjavik where he built his home. Soon other settlers arrived, many of them known by name.

Gwyn Jones, writing about the world of the vikings, gives the following reasons for the settlement of Iceland:

The presence of a vast and for the most part unsailed ocean to the west of Norway and the British Isles was a constant challenge to the land-hungry, wealth-hungry, fame-hungry vikings of Scandinavia. As soon as they had ships fit for its waters it was a challenge they accepted. The motivating force of the Norwegian sailings west, the colonization of the lesser Atlantic islands, and thereafter of Iceland and Greenland, and the attempted settlement in America, was a need for land and pasture. Fittingly enough, Iceland, whose soil the Norsemen made so devotedly their own, would prove the one lasting "pure" Norse colonial experiment overseas. . . .5

4 Ibid.
During this period Harald the Fairhead became King of all Norway after winning the battle of Hafrsfjord in 872. Rather than submit to "the harsh overlordship" of King Harald a substantial number of petty kings and earls emigrated to Iceland. Thus, the settlement of Iceland has also been attributed to a strong individualism and love of liberty of the early settlers.

Jensen describes the early settlers as follows:

Of a superior type, they were well-born men--petty kings, earls and nobility--and were practical idealists. Most of them came from Norway and were chieftains or sons of chieftains, descendants of Scandinavian Vikings, seamen of genius, full of vitality, possessing ability to fight, organize, and rule, and eager to exploit new countries which they could hold, they left their native land.6

Sir William A. Craigie, the eminent scholar and editor of the Oxford English Dictionary, also describes the settlers as being of noble lineage:

Not a few of these settlers belonged to old and famous families in Norway, and some of them were closely connected with kings and earls there, or in other Scandinavian countries. When these removed to Iceland, they were accompanied by many of their adherents and dependents, and asserted for themselves in the new land the leading place they had held in the old. To such settlers it was a source of pride to recall and recount the names and exploits of the famous men to whom they were related; and an immense quantity of old lore, reaching back into early prehistoric times, was thus carried out to Iceland, and preserved there after it had been forgotten in the place of its origin.7

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7 William A. Craigie, The Icelandic Sagas (Cambridge:
Sigurdur Nordal, on the other hand, suggests a more cautious interpretation of the noble origins of the early settlers:

The view that Iceland was settled by a select body of men is of long standing. Old Icelandic sources contain much evidence in support of this view, both in genealogies and in character delineations. On the basis of these sources, as well as various aspects of the Icelandic civilization that have been found remarkable, later generations have entertained rather grand ideas about the settlers. Foreign scholars have expressed themselves on this point even more forcibly than the Icelanders themselves.⁸

At this point, Nordal quotes from the Norwegian historian, Ernest Sars, who writes in the _Odsigt Over Den Norske Historie_ (Oslo, 1873) as follows:

"The settlers belonged to the Norwegian aristocracy of holder (freeholders) and hersar (local chieftains). They represented the most unbending and stiff-necked section of the aristocracy. . . . Thus it may be said that the family groups which settled in Iceland were the most Norwegian of all Norwegians, la creme de la creme—that part of the Norwegian population which had developed the most distinctive characteristics. . . . There can hardly have existed any other society in which in proportion to the population, there were found so many great, noble, and high born families as in Iceland during the first centuries after the country was settled."⁹

Nordal advises that:

Historians, however, should make only the most sparing use of the notion that the noble extraction of the settlers is the foundation on which the history of the Icelanders rests.¹⁰

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⁹Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 79.
The settlers of Iceland were actually of mixed stock. The Norwegians sometimes sailed to Iceland by way of Ireland where some of them settled for awhile before continuing on to Iceland or stopped long enough to pick up slaves. Some scholars have claimed that Irish blood in the Icelanders may be as high as 35 percent.

The period of colonization (874-930) was rapid and by its close the population of Iceland, as estimated by some scholars, was about 50,000.\textsuperscript{11} At that time most of the land had been claimed and settled.

In 930 there occurred one of the most remarkable events in the history of Iceland. The Althing (Parliament) was founded on the plains of Thingvellir, about thirty-five miles to the east of Reykjavik, and Iceland became a republic during a time when most of Europe was ruled by kings. The Althing was composed of thirty-six godar (local chieftains) holding the godord which could be inherited or sold. (In 965 the number of godar [sing. godi] was increased to thirty-nine.) In addition the godar selected liegemen to act as their counselors and thus the membership of the Althing reached a maximum number of one hundred and forty-seven by the end of the tenth century.

The country was divided into thirteen local districts in which there were three godar. Local things

(parliaments) were also held in these districts for a while under the leadership of the godar. The country was also divided into four quarters, each of which had its own thing.

The supreme power, however, rested in the Althing which met for several weeks each summer. The President of the Althing (logsogumadur), elected for a period of three years, was obliged to recite from memory each year at the meeting of the Althing one-third of all the valid laws of the country and all the parliamentary rules. The real power of the Althing, however, did not rest in the hands of the executive, but rather in the judicial and legislative branches.

The Icelandic republic was firmly based on law, causing Adam of Bremen in 1075 to comment: "They have no kings, but only laws." The local chieftains who composed the parliament were men of reason who believed that "upon law the foundation of the nation rests." Magnusson states: "If ever there was a real-life approximation to the Platonic ideal of the enlightened ruler, we find it among the Icelandic chieftains."\textsuperscript{12}

Jensen sees this republic as unique among the nations of the world at this period:

They drew up a remarkable Constitution, different from any other of which records remain, and formulated

a body of elaborate and complex laws, which later resulted in political unity and justice by law. While other nations in the world were floundering in the dark ages and organizing for war and engaging in it, Iceland, without bloodshed, was establishing this Republic, with its legislative assembly, which later was to create enlightened laws to keep peace and give equal opportunity to everyone.13

There was later to be bloodshed, however. There is no doubt that the Icelanders were devoted to the sword as well as to reason and order. In this dualism--mind and might of arms, along with a weak executive on the part of the Althing--lay the seeds of destruction of the Icelandic republic that was to come about three hundred years later.

The Althing which met each summer was more than a legal gathering. It was an annual event with great significance for the cultural development and education of the Icelanders. Gislason describes the important role of the Althing in the national life:

The meetings of the Althing each summer were the main event in the national life of the time. People flocked there from all parts of Iceland to a sort of national festival. Tales were told and poems recited, there were sporting events and all kinds of entertainment. Relatives and friends from distant districts met there. People made new acquaintances and friends. Young men learned of the legislative work and the judicial activities of their elders. Old stories and verse were recalled, and young bards introduced their works. News from foreign lands was disseminated. Fine clothing and splendid weapons were displayed.

Probably few things contributed so greatly as the assembly at Thingvellir every summer to make the Icelanders one nation and Icelandic culture that independent entity it became already in the first few generations

13 Jensen, p. 21.
after the settlement of the country. There is nothing to indicate that any other nearby nation celebrated any similar sort of national festival each summer, where all the most important and the best of the common national heritage in law and justice, art and brilliance were narrated and displayed. Those wise men who conceived the idea of founding the Althing played a greater part than any others in making Iceland into the nation that it became, and it is largely thanks to them that Icelanders are still living in their country as an independent state.\textsuperscript{14}

During this period of national development, Iceland, although situated far to the north, was not isolated from contact with other countries and cultures. Quite the contrary was true, as Nordal explains:

Far too many scholars outside Iceland entertain the absurd notion that the Icelanders reached the development attested by their ancient literature because of their isolation, living as they did in self-sufficient solitude in a remote land and on remote farmsteads. Nothing could be further from the truth. On the contrary, the Icelanders were among the greatest globe-trotters of Europe during the tenth to the thirteenth century; moreover, because of the Althing, they had a unique opportunity, upon returning home, to make their experiences abroad widely known.\textsuperscript{15}

The extent of their travels was great, as Craigie explains:

For several generations close relations were maintained not only with their original home in Norway, but also with Sweden, Denmark and the British Isles. Apart from the risks involved in crossing the wide stretch of ocean, risks which were reduced as far as possible by sailing only in the summer, there was no difficulty in keeping up an intimate connexion \[sic\] with these countries. The Icelander, in fact, had exceptional qualifications for doing so. He spoke a language which at


\textsuperscript{15} Nordal, p. 276.
the beginning of the eleventh century was still in use over the whole of Scandinavia and in part of Russia, which had also extended its range to the north and west of Scotland, to the north and east of England, to the chief sea-ports of Ireland, and even to the greater part of Normandy. Over the whole of this great area, with its complex nationalities, its varied culture, and rapidly changing history, the Icelander could range with little difficulty, and converse with men of his own tongue. If he were still more adventurous, he could make his way down the great Russian rivers and so reach the court of the Byzantine Emperor, whose bodyguard he would find composed of his own race and speech. Many Icelanders did avail themselves of these opportunities, and everywhere met with the most encouraging reception. Their reputation in general stood very high, either as good and faithful fighting-men, honest and enterprising merchants, or skillful poets and storytellers. In Scandinavia and the British Isles they were usually welcome at the courts of kings and earls, and many of them obtained high positions of trust under these, or received from them special marks of favour or esteem.16

The Icelanders who traveled to such distant and diverse places returned home with a considerable amount of knowledge. Their accounts were eagerly heard by their countrymen gathered at the Althing and then disseminated throughout the country. Such stories were handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation and later committed to writing. To these instinctive historians, we owe practically all our knowledge of Scandinavian history, as well as much that sheds light on the early history of the British Isles, prior to the twelfth century.

The first four centuries of Icelandic history may be divided roughly into the following periods:

16Craigie, pp. 8-9.
874-930: Age of Settlement

930-1030: Saga Age, the period during which the events which are recorded in the Icelandic sagas took place. In many ways, as the sagas, relate, it was a very turbulent age.

1030-1120: Peace Age, when life in Iceland became relatively stabilized and Christianity began to take root. The two bishoprics were established, and along with them schools. Outside influences, largely through the Church, reached Iceland. The Latin alphabet was adapted and foreign works were translated into the vernacular.

1120-1230: Writing Age, when the great literary works of Iceland were written. It was a period of great intellectual activity, both artistic and scholarly.

1230-1264: Sturlung Age, named after the most powerful family in Iceland. This was an age of violent civil strife and conflicts between the leading and powerful families which resulted in the fall of the republic (1262-64). During and shortly after this period some of the finest sagas were written. It has been called, with some justification, the Icelandic Renaissance.

The culture which the settlers brought to Iceland and where it reached its zenith had its roots deep in Scandinavian mythology which found its expression in the Poetic Edda (sometimes called the Elder Edda). Of these ancient poems, the "Havamal" (Sayings of the High One)
contains "... one of the oldest and most remarkable sources on the view of life of the Icelanders."17

The "Havamal" places great emphasis on wisdom, intelligence and understanding—but with moderation:

Happy is the man who has while he lives
Wisdom and praise as well.

A better burden may no man bear
For wanderings wide than wisdom;
It is better than wealth on unknown ways,
And in grief a refuge it gives.

A measure of wisdom shall each man have
But never too much let him know;
For the wise man's heart is seldom happy,
If wisdom too great he has won.18

Other qualities which the "Havamal" say becomes a man best are that he is independent, observant, polite, moderate, faithful to his friends, glad and cheerful, hospitable, generous, brave and winning thereby a good reputation.

One of the "cultural heroes" most admired by the Icelanders is Egil Skallagrimsson, the great tenth century poet. He was, on the one hand, an individual of great artistic and intellectual accomplishment—poet, scholar and sage; on the other hand, he was a man of action, an entrepreneur, although often cruel, avaricious, coarse and


mean. Snorri Sturluson (1178-1241), poet, historian and politician; Hannes Hafsteinn (1861-1922), poet and Iceland's first native prime minister and Einar Benediktsson (1864-1940), poet and financier, also represent this type of "cultural hero."

During the Icelandic republic a strong and original culture, based on ancient roots and contemporary foreign influences, had developed. Dr. Gudmundur Finnbogason, one of the eminent interpreters of Icelandic culture and an early and very influential leader for public education in Iceland, has written about this culture as follows:

The gifts of the strong Norse stock have perhaps become more versatile and more fertile owing to the mixture of races. The new problems presented by the new, varied and difficult land stimulated the mental faculties. As the settlers went to Iceland in order to preserve their liberty and to live in accordance with that part of their ancient culture which was most precious to them, but had however at the same time to adapt themselves to new conditions of life, this led on the one hand to conservatism and on the other hand to initiative in meeting new demands and needs. The consciousness of the danger of isolation, and the ambition not to be inferior to others, has been an incentive for Icelanders to acquaint themselves as well as possible with the culture of other nations, and to learn from them whatever might be of use; and indeed this fear of isolation has always remained with the Icelanders, and has directed their attention abroad whenever there was an opportunity to learn something from other countries.19

The character of the Icelanders was chiefly molded by their strong sentiment of independence and self regard.

The Icelanders, according to Finnbogason, have always wanted to be aristocrats; indeed, they have "... a deep rooted conviction that they were by nature aristocrats, though they could not be so in practice." The problem arises when everyone wants to be chief and where heroes are veritable human beings, often cruel to others, but likewise unflinching toward themselves; grasping, eager for glory, jealous of their rights, but also ready to cast aside all possessions and life itself when their code of honor demands it.

Quoting Axel Olrick in Nordisk Aandslif i Vikingetid og tidlig Middelalder (Copenhagen, 1927), Margaret Schlauch reinforces this concept of their strong individualism: "They are human beings whose will is a colossal power. Their ego is like a block of granite; you can split or crush it, but you cannot bend it." The solution was equality, and this ideal has marked the legislation of the Icelanders and their social life to this very day. To be sure, the aristocratic ideal and the ideal of equality are opposites which are often difficult to reconcile. Nordal has also arrived at this conclusion:

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20 Ibid., p. 22.


22 Ibid.
The two contrasting qualities of the viking civilization—on the one hand lust for power and, on the other, a talent for organization in the face of uncompromising demands for independence, of individualism, and of the desire for equality—characterized the masterpiece of the old Icelandic social order and national life; the Icelandic "Aristo-democracy" (hofdingjalydraedi).

Finnbogason also describes the ancient Icelandic republic as an "aristo-democracy," and quotes Professor Andreas Heusler, whom he regards as one who knew Icelanders and their culture, ancient and modern, better than almost anyone else, in his advise on demeanor toward Icelanders—"treat each man, even if he is dressed in rags, as a gentleman, and you will get on well."  

This absence of class distinction among the Icelanders, which according to Magnusson "... indicates a highly developed democracy, but more correctly ... an essentially aristocratic outlook..." has also been observed by foreigners. Among them is W. H. Auden, who in a haiku stanza from his poem, "Iceland Revisited," written on the occasion of his visit to Iceland in 1964, observed:

Fortunate island
Where all men are equal
But not vulgar—not yet.

One of the earliest and most important decisions of the Althing was the adoption of Christianity in the year

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23 Nordal, p. 120.
24 Finnbogason, Islendingar, p. 248.
25 Magnusson, p. 159.
1000. The viking expeditions had brought the Norsemen in close contact with Christian Europe. Of great importance was the conversion in England of Olof Tryggvason who in 995 ascended the throne of Norway. In his zeal for the cause of Christianity, he sent missionaries to Iceland and in Norway he paid special attention to the visiting Icelanders, whom he sought to convert to the Christian faith. Shortly before the end of the tenth century several prominent leaders in Iceland had adopted Christianity. Among them were Gissur the White who built a church at Skalholt and Hall of Sida. At Kirkjubæ26 a church had existed since the time of the Irish monks.

When the Althing was discussing the adoption of Christianity, information was brought to those in attendance that a volcanic eruption was taking place in Iceland. Some of the chieftains in attendance commented that the old gods were angry. Hall of Sida commented: "At what were the gods angry when the very plains on which we are standing was once a field of burning lava?" (Thingvellir, the seat of the Althing is one of the geologic wonders of the world, being a vast lava field from a volcanic eruption in prehistoric times.)

With the coming of the Christian faith, books

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26Kirkjubæ means church (kirkja) farm (baer). Later when a nunnery was established there, it became known as Kirkjubæjarklaustur. It is still a parish--one of the oldest in Iceland.
written on parchment and in Latin came to Iceland.\textsuperscript{27} With
the Latin language came an alphabet which was better suited
to writing than the ancient runic alphabet. During the early
decades of the eleventh century foreign clergy, mostly Anglo-
Saxon or Irish and known as missionary-bishops, arrived in
Iceland and were probably the only teachers in the country.\textsuperscript{28}
One of the most prominent of them and one about whom we
have some information was a Rudolf who lived in Iceland
about 1031-1049 and who founded a monastery (munkalifi) at
Baer in Borgafjordur. Apparently several monks studied
with him and he preached in the Icelandic language.\textsuperscript{29}

Gissur the White was married three times. His
third wife was named Thodis, and from this marriage
Isleifur (1006-1080) was born. According to the ancient
Biskupa Sogur, Gissur "did everything in his power to
strengthen Christianity" (Hann lagdi allan hug a at styrk-
ja kristina).\textsuperscript{30} He sent his son Isleifur to the famous
monastic school at Herford in Westphalia, which was pre-
sided over by the Abbess Godesti, the aunt of Duke Ordulfur

\textsuperscript{27}Jonas Kristjansson, Icelandic Sagas and Manu-
scripts, trans. Alan Bouchel (Reykjavik: Saga Publishing

\textsuperscript{28}Gabriel Turville-Petre, Origins of Icelandic

\textsuperscript{29}Johannesson, p. 193.

\textsuperscript{30}Biskupasogur [The Lives of the Bishops], 2 vols.
(Copenhagen: Hid Islenzka Bokmentafelagid, 1858, 1878),
1:26-27.
(the Duke was married to Ulfhildur, the daughter of St. Olof, King of Norway). As far as is known, Isleifur was the first Icelander to be educated abroad. He earned considerable reputation for his learning and before returning to Iceland, he was ordained a priest—at the youthful age of twenty-one, and for which he received a special dispensation because of a shortage of clergy in Iceland.

Later Isleifur journeyed to Rome where he had an audience with the Pope. On Whitsunday, May 25, 1056, he was consecrated a bishop by Archbishop Adalbert of Bremen who called Isleifur "one of the holiest of men." Indeed, all the sources relating to Isleifur depict him as a good and highly esteemed bishop.

Isleifur was the first bishop consecrated to serve in Iceland (the missionary-bishops were not assigned to any specific territory). He settled at his father's estate, Skalholt, which became the property of the Church when deeded by Isleifur's son and successor. The historian, Knut Gjerset, has summed-up the new age which dawned upon Iceland when Isleifur became bishop:

The Icelanders were entering upon an epoch of intellectual growth, an era which culminated in the literary golden age of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the greater part of Icelandic history writing and other prose literature was produced. The

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leaven of Christianity has finally wrought its changes. Under its influence young Icelanders were now flocking abroad, not as scalds and warriors, but as students seeking the learning of European universities, and the distinction which could be won through scholarly attainments. A new type of national leaders appeared—schoolmen, historians and high officials in the Christian church—replacing the scalds who had hitherto been the chief representatives of the people's higher social and intellectual life. Not only bishops and higher ecclesiastics studied abroad. Many learned Icelanders of distinguished ability who could find no suitable position in the church entered the monasteries, or lived as private men on their own estates, where they worked as teachers and devoted themselves to literary work. Learning was assiduously cultivated, and schools were organized, not only in connection with the cathedral churches and at the monasteries, but also by private individuals. This love of scholarship, the schools at home, and the number of men who studied abroad, placed Iceland ahead of the other countries of the North in higher intellectual cultivation, and launched the people upon a new national development.32

Bishop Islefur established a school at Skalholt shortly after he became bishop, and, although little is known about it, it is known that chieftains sent their sons there to be educated under Isleifur. Among his pupils were Jon Ogmundarson who became the first bishop of Holar in 1106 and Isleifur's cousin, Kollur Thorlaksson who became Bishop of Vik (Oslo) in Norway. That a bishop in Norway should have received his education in Iceland speaks of the excellence of education at Skalholt.33 The early bishops of Skalholt and Holar, as well as those men who headed the schools at Oddi and Haukdalur, were so well educated that it has been assumed that their schools were not academically

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33 Turville-Petre, p. 78.
inferior to the cathedral schools of southern Europe.34

Two of Isleifur's sons played important roles in early education in Iceland. Teitur (-1110) founded a school at Haukdal, a few miles from Skalholt. Although a priest, he was also an authority on the early history of Iceland. The school at Haukdal was private in the sense that it was not connected with a cathedral. Ari Thorgilsson, "the learned," and, as already mentioned, the first historian in Iceland and author of the Islendingabok (Book of the Icelanders) was among the pupils of Teitur.35

The most influential of Isleifur's sons, however, was Gissur (1042-1118) who succeeded his father as Bishop of Skalholt. Because he had been married twice,36 he went to Rome to receive a dispensation from the Pope before going to Megenberg, where on September 4, 1082, he was consecrated Bishop of Skalholt by Archbishop Hardvig. Like his father he had been educated at Herford and had traveled widely. He was a great statesman as well as an outstanding bishop. He rebuilt the Cathedral at Skalholt, declaring that "... there should always be a bishops' chair there while Iceland is inhabited and Christianity

34 Benjamin Kristjansson, p. 199.
35 Biskupasogur, 1:153.
36 The clergy in Iceland did not always practice celibacy.
He also established through the Althing, in 1096 a system of tithes in four parts: (1) for the bishop, (2) for the church, (3) for the clergy and (4) for the poor. G. Turville-Petre has summed up Gissur's episcopate:

No figure in the history of Iceland was admired so generally as Gizurr [sic], and it could be truly said that he was both king and bishop, for everyone strove to do his will. The years when he was bishop were the most peaceful in the history of Iceland, for the ruling families laid aside their hereditary feuds, and collaborated with the bishop in reforming laws and securing the organization of the Church. 38

The chief of Gissur's achievements was to place the Church on a secure footing and to establish Skalholt as a center of culture and learning and which it remained until the end of the eighteenth century when the cathedral school was closed and shortly after removed to Reykjavik. In 1105, at the request of the people of the north of Iceland, Bishop Gissur gave permission that a second bishop's seat be established at Holar. Jon Ogmundarson (1052-1121), a descendant through his mother of the early champion for Christianity, Hall of Sida, was consecrated Bishop of Holar by Ozur, Archbishop of Lund in Skane in 1106. 39

37 Biskupasogur, 1:153. 38 Turville-Petre, p. 79. 39 The bishops were elected by the Althing and consecrated by the heads of the Church province of which Iceland formed a part--the Archdiocese of Bremen-Hamburg (Germany), later by the Archbishop of Lund in Skane (Denmark) and finally by the Archbishop of Nidaros (Trondheim)
Along with Bishops Islefur and Gissur, Jon Ogmundarson was one of the outstanding bishops of the early years of the Church in Iceland. He had been educated at Skalholt under Bishop Isleifur and had traveled widely. He continued his education in Denmark and Norway and was especially interested in Latin, architecture and music. He was a singer of some excellence and played the harp. During his tenure, he condemned superstitious practices and forbad the use of such names as Thor's day (Thursday) and Frey's day (Friday). After his death, Bishop Jon became known as Jon helgi (Jon the Saint or Saint Jon), though his "sainthood" was never recognized by Rome.

Bishop Jon's chief work was the founding of the school at Holar—a school that was to have as much influence in the north of Iceland as the school at Skalholt in the south. It is the first school about which we have definite information from the Biskupasogur. Among the teachers at this school was a Gisli Finsson from Gautland in Norway. During the last years of the Icelandic republic the Norwegian kings were very interested in securing Iceland as a part of the Norwegian kingdom. Influence in this direction was exerted upon the Church in Iceland through the Archdiocese of Nidaros.

In Iceland Wednesday (Wodensday from Odin) is known as Midvikudagur (Midweek day), Thursday (Thor's day) is known as Fimtudagur (Fifth day) and Friday (Frey's day) is known as Fostudagur (fostu from fasta—to fast).

Jon Ogmundarson is one of the two national "saints" in Iceland. The other is Thorlakur Thorhallsson (1133–1193), Bishop of Skalholt (1178–1193).
(Sweden) who was also the headmaster and who taught Latin. Another teacher was Rikini, and he is described as a Frenchman who taught singing and verse-making. He was also the chaplain.

Many of the chieftains of northern Iceland sent their sons to be educated at Holar—either to the end of becoming clergymen or laymen. In his "Life of St. Jon of Holar," the monk, Gunnlaugur Leifsson gives the following description of life at the school during the time of Bishop Jon Ogmundarson:

Great industry was to be seen in every building of the See; some were reading holy scripture, some were writing, some were singing, some were learning, some were teaching. . . . When the signal for service was given, all of them would hurry from their cells to the church, like the busy bee bringing with them to the bee-hive of Holy Church the sweet honey which they had gathered in the delightful wine-cellars of holy scriptures.43

Among the students during the early years of the Holar Cathedral school were Klaengur Thorsteinsson, Bishop of Skalholt (1152-1176); Bjorn Gislason, third Bishop of

42 There are two lives of Bishop Jon Ogmundarson in the Biskupasogur. One is "Jons Biskups Saga, hin elsta (the old, i.e., the oldest version) found on pages 149-212 of volume one. The other is "Jons Biskups Saga," by Gunnlaug, a monk. Gunnlaug Leifsson was a monk at the Monastery of Thingeyra and died in 1218. It is from these sources that we have information about the life of Bishop Jon and the school he established at Holar. His condemnation of the use of the names of the Norse gods for days of the week is found on page 237 of vol. 1 of the Biskupasogur from the life by Gunnlaug (pp. 213-60).

43 Biskupasogur, 1:240.
Holar (1147-1162); Vilmundur Thorolfsson, first Abbot of Thingeyri; Hreinn Styrisson, third Abbot of Thingeyri; and Bjarni Bergthorsson, a priest and mathematician. Another student whom the monk Gunnlaugur mentions was a "chaste virgin" (hreinferðug jungfru) called Ingunn. According to the Biskupasogur, she was no less proficient in letters than her male companions, and she taught Latin, allowing the students to read their compositions to her while she embroidered stories from the lives of the saints.

Another story is related that Thoroddur Gamlason, the cathedral builder, possessed such a rare capacity for learning that he learned Latin while hearing it being taught to the clerics; in this way he was said to have become very adept in that language.

The second private school of this period was the one at Oddi, an estate of one of the leading families of Iceland. The school was founded by Saemundur Sigfusson (1056-1133) who studied in Paris, likely at the school connected with Notre Dame cathedral. He was called "Saemundur frodi" (the learned), and legends grew about his extensive knowledge. Among his sons were Eyjolfur, a priest, and Loptur, the father of Jon, who became the most

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44 Ibid., p. 241.

powerful man in Iceland in his day, being, as some have said, "the uncrowned King of Iceland." 46

There is information about three men who studied at Oddi. In the times of Saemundur Sigfusson there was Oddi Thorgilsson, son of a chieftain. He was ordained a priest and sources call him a "wise man and most eloquent." 47 Thorlakur Thorhallsson (1133-1193), afterwards Bishop of Skalholt, was a student at Oddi during the days of Eyjolfur Saemundsson. The most famous student, however, was Snorri Sturlason (1178-1241), member of the prominent Sturlung family. He came to Oddi at the age of three and remained there for fifteen years. He was a historian and poet of great stature, being the author of the Heimskringla (History of the Norse Kings), The Prose Edda, and probably of Egil's Saga, one of the greatest of the Icelandic sagas. His early information about the kings of Norway was probably gained at Oddi where he was taken as a "foster son" by a grandson of a Norwegian king.

The cathedral schools at Skalholt and Holar and the private schools at Haukdal and Oddi were modeled after foreign schools. The seven liberal arts—grammar, dialect and rhetoric of the trivium and geometry, arithmetic, music

46 Jon Loptsson (1124-1197) was the son of Loptur and the grandson of Saemundur, "the learned." His mother was Thora, daughter of King Magnus barelegs of Norway.

47 Hermannsson, p. 31.
and astronomy of the quadrivium—were taught at these schools. Icelandic history, literature and language were probably taught outside the classroom. Josephson has the following to say about the curriculum of these early schools:

The curriculum of the Icelandic schools emphasized memorizing Latin verses from the Old Testament, especially from the Psalms of David. Writing was taught by giving the students documents to copy and, therefore, served also as a useful method to reproduce new copies of the valuable documents. Although most books were written in Latin, historians have found it of interest to discover that a large number of books used at Icelandic Schools before the Reformation were written in Greek. For the practice of Latin grammar in the Icelandic schools, Aelius Donatus was the basic source. Other authors commonly used were Virgilius, Horatius, Ovidus, Lucanus, and others. For the study of rhetoric, Cicero, Quintilianus and Augustianus were most commonly used. Logic, however, was considered the most important subject (ars nobilissima).

Of the Quadrivium subject [sic], music was by far the most emphasized in the medieval Icelandic schools. Arithmetic and astronomy were fairly important but geometry, which was closely related to architecture, does not appear to have been emphasized to any degree in Icelandic schools.49

The religious houses founded in Iceland during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were veritable centers of learning and scholarship.50 After the decline of the

48 Sigurdur Lindal, "Upphaf Kristni og Kirju" [The Beginnings of Christianity and the Church], in Saga Islands [The History of Iceland], ed. Sigurdur Lindal (Reykjavik: Hid Islenzka Bokmenntafelagid/Sogufelagid, 1974), 1:262-64.


50 Johannesson, p. 199.
Cathedral schools and during periods when they did not operate, education was carried on in the monasteries. During this period the following religious houses were founded in Iceland:

- Thingeyray, founded 1133, Benedictine monastery
- Munkathvera, founded 1155, Benedictine monastery
- Hitadalur, founded 1166, Benedictine monastery (soon abandoned)
- Thykkvibaer, founded 1168, Augustine monastery
- Flatey, founded 1172, Augustine monastery (moved to Helgafell in 1184)
- Kirkjubæjar, founded 1186, Augustine nunnery
- Videy, founded 1126, Augustine monastery
- Reynistadur, founded 1294, Augustine nunnery
- Modruvellir, founded 1296, Augustine monastery.

The monasteries in Iceland were more nationalistic and secular than elsewhere during this period. The men who entered the monasteries were often elderly chieftain-farmers who sought in them a place of retirement. It was not likely, however, that they would forget their cultural heritage. Although the monastic population was small—usually five to ten members to a house—its importance is far beyond its small numbers. Here some of the sagas were written by anonymous authors. (Of all the Icelandic sagas, only one—Egill's Saga—is attributed to a known author, Snorri Sturlason.) According to Eliassen there were many learned men in the monasteries and most of them maintained schools.

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52 Helgi Eliasson, *Stutt Yfirlit um Skolamal a*
Hood in his history of the Church in Iceland gives the following evaluation of the place of the monasteries in the cultural life of the nation:

The intellectual spirit which animates Icelanders found a home and was fostered in the monasteries. Even though in the dark years of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the clear and sparkling stream of Icelandic literature ceased to flow, yet these communities never failed to offer draughts from the sacred fount of learning.53

In addition to the cathedral schools, the private schools at Oddi and Haukdal and the monasteries, the priests operated private schools where advanced instruction was offered to those studying for the priesthood and instruction in reading, writing and religion for children and youth. According to Josephson, there are many indications that this practice of operating private schools in Iceland during this period was quite common.54

Education in Iceland was more nationalistic than elsewhere. There are several reasons for this. From its beginning, the Church in Iceland was nationalistic. Many of the early bishops and scholars, though educated in Europe and from where they introduced foreign influences, were deeply rooted in the past. They had their feet firmly

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54 Josephson, p. 81.
planted in the secular world and were well endowed with both knowledge and love of the national Icelandic lore.

Most important, however, was the early creation of a native literature of considerable volume and outstanding quality. Elsewhere men of learning were a class apart who wrote in Latin. Almost all Icelandic authors wrote in the vernacular. Religious works were also translated and composed in Icelandic, and other foreign studies were accorded the same treatment. In this way the native literature and foreign works translated into Icelandic became the possession of all people. Jonas Kristjansson has observed this widespread diffusion of writing and knowledge among the Icelanders:

The production of books was not confined to centres of learning, but was carried out in farmhouses all over the country. The most famous Icelandic author was Snorri Sturluson, a layman, and the most famous manuscript, Flateyjarbók, was written in a farmhouse in the north. From the earliest times literacy was general.55

One of the most important agents of education in Iceland has always been the home. The history of education in Iceland, according to Trail, is not chiefly a history of the schools of the country for the role they played in education has until recently been comparatively small.56 He explains this conclusion as follows:

55 Jonas Kristjansson, p. 31.
The schools of the earlier centuries were schools for theologists, officials, and for erudition in the proper sense. They only concerned a minimal layer of the population. The rest were educated by their family or by friends, as "barnfostur," or the custom of offering a son to a friend, and to have the son accepted for the purpose of educating him was a mark of high esteem and friendship.\textsuperscript{57}

Literacy has always been high in Iceland. People in Iceland during the past could read and write when their contemporaries were illiterate. Professor Einar Ol. Sveinsson of the University of Iceland, after an extensive study, concluded that by the end of the twelfth century the greater part of the chieftains and the wealthy farmers were able to read and write.\textsuperscript{58} Jonas Kristjansson writes that "one can scarcely speak of a special class of scribes in Iceland, as in many other countries . . . the ability to write was general."\textsuperscript{59} Trail states that the standard of education in Iceland has been high\textsuperscript{60} and Magnus writes that during the time of the republic "knowledge among the common people of Iceland was higher than in neighboring countries."\textsuperscript{61} Josephson writes that even during the

\textsuperscript{57}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{58}Einar Ol. Sveinsson, "Lestrakunnatta Islendinga i Fornold" [Literacy Among the Icelanders During the Early Centuries], Skirnir 118 (1944): 197.

\textsuperscript{59}Jonas Kristjansson, p. 34.

\textsuperscript{60}Trail, p. 10.

worst of times after the fall of the republic "... the love of books developed into a 'national phenomenon' in Iceland."\(^62\) Finnbogason writes that "the Icelanders have always devoted an attention to poetry unexampled among other nations" and that "it has become a national pastime. . . ."\(^63\)

During the greater part of Iceland's history the kvoldvokur has been a national tradition. The kvoldvokur educated and entertained generation after generation as the family gathered together to read. Vilhjalmur Stefansson vividly describes the kvoldvokur:

A significant force in popular education . . . had been the Kvoldvokur (Evening Wakes) when one person read aloud from the sagas, or recited rimur lays, while the others worked at quiet indoor tasks. The Kvoldvokur usually began in the afternoon, with the start of the early winter twilight, and continued until bedtime; they were held only in the winter when most outdoor work was impossible. In the tenth to fifteenth centuries professional bards went from farm to farm, but later some one person in the family group was selected to do the reading. . . . The Kvoldvokur . . . survived into the second decade of the twentieth century.\(^64\)

Gislason also writes of this love of literature which has been so much a part of the national life:

The literary activity of the Icelanders in those centuries in the sphere of poetry, saga and history has no parallel in nearby countries. This literature became

\(^62\) Josephson, p. 82.

\(^63\) Finnbogason, The Icelanders, p. 20.

\(^64\) Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Iceland, the First American Republic (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1939), p. 86.
the property of the people. Books were passed from one person to another and were copied throughout the whole land.65

Because this literature had early become so much a part of the national life and was the possession of all the people, the literary language became the common vernacular as Finnbogason has observed:

We can hardly speak of a literary language of learned men as being different from the language of the common people. Quite the contrary, the purest language is that which we hear spoken by common men and women in the rural areas. This is the clearest witness that the language of the people has its roots deep in the literary heritage which has preserved our tongue for many centuries.66

Finnbogason also states that the "... stately language . . . unites all Icelanders, high and low, past and present, in one spiritual community."67 But even beyond that, according to Finnbogason, "... it has . . . been the best source of education for the nation."68

The thirteenth century was one of great portent for Iceland. It was, on one hand, an age of great literary creativity; on the other hand, it was a tragic age during which the Icelandic republic came to an end. Dr. Einer Ol Sveinsson, Professor of Icelandic literature at the University of Iceland, has commented:

65 Gislason, p. 29.
66 Finnbogason, Islendingar, pp. 77-78.
67 Finnbogason, The Icelanders, p. 18.
68 Ibid.
The last century of the Icelandic Commonwealth [i.e., the Icelandic republic] is not only one of the most fateful periods in the history of Iceland but also one of the most remarkable stages in the development of its culture. Everyone remembers this century as the time of the disastrous submission to foreign power; that great tragedy tinges with sorrow all our ideas about this age. But other charges as well are brought against it. It is also notorious for every kind of outrage—warfare, atrocities, murders and incendiarism, treachery and immorality. Cold and lowering and grim is the aspect it presents to the mind's eye. But this is not its only visage; like Janus, it has two faces. For this was also an age of tremendous cultural activity. It is the age of Snorri Sturluson and his Edda and Heimskringla, the age of all the anonymous masters who wrote the Icelandic sagas. The contrast between conscious, disciplined cultural achievements and the frenzy of unrestrained vitality is the outstanding characteristic of the age and the riddle of its life.69

During this period great power lay in the hands of the three or four ruling families. There was ever increasing violence as they vied for more power. The Althing was powerless to check this political rivalry. At the same time the Church came under increasing control of the Archdiocese of Nidoros (Trondheim) as foreign born bishops were appointed to the two episcopal seats in Iceland.

As the country continued to move in the direction of civil conflict, the chieftains turned to the King of Norway for aid in settling their internal dissensions. The King used this unique opportunity to achieve the ambition of his predecessors to gain dominion over Iceland. With the view of securing peace and lawful government in the country, the chieftains in 1262-64 entered into a union with King Magnus VI of Norway.

The covenant of union which the Althing made with the King was known as the gamli sattmali (the old pact). Under this agreement, the Icelanders swore allegiance to the King of Norway, not to the Norwegian state. The King on his part promised to maintain peace within the country, adhere to Icelandic laws and send six ships to Iceland every summer. Legislative power was vested jointly in the Althing and the King. In each district a royal official (sysslumadur or district magistrate) was appointed with both executive and judicial powers. He administered justice locally and collected taxes. The crown did not interfere actively in Icelandic affairs until after the Reformation. With the Union of Kalmar in 1397, Iceland came under the Danish crown. With the concept of the "divine right of kings" and an increasingly absolute monarchy, the country gradually came under royal control.

The great creative outburst of the thirteenth century was the culmination of literary production. Although writing continued, and such works as ballads, translations of foreign works and lives of the saints were written, it never reached the level of the classical literature of Iceland.

Gjerset has noted this literary decline after the union with the King of Norway:

Intellectual life continued to flourish, and numerous literary works were written, but a distinct
decline in the quality of literary production becomes noticeable, especially toward the close of the thirteenth century. The old vigor and originality was dwindling. . . .70

During the fourteenth century a series of great calamities befell the Icelanders. The eruption of the great volcano Hakla in 1300, the fifth to be recorded, was followed by violent earthquakes, which resulted in the loss of life and property. Hekla erupted again in 1341 and in 1389. In addition there were recurrent epidemics, mainly of smallpox, which killed hundreds of people. The Black death which swept Norway in 1349 decimated one-third of the Norwegian population. This calamity resulted in one ship sailing to Iceland during that year. The following year, there was no ship recorded in the Icelandic annals as having reached Iceland. This great reduction in foreign trade and the natural calamities which befell Iceland during this period were disastrous.

The fifteenth century proved even more disastrous for the Icelanders. The Black death which ravaged Iceland in 1402-1404 resulted in the death, according to old estimates, of two-thirds of the population. Although this was surely an exaggeration, scholars agree that one-third perished.71

During the republic the Icelanders had been self-
sufficient. After the union with the Norwegian King and later after coming under Denmark, they became increasingly dependent on foreign trade, yet without ships of their own and no control of their commerce. As time went on, both Crown and Church became more powerful. Gjerset succinctly describes the condition of the Icelanders: "Church and state officials vied with each other to collect taxes and dues from the impoverished and suffering people." 72

The Cathedral schools which had been so important a part of education in Iceland also declined. The school at Holar was closed in 1200 due to a lack of funds and was not reopened until 1270. The school at Skalholt was closed in 1236 and nothing was heard about it again until 1491. From 1393 to 1474 there is hardly any mention of schools in Iceland. 73 In addition, during this period few Icelanders sought an education abroad as they did in earlier centuries.

By 1400 much of the old culture was extinct in the national life. Natural calamities increased with greater frequency and foreign rule was an established fact. Foreign born bishops, first Norwegian and then Danish, appointed to the episcopal sees, "... now thought more of

72 Gjerse t, p. 248.
73 Gjerse t, p. 254; Josephson, p. 85; Trail, p. 16.
furthering the temporal interests of the church than of educating the people."  

During this dark night of the nation's history—an "interlude" of more than six centuries—the homes of Iceland continued to educate, generation after generation. Writing about conditions after 1400, Nordal illustrates the deep-rooted interest of Icelanders in education even during the worst of times:

... the later history of Iceland enables us to observe one of the most remarkable examples of cultural activity in history. Here were people living in such abject poverty that they ought to have bent all their efforts to earning their daily bread. They seem, nevertheless, to have felt that they could afford to neglect intellectual matters even less than the struggle for bread; they seemed to have feared the death of the body less than they feared losing their souls.  

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74 Trail, p. 15.  
75 Nordal, p. 100.
CHAPTER III

FROM THE REFORMATION TO HOME RULE, 1550-1904

The Reformation, which came during the lowest ebb of the national life, brought with it violence and bloodshed. The Catholic religion was dear to the Icelanders who did not welcome a change. Gjerset has noted that the Reformation:

... was thrust upon the people almost as a surprise in the form of royal decrees backed by military force... the royal government bent itself to the task of forcing upon the Icelanders the king's religion. The first effect of this procedure could only be negative, resulting in the destruction of what still remained of the ancient culture.¹

In Iceland the Reformation came about in two phases--at Skalholt (1526-1541) and at Holar (1542-1550). During the latter phase, there was great conflict.

Jon Arason (1484-1550), Bishop of Holar (1522-1550) was not only a great church leader and poet, but also one of Iceland's greatest leaders. He was a man of great determination--a born leader, dignified in appearance, popular with his followers, loyal to his friends and ruthless toward his enemies.

The Lutheran faith became established in the south of Iceland largely through the efforts of Gizur Einarsson, Bishop of Skalholt (1540-48), who was a sincere reformer. He maintained such good relations with the Danish king that the Reformation was accomplished in his diocese without trouble. The story in the north of Iceland, however, was different. Although Bishop Jon Arason did not recognize the new religion in the south of Iceland, he did maintain generally good relations with Bishop Gizur Einarsson who, although he espoused Lutheranism, had the interests of the Icelanders at heart. After Bishop Gizur's death, he started a crusade against his successor, Bishop Marteinn Einarsson (—1576). There were clashes at the Althing and elsewhere and Bishop Marteinn was even taken captive by Bishop Jon. The growing opposition to the Reformation in various parts of Europe and a letter from Pope Paul III probably encouraged Bishop Jon Arason.

Jon Arason was finally defeated, captured and,

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2 Pall Eggert Olason, Sextanda Old [Sixteenth Century], Saga Islendinga [The History of the Icelanders] (Reykjavik: Menntamalarad og Thjodvinafelagid, 1944), 4:140.

3 Bishop Marteinn Einarsson was appointed Bishop of Skalholt in 1548, but he was so disillusioned with the lack of sincerity and excesses of Danish authorities that he resigned from his office in 1556.

along with two of his sons who had supported his cause, was executed without trial at Skalholt on November 7, 1550. He remains to this day a national hero, greatly esteemed by the Icelanders. Gislason has summed up the reasons for his popularity as follows:

He fought for the ancient national rights of the Icelanders against the lawlessness of the King's representatives. He doubtless intended to preserve the Catholic faith in Iceland and to prevent the Danish King from gaining complete and final control over the country.⁵

With the death of Bishop Jon Arason the Reformation, which had been supported by both sincere clergy who desired to reform the Church and insincere Danish officials who sought personal gain and more control over Iceland, was completed in Iceland.

A long period of Danish misrule began which Gislason has summed up as follows:

By the Reformation the King acquired one-sixth of all land in Iceland. Heavy taxes were imposed upon the Icelanders. Offices were awarded to Danes,⁶ who ruled with great severity. The King and his representatives assumed the power that had previously been in the hands of the Althing and Icelandic officials.⁷

In 1602 Danish merchants were given a monopoly of


⁶With the exception, however, of the bishops of Skalholt and Holar who after the Reformation have been Icelanders.

⁷Gislason, p. 36.
trade with Iceland—which was strictly enforced until 1854. Anyone caught trading with any other than select Danish merchants faced severe penalties. For example, in 1678 a Pall Torfason bought a couple of fishing lines from an English trawler in exchange for a few articles of knitted goods which the Danish merchants had refused to buy. For this offense he was brought to trial, and, although he pleaded that without the lines he could not continue his fishing, his household articles were confiscated.⁸

In 1662 King Frederik III had himself proclaimed absolute hereditary monarch in Denmark, Iceland and Norway, and on July 28th of that year the leading men in Iceland were required, under threat of force, to take the oath of allegiance at Kopavogur.⁹

Great natural calamities, famines and pestilence continued, with increased severity. Magnusson has summarized the conditions during the latter part of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century as follows:

During the latter part of the sixteenth century epidemics, volcanic eruptions and severe weather ravaged Iceland, and the seventeenth century began with the hardest winters ever recorded in Icelandic history. For four consecutive years there was no respite from the bitter cold with the result that large numbers of livestock succumbed and some 9,000 people

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⁸Gjerset, pp. 335-36.

⁹Kopavogur, near the then residence of the Royal Governor, is now a suburb of Reykjavik.
starved to death, while thousands took to the road. All requests to the crown for assistance went unheeded.\textsuperscript{10}

As the seventeenth century progressed conditions became worse. In 1618-19 earthquakes destroyed many farms. In 1625 a volcanic eruption in the east of Iceland cast ashes as far away as Norway. In 1636 Hekla had its fifteenth recorded eruption. In 1660 Katla erupted and destroyed many farms. In 1693 Hekla erupted again, spreading ashes all over Iceland. During the severe winters of 1695 and 1696 rivers and lakes froze and even the sea surrounding Iceland was icebound. Pirate raids brought additional misery. The most brutal raid took place in 1627 in the Westman Islands off the south coast of Iceland and is described by Magnusson as follows:

On 16 July three ships from Algiers arrived in the islands with 300 men who divided into three bands and overran the large inhabited island of Heimaey, yelling and massacring the terror-stricken and helpless inhabitants. All the survivors were herded together into a large storehouse belonging to the Danish merchants, where the youngest and strongest, 242 in number, were selected and taken on board the ships. The rest were burned along with the building. Jon Thorsteinsson, a well-known hymn writer, was struck dead while kneeling in prayer in a cave with his wife and children, who were driven on board the ships. The parish church was burned, and those who tried to escape were hunted down and killed.\textsuperscript{11}

The beginning of the eighteenth century saw no


\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.
improvement. In its beginning years a smallpox epidemic claimed about 18,000 people, or about one-third of the population. In 1727 a volcanic eruption beneath the Oraefa glacier lasted almost a year, destroying farms, sheep and horses. In 1732 a severe earthquake destroyed and damaged many farms. In 1757 about 2,000 died of hunger in the Skalholt diocese.

The worst disaster was the eruption of Skaptajokull in 1783. This "... greatest lava outburst in Iceland and, indeed, in the world in historical times ..." so devastated the land and so polluted the coastal waters that crops failed, cattle died and the fish disappeared. During the years 1783-85 it is estimated that over 9,000 persons died in Iceland from hunger and disease. Jon Steingrimsson, Pastor of the Kirkjubaejarklaustur parish, which was hardest hit by the eruption, wrote that of 602 members of the parish 224 had died during these years.

The following statistics show the results of the calamities which befell Iceland during the eighteenth century:


14 Magnusson, p. 117.
The hopeless poverty to which the people had been reduced is described by Jon Jonsson [Adils], as quoted in Gjeret:

"The badstofa [living room] on the common peasant farmstead was usually not covered with boards on the inside. One could see between the rafters and the grass-covered roof, which soon looked like ordinary sod, and from which mildew and cobwebs were hanging. The floor was uncovered, consisting only of earth trampled hard. But during heavy rains when the roof was leaking water dripped down, and it soon became a pool of mud through which people waded. The walls along which the bedsteads were nailed were covered with a grey coat of mildew, and green slime was constantly trickling down the walls, especially in the winter. Old hay, seaweed or twigs did serve as mattress, and a few blankets constituted the covering. In some houses a little loft was built, the pallr, two or three feet from the ground, where the people of the household stayed. The dark room underneath the pallr was occupied by lambs and young calves which needed special care. . . . One trouble with all dwellings, though there might be considerable difference between them, was the want of light. In a house where there was no heating apparatus, as in the Icelandic badstofa, and in a climate as chilly as that of Iceland, it was necessary to preserve the heat as well as possible. The windows were, therefore, both few and small, and were usually placed in the roof above the bed. A window consisted only of one pane, and this was not of glass, but of thin membrane (liknabelgur) stretched upon a frame and placed in a hole in the roof. When the wind was strong, the windows would often break, and the women would have to mend them."
It can readily be understood that these windows admitted so little light into the room that the people had to sit in continual darkness even in the middle of the day.\textsuperscript{15}

Such conditions existed well into the nineteenth century, but as that century dawned almost the entire population was literate. Jensen has described this high level of literacy and interest in education as follows:

The ingenious Icelanders did not, however, completely succumb to despair. Their indomitable spirit and love of learning kept them from perishing. Although they had lost their freedom by foreign domination and their means of livelihood by nature's rampages, their passion for education remained.\textsuperscript{16}

The Reformation had brought to Iceland a spiritual awakening and a renewed interest in education. The old Cathedral schools which had been neglected were reopened and church officials concerned themselves with education.

As early as 1542 the King had issued a decree on education which included the following provisions:

1. All children in Iceland should learn to read.
2. Primary schools should be established at three of the monasteries in the Skalholt diocese.
3. Two Latin schools should be established at the monasteries of Videy and Helgafell.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15}Gjerset, pp. 326-27.


\textsuperscript{17}Bragi Straumfjord Josephson, "Education in Iceland: Its Rise and Growth with Respect to Social, Political and Economic Determinants" (Ed.D. dissertation,
Royal officials opposed the decree and it was not carried out. In 1552 a new royal decree was issued which laid the basis for the two Latin grammar schools at Skalholt and Holar. The decree provided that the school at Skalholt should have an enrollment of forty students and the school at Holar twenty-four students. In addition to the rector, there were to be two teachers at each of the schools. Since the main work of these schools was to prepare men for the Lutheran ministry, the main subjects were Latin and theology. Around 1600 Greek was added to the curriculum and a little later arithmetic was added. Although their language was not taught as a subject, it was used in schools, where students translated Latin into Icelandic. Most of the students were sons of educated fathers and received preparatory education at home.

These two schools, founded in the sixteenth century, continued to be Iceland's educational centers until the end of the eighteenth century. For further education, graduates went abroad—usually to the University of Copen-


18 Josephson, p. 99; Eliasson, pp. 4-5.

hagen. Although the enrollments were never large (perhaps thirty to forty students at each of the schools) and there was often a lack of books and adequate accommodations, the level of education at the school remained generally high. Regarding education in Iceland during this period, Gjerse has stated:

Without a university of their own, with only two higher schools, weak and poorly equipped . . . higher learning was nowhere more diligently cultivated than in Iceland, and in no land was the number of talented and well educated intellectual leaders relatively so large. 20

Trail has also described the post Reformation period as a time of renewed intellectual activity:

The introduction of the Lutheran doctrine had, undoubtedly, deep and lasting influence upon the mental and spiritual life of the people. The important literary achievements of that period bear witness to a new creative activity. The Icelanders were experiencing a literary renaissance which kindled new light and new hope in the hearts of a sorely tried people. Higher learning was cultivated with remarkable diligence, and in no land was the number of talented and well-educated men as large relatively as in Iceland. Due to the effort of those able men progress was made despite the fact that the King diverted to the royal treasury resources rightly belonging to the monasteries which should have been used for the building of schools for the people. 21

Several of the early Lutheran bishops in Iceland concerned themselves with education. Gisli Jonsson (1515-1587), Bishop of Skalholt (1556-1587), of practical rather than intellectual ability, directed his clergy to visit

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20 Gjerse, p. 313.

the people to see that they knew the catechism. His successor, Oddur Einarsson (1559-1630), whose episcopate lasted for forty-one years (1589-1630), was characterized chiefly by his pastoral benevolence and devotion to scholarship. He was educated at the University of Copenhagen where he studied classics and theology, as well as mathematics under the famous astronomer, Tycho Brahe. He returned home to become rector of his old school at Holar before becoming Bishop of Skalholt. He collected a large library of deeds and inventories with the view of writing a history of the Church in Iceland, wrote descriptions of the country and translated Danish and German works into Icelandic.

The most prominent person of this age in Iceland was Gudbrandur Thorlaksson (1541-1627) who at the age of 29 became Bishop of Holar and continued in that office for fifty-seven years until his death. Not only was his term of office the longest in the history of the Icelandic Church, but his influence was the most far reaching since the days of Bishops Gissur Isleifsson and Jon Ogmundarson. Both a scholar and a reformer after Luther's own heart, he used the printing press brought to Iceland by Bishop Jon Arason in 1530 to spread religious literature throughout the land. He translated, edited or wrote a total of eighty-five works, among them a Lutheran hymnal (1589) which was used for 200 years, a "Graduale," or book of melodies for Lutheran hymns, catechisms, long and short,
books of prayers, psalms, meditations and sermons. He was also a cartographer whose map of Iceland appeared in the first modern atlas, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Theater of the World) published by Ortelius.

His greatest printing achievement was the Bible which he and others translated into Icelandic, and which he lovingly saw through the press in 1584. Not only was it one of the most monumental works ever printed in Iceland, but it set a standard by which later translations of the Bible were measured.

Dr. Sigurbjorn Einarsson, the present Bishop of Iceland, has assessed the work of these early church leaders as follows:

The great desire of the Reformers to make the Gospel a common possession by means of general education was instrumental in evoking and encouraging huge efforts in religious publication, much of only temporal importance, but some of lasting significance and value that constitutes a part of our classical national heritage.22

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the publication of the Bible ("Gudbrands Bible," as it is called) and other publications in helping to preserve the Icelandic language and culture. Hood has assessed this great contribution of the early reformers in Iceland:

As has been truly pointed out, "The literature of the Reformation in Iceland was a battle for the language. Was the Old Norse to survive, or was it to be

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merged, like Norwegian, in the Danish literary lan-
guage?" The Old Norse won. Owing to the definitive
work of Odd [sic] Gottskalsson23 and Gudbrand [sic]
the noble ancient language of Scandinavia, our origi-
inal mother-tongue, which has been immortalised [sic]
in the sagas, was preserved as the language of Ice-
land.24

During this period several Icelandic scholars de-
voted themselves to the study of Icelandic literature and
history. Arngrimur Jonsson (1568-1648) more than any
other scholar of this age, brought to the attention of
other scholars the ancient cultural heritage of Iceland
through his works which he wrote in Latin. Among his works
which received a fairly wide circulation were Crymogaea
(1609) and Specimen Islandiae historicum et magna ex parte
chorographicum (1643). The first named contained a de-
scription of Iceland, its political and cultural history,
the lives of its great men and recent events. It was
printed in a shorter version in London in 1685.

Professor Stefan Einarsson of Johns Hopkins Uni-
versity has noted Arngrimur's contribution to Icelandic
scholarship:

The scholarly world of Scandinavia was just ripe

23Oddur Gottskalsson (-- -- 1556), while a student
in Norway, embraced Lutheranism. His translation of the
New Testament was published in 1540 at the Royal Danish
Press at Roskilde and is the earliest extant book printed
in Icelandic. Bishop Gudbrandur used his translation for
his Bible.

24John C. F. Hood, Icelandic Church Saga (London:
for the message of Arngrímur the Learned. In the Romance countries the Renaissance had pointed the way back to antiquity, to the illustrious Greek and Roman literature. It had stimulated learning and imitation of the classic writers. In Scandinavia the Old Icelandic writings took the place of the Greco-Roman classics, becoming in the imagination of scholars and, as it turned out, in reality the classics of Scandinavian antiquity. And they were sorely needed. True, the Danes had their Saxo Grammaticus. But the Swedes had nothing and the Norwegians only Snorri's Heims­kringla which they by now began to translate into the modern idiom. Actually these translations first called attention to the promise of the Old Icelandic literature for the history and the antiquities of Scandinavia. 25

Thormodur Torfason, called Torfaeus (1636-1719), collected Icelandic manuscripts and kept professional scribes to copy them. He translated the Icelandic sagas into Latin and wrote historical works in Latin on the manuscripts. He served two kings as royal historiographer.

Bishop Thorlakur Skulason (1597-1656), grandson and successor of Bishop Gudbrandur, collected manuscripts and in 1644 produced a new edition of his grandfather's Bible. His son, Thordur, Bishop of Skalholt (1674-1697), obtained the Holar printing press which he brought to Skalholt. Here he published for the first time editions of Icelandic classics such as Landnamabok, Kristnisaga, Olaf's Saga Tryggvason and the Islandingabok of Ari the Learned.

Bishop Brynjolfur Sveinsson (1605-1775) of Skal-

holt was also an outstanding scholar. During his episcopate the school at Skalholt flourished. Magnusson has summed up his contributions to education and scholarship:

Perhaps the most influential man in Iceland during the latter part of the seventeenth century was Bishop Brynjolf [sic] Sveinsson. . . . He was highly educated, well versed in classical languages and in the literature of his country, a keen collector of Old Icelandic manuscripts who spared neither time nor money in his efforts to create a valuable manuscript collection which included many of the best works. He had planned to settle down abroad but was persuaded to assume the bishop's office at Skalholt. He was a born leader, with a majestic appearance, and his management of church affairs was exemplary; he raised the educational and moral standard of the clergy. He also became wealthy and powerful, and was instrumental in averting many harmful speculations of the Danish merchants, since his advice carried great weight with the crown.\(^{26}\)

Although Arni Magnusson (1663-1730) wrote very little himself, he is one of the eminent figures in Icelandic literary history because of his vast collection of Icelandic manuscripts and books. For the purpose of collecting these materials, he visited his native land several times during the years 1702-1712. The rest of his life was spent in Denmark where he became a secretary in the Royal Archives and in 1701 a Professor of Danish Antiquities at the University of Copenhagen, the first to hold that chair. Along with Halldor Hermannsson (1878-1958) of Cornell University, he was one of the two greatest Icelandic bibliographers.

During the great fire of Copenhagen (1728) many

\(^{26}\) Magnusson, p. 118.
of the books which Arni Magnusson had collected, including
the then only extant copy of the first book printed in
Icelandic, and newer manuscripts were lost. Fortunately,
the greater part of the ancient (and most valuable) manu-
scripts were saved. After Arni Magnusson's death (perhaps
hastened by the damage to his library), what remained of
his collection went to the University of Copenhagen where
it has been known as the Arnamagnaean Collection and has
been administered by the Arnamagnaean Foundation. The sig-
nificance of this collection as the center of Icelandic
studies for two hundred years has well been appraised by
two contemporary Danish scholars:

Arne [sic] Magnusson's gift to the University of
Copenhagen in his will has served his descendants in
the way himself had wished. The Arnamagnaean Collection
may indeed not be the largest collection of Ice-
landic manuscripts but it is the most important. Its
treasures have furnished material for research for more
than two centuries. And Arne Magnusson's plan that
there should always be two native-born Icelanders
connected with the Collection as scholarship holders,
has given young researchers in Iceland the possibility
of qualifying themselves at the University of Copen-
hagen in that field which was closest to Arne Magnus-
son's heart. This part of his will naturally had a
particular significance until Iceland established its
own University in Reykjavik (1911).27

Meanwhile back in Iceland education was slowly
developing. In 1635 the King issued an ordinance re-
quiring ministers to make regular visits to all homes in

27 Hans Bekker-Nielsen and Ole Widding, Arne
Magnusson, the Manuscript Collector, trans. Robert W.
Mattila (Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press, 1972),
p. 59.
Iceland and to assure that children received instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic and Christian doctrine. According to Josephson, "the ordinance represents the first major attempt of the monarchy to supervise or control educational activities in any way in Iceland." Twenty years later the first elementary reading book in Icelandic, Eitt Lited Stafrofskver Fryrer Born og Ungemenne [A Little Reader for Children and Youth] was published.

According to Gislason:

One of the most remarkable aspects of Icelandic history is that, when the people's need was the greatest, they should have acquired two of the greatest geniuses in their entire history.

One of these geniuses was Hallgrímr Petursson (1614-1674) whose childhood had been spent at Holar where his father had served as bell-ringer at the Cathedral during the episcopate of his close relative, Bishop Gudbrandur. Hallgrímr spent his youth in Copenhagen where he worked as a blacksmith and where Brynjolfur Sveinsson (later Bishop of Skalholt) found him, as legend has it, swearing in eloquent Icelandic. Brynjolfur Sveinsson recognized Hallgrímr's genius and sent him to school in Copenhagen. Upon his return to Iceland, Hallgrímr was ordained. During his early years as a priest he served one of the poorest parishes in the country and married a woman who, incidentally, has been ransomed from the Algerian pirates.

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28 Josephson, p. 115.  
29 Gislason, p. 39.
Hallgrímur Petursson was the greatest poet in Iceland during the seventeenth century and one of the greatest poets Iceland ever produced. His masterpiece was his *Passiusalmar* [Hymns of the Passion], a collection of fifty hymns depicting the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. These hymns have been published in over sixty editions in Icelandic and have been translated into many languages since they were first published in 1666. The Icelanders have taken to heart few books, if any, as they have the *Passiusalmar*, and their popularity is well attested by the many editions which have been produced—a record in the annals of publishing in Iceland. The suffering of the Lord so poignantly and skillfully depicted in these hymns gave comfort and solace to a suffering and down-trodden people.

This hymn writer, who ranks among the greatest in the world, has been a "teacher" of the common people generation after generation in Iceland. In the introduction to one of the English translations of the *Passiusalmar*, Dr. Sigurbjorn Einarsson, Bishop of Iceland, assesses Hallgrímur's place in the lives of the Icelanders:

The common people of Iceland have never asked, nor could they have answered, the question why they have taken these poems so closely to their hearts. They have submitted to their inexplicable enchantment, finding in them consolation and strength. They have learned them spontaneously, the child turning to them for its first words of prayer; in times of temptation, and in the battle of life with its trials and tribulations their lines have sprung to the lips; in the last conflict they have served to strengthen and console, and were unfailingly used when loved ones were laid
to their final rest. The Hymns of the Passion were sung or read during Lent in every Icelandic home: one hymn each evening. Today they are broadcast throughout Lent on the radio. Thus Hallgrimur has been the companion of every child of Iceland, from the cradle to the grave, for three centuries. His contribution to the religious life of the nation and its spiritual endurance in the hard days gone by can never be fully estimated.30

The other "teacher" of the common people was Jon Vidalin (1666-1720), Bishop of Skalholt (1698-1720). His collection of sermons, known as the Huspostilla [Sermons for the Home] were owned and read by almost all Icelanders down to the present century, although their popularity during the latter part of the nineteenth century was shared with a collection of sermons by Petur Petursson (1808-1891), Bishop of Iceland (1866-1889).

During the early decades of the nineteenth century the books most often found in Icelandic homes in the Austur-Hunavatssysla district were the Graduale of Bishop Godbrandur, the Huspostilla of Bishop Jon Vidalin and the Passiusalmar of Hallgrimur Petursson.31 There is no reason to doubt that this was also true concerning all parts of Iceland at this time.


The important place of these works in the lives of the Icelanders is well expressed by Gislason:

The Hymns of the Reverend Hallgrímur and the Postilla Sermons of Bishop Jon, known virtually to every Icelander, must have quickened the literary tastes of the people in general and undoubtedly helped many a pauper to resign himself to his fate.\(^32\)

The eighteenth century which brought with it to Iceland hardship, misery, starvation and death, as well as the greatest volcanic outburst ever witnessed by man, was also a time of deep concern for education. During this period the first educational survey was conducted in Iceland. Literacy reached its lowest level; yet a generation or two later it had risen so sharply that almost the entire nation was literate. Reykjavik, hardly more than a small fishing village, began its slow and steady growth. Influences from the Enlightenment, such as interest in scientific rationalism and modern studies, reached Iceland and old customs and institutions, even the language itself, were challenged. During the worst of times institutions of enlightenment and learning were founded.

As early as 1717 Bishop Jon Vidalin of Skalholt and Bishop Steinn Jonsson (1660-1739) of Holar wrote to the king as follows:

Here in Iceland there are no primary schools. There are only two Latin grammar schools at the Cathedral Churches. Few farmers can read or write and, as a result, have little knowledge about the Christian faith.

\(^{32}\)Gislason, p. 40.
It is extremely urgent that in each district [sysla] a school be established to teach poor children reading and other useful knowledge. . . . We propose that in each district a few God fearing men together purchase land for the establishment of such schools.  

Bishop Jon Vidalin in the same year donated his farm Durmdoddsstadir to establish such a school and Bishop Steinn Jonsson gave a number of books. Others donated land, money or books, but no schools at this time were established.

In 1736 Jon Arnason (1665-1743), Bishop of Skalholt, wrote to the king and suggested that a school be established in each district. Considerable correspondence was exchanged between the king and the bishop concerning education. Josephson has the following to relate about Bishop Jon Arnason:

Education was Bishop Jon Arnason's [sic] greatest interest. He was also deeply concerned with the general welfare of the people and particularly in the improvement of their deplorable drinking habits which he considered the greatest evil of the Icelandic people. He was an active publisher and wrote a catechism for the instruction of youth and a Latin dictionary. During the twelve years as rector at Holar and after becoming a bishop, he expressed a general interest in educational improvements. Besides the active work that he performed through active correspondence with royal officials and leading Icelanders, he also inspired and financially aided young men in obtaining an education abroad.  


34 Josephson, p. 124.
During this time one of the greatest advocates of education, Jon Thorkelsson (1697-1759), appeared on the scene. Far ahead of his time in his thinking concerning education, much that he advocated eventually came to pass and he may truly be called "the father of Icelandic public education."

Jon Thorkelsson received his early education at Skalholt and his higher education at the University of Copenhagen where he distinguished himself in his studies. He returned to Iceland in 1728 to become the forty-second rector of his old school. So keenly did he feel the deplorable conditions of his people and so passionate was his desire to improve their condition that he resigned his position at Skalholt and went to Denmark on his own accord to appeal to the king. To resign his position and make such an appeal was by no means an easy mission, but it bore results.

Because of the efforts of Jon Thorkelsson and Bishop Jon Arnason, King Christian VI in 1741 appointed Ludvig Harboe (1707-1783), then a clergyman and later a bishop in Denmark, to conduct an extensive survey of educational conditions in Iceland. Harboe was a man of noble character, well-educated and just, who soon gained the confidence and respect of the Icelanders, and has been called "the best representative ever sent from Denmark to Iceland."
Harboe and Jon Thorkelsson, who served as his secretary and interpreter, traveled extensively in Iceland during the years 1741-1745. According to the survey they made, the majority of the clergy were poorly educated, some barely literate and many given to drink. Their survey also revealed that in the population as a whole the literacy rate ranged from slightly more than half in the Holar diocese to slightly less than half in the Skalholt diocese.

The manifold disasters, already mentioned, had so devestated the land and brought the people to such an abject level of poverty that interest in education was at an all time low, as Trail, among others, readily observes:

The nation as a whole was in a sad plight. The people were dispirited, due to all kinds of misery, oppression, superstition, hunger and poverty. Their interest in schools was, therefore, rather limited.

Harboe and Jon Thorkelsson suggested many improvements in educational matters of which, according to Josephson the most important can be summarized as follows:

1. Emphasis should be placed on the instruction of the Christian doctrine for children.
2. All children and adults should learn to read.

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36 Magnuss, Saga Althydufraedslunnar a Islandi, p. 36.
37 Trail, pp. 19-20.
3. All requirements of instruction and learning should be strengthened.

4. The grammar school should be operated from September 29 to July 2.

5. Home visitation and supervision of learning by the priests should be re-established and re-emphasized.

6. Teacher training for the Latin schools should be strengthened.

7. Instruction and general provisions for students at Skalholt should be improved.

8. Parents who are illiterate should be ordered to hire a servant, male or female, who could read, to teach reading in the home.\(^\text{38}\)

In 1736 King Christian VI, by ordinance, established reading as a condition for confirmation, and confirmation as a condition of marriage, this ordinance directed to the entire Danish kingdom of which Iceland was a part.\(^\text{39}\) An ordinance issued in 1746 required pastors to visit each home at least twice each year.\(^\text{40}\) Further ordinances relating to instruction in Christian doctrine and reading were issued in 1749 and 1760.\(^\text{41}\)

In 1790 King Christian VII issued an ordinance relating to the education of children which may be summarized as follows:

\(^{38}\)Josephson, p. 129.


\(^{40}\)Eliasson, p. 6.

\(^{41}\)Magnuss, Saga Althyrufraebslunnar a Islandi, p. 85.
1. Each child should begin to learn to read before the age of five.

2. If parents neglect to teach a child to read before the age of five, the priest shall admonish them. If the child is not taught to read before the age of seven, the parents shall pay a fine as determined by the district sheriff.

3. Before a child is ten years of age instruction in Christian doctrine should begin. If the parents neglect this teaching, they shall pay a fine.

4. Instruction in Christian doctrine shall be completed by the time the child is fourteen.

5. If parents or guardians neglect the education of their children, their children may be taken from the parents and placed in homes where they shall receive such instruction.

6. During his visitations, the minister shall examine the children to determine how they have progressed in their learning of Christian doctrine and reading. He shall record such information as relates to the education of the children in his parish.

7. If a minister fails to assure that children in his parish are educated and record such information, he shall be fined.

8. If a minister confirms a youth who is unable to read, he shall be fined.

These ordinances did bring about a great increase in literacy. According to a survey made by Hallgrimur Hallgrimsson, by 1790 90 percent of the population could read and out of nearly a thousand homes at that time, only seven did not have any books.

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42 Ibid., p. 86.

43 Hallgrimur Hallgrimsson, Islenzk Althydumentun a 18 old [Education of the Common People in Iceland During the Eighteenth Century] (Reykjavik: Prentsmidja Acta, 1925), pp. 70, 73.
That such a marked increase in literacy should have come about in such a short time was due to the patience and diligence of the clergy who worked in the spirit of Harboe. Hallgrímsson states that "Christian doctrine is the foundation on which the education of our common people rests." 44

During the latter part of the eighteenth century a number of new books in reading, spelling and Christian doctrine were published in Icelandic. 45 A reader in Christian doctrine, called "Ponti" because it was written by Eirik Pontoppidan, Bishop of Sealand in Denmark, was translated into Icelandic and widely used. 46

Few schools, however, were established in Iceland during this period. In 1745 a primary school, the first in Iceland, was established on the Westmann Islands. It operated for fifteen years.

The estate of Jon Thorkelsson was fairly large and was used to further education in Iceland for a long time. Trail has the following to say about his character and contribution to education in Iceland:

44 Ibid., p. 70.
45 Josephson, pp. 140-42.
46 Sannleiki Gudhraedslunnar [The True Fear of God] was first translated by Bishop Halldor Brynjolfsson and printed in Copenhagen in 1741. It was called "Rangi Ponti" because of its numerous errors. The translation by Hogni Sigurdsson was first published in Copenhagen in 1746 and subsequently (1769, 1773, 1775, and 1781) at Holar.
Although he did not live long enough to see his greatest hopes materialize, it cannot be said that his was labour lost. He died in 1759 without ever receiving any token of appreciation from his people whom he had truly loved to the end of his days. He remained true to his ideals, his people and his country. In his last will he gave all his possessions—books, money and estates—to the poor orphan children in the district of Kjalarnes. A nobler gift has never been given to the children of Iceland. Jon Thorkelsson was indeed a man with the spirit of a true reformer. His magnificent courage and effort reflect his character and dignity.\footnote{Trail, pp. 20-21.}

In 1791 a primary school was established from funds from the estate of Jon Thorkelsson who died in 1759. The school was a boarding school and had an annual attendance of twelve to sixteen children. It operated until 1812.

The Latin grammar school at Skalholt was closed in 1785, following severe earthquakes, and the following year a Latin grammar school, known as the Holavallaskoli, was established at Reykjavik. In 1801 the Holar bishopric was discontinued and one diocese for all Iceland was established in Reykjavik—an arrangement which is still in effect. In 1798 the Althing assembled for the last time at Thingvellir where it had met for 868 years. It was permanently dissolved in 1800 by royal order and replaced by a new High Court, consisting of a chief judge and two associates. Magnusson has observed that "... all the institutions symbolizing ancient culture and national traditions were eclipsed at the close of the two worst centuries in Icelandic history."\footnote{Magnusson, p. 124.}
The man most responsible for this change was Magnus Stephensen (1762-1833) who was appointed the first chief judge of the High Court. Coming from one of the most distinguished families in Iceland, he was educated in Copenhagen where he came under the influence of the Enlightenment. He was a great proponent of scientific and religious rationalism and his outlook was cosmopolitan. He was a man of many interests, and besides being a jurist, he studied theology, singing, dancing and modern languages. He was also a prolific writer, but his command of the Icelandic language was lamentably poor. Having secured the two printing presses in the country, he published numerous works which reflected his rationalism and Enlightenment thinking. His greatest blunder was a "rationally revised hymn book" which was an outrage to the literary and religious heritage of the people. In 1791 he founded a new society, the Landsuppfraedingarfelagid (The Society for General Enlightenment). He also published the first Icelandic monthly, Klausturposturinn and other periodicals devoted to the cause of enlightenment. Although interested in bringing about better conditions in Iceland and dominating the scene for many decades, Stephensen was somehow "alien" to the cultural traditions of his country, Gjerset has written that:

... much of Magnus Stephensen's work for the promotion of culture was characterized by an uncritical
adherence to European ideas and a disregard for the value of the traditions and institutions of his own country. In his admiration for foreign ways he was ready to give everything a touch of the new cosmopolitan spirit, even when this would lower the intrinsic value of the culture when he sought to promote.49

Magnus Stephensen was part of a movement in Iceland known as the Bishops' Sons Party, so named because another of its proponents was Hannes Finnsson (1739-1798), Bishop of Skalholt and son of the learned Finnur Jonsson (1704-1789), Bishop of Skalholt and author of the monumental Historia Ecclesiastica Islandiae (Copenhagen 1772-78). The Bishops' Sons Party, advocating modernization of Iceland by borrowing Danish customs, was opposed by the Farmers' Sons Party which wanted to preserve and promote native culture.

The leading personality of the Farmers' Sons Party was Eggert Olafsson (1726-1768), a farmer's son of good heritage who received his bachelor's degree in 1748 at the University of Copenhagen. Together with Bjarni Palsson, later Surgeon-General of Iceland, he traveled extensively throughout Iceland during the years 1752-1757. Their findings were recorded in the monumental Travels in Iceland, first published in Danish and later in German, French and English (1805). Eggert Olafsson and his followers advocated a "... return to the active life of the saga

49 Gjerset, p. 348.
heroes as well as to patterns of their language and poetry."  

This proposal, somewhat impractical, was not as radical as one proposed by a member of the opposition. Bjarni Jonsson (1725-1798), Rector of the Skalholt School, wrote to the Danish authorities on August 28, 1771, suggesting that the Icelandic language be dropped and replaced by the Danish. He reasoned thus:

When the Icelanders spoke the same language as other Scandinavian nations, they were everywhere held in high esteem. Nowadays their language is no longer understood by others, and they are not respected. This hinders communicating with other nations. Why should we continue in this attitude? Let us follow the example of the Norwegians and Faroese and adopt the Danish language, since we are governed by the Danes and maintain commerce with them.

Although such a proposal was radical and, fortunately, not adopted, it was not without merit. Not only was Iceland at this time under Danish rule, but Danish influence in Iceland was very strong. With few exceptions, those who had received an education beyond what was available in Iceland, obtained it at the University of Copenhagen. All merchants in Iceland were Danish and Reykjavik, though small at the time, was a Danish town in much of its culture and language.

As the nineteenth century began the population of

\[50\] Stefan Einarsson, p. 213.

\[51\] Magnus, Saga Althrydufraedslunnar a Islandi, p. 19.
Iceland was only 47,000—about the same it had been at the time of the settlement. Never in the history of Iceland had the people so little to hope for; they could, in their distress and misery, only look back to better days—far back when centuries past the republic had been established and their remarkable literature had been written. Sigurdur Nordal has perhaps better than any other described their feelings:

Conditions made it impossible for the nation to rid itself of the memories of its past. The literature continually exerted the people, who in a way were afraid to measure themselves against their ancestors, not to betray the original goals of their forefathers. The Icelanders sought oblivion, now in relentless toil, now in absurd daydreams. But they found no peace.52

Not too many decades of the century passed, however, until Iceland began to go through a slow revolution. The forces released by the Romantic movement in Europe and the July Revolution of 1830 in France were felt in Iceland. From that time on there was an intellectual awakening in Iceland which looked to the past for inspiration and to the future for eventual freedom. This revolution aroused anew the desire to preserve and purify the language and to create new literary works, many of which were produced and read. Gjerset has described the trend of this awakening:

The intellectual awakening in Iceland produced a literary renaissance which gradually broadened into a great national patriotic movement, political as well literary in character.

In Iceland as elsewhere an intense patriotic sentiment was awakened through the influence of the new national poetry and the stimulus of revolutionary ideas. The people were waking from their apathy to demand freedom from oppression, restoration of their Althing, recognition of their rights and character as a distinct nation, and rehabilitation of their country, which during years of misfortune had been reduced to abject political and economic dependency.\(^5^3\)

During the nineteenth century the following institutions were founded: The Icelandic Literary Society in Reykjavik and Copenhagen in 1816 by the Danish linguist, Rasmus Christian Rask (1787-1832) for the purpose of preserving the Icelandic Language and publishing its literature, old and new; The National Library in 1818 by Carl Christian Rafn (1795-1864), who also founded the Society for Northern Research; The National Museum of Iceland in 1863; and The Society for Cultural Preservation (Hid Islenzka Thjodvinafelagid) in 1869.

Tomas Saemundsson (1807-1841), a patriotic leader; Jonas Hallgrimsson (1807-1845), one of the country's most beloved poets; Konrad Gislasón (1808-1891), a philologist; and Brynjolfur Petursson (1809-1851), a jurist, banded together to publish the periodical *Fjolnir*, which became the organ to purify the Icelandic language, to cultivate a new literature, and to arouse the patriotism and love of

\(^{5^3}\)Gjerset, pp. 370, 371.
the people. This periodical, published during the years 1835-1847, and which was widely circulated and read had tremendous influence in Iceland. Magnusson has noted that such activities "... quickened the patriotic and nationalistic sentiments of the people and gave substance to the long-dormant dream of a rehabilitated and independent Iceland." 54

The man who really led the movement was Jon Sigurdsson (1811-1879). Receiving his education at the University of Copenhagen, he became a noted scholar and edited many of the manuscripts of The Royal Northern Text Society. He devoted himself to philology, archaeology and history. Although he distinguished himself as a scholar, and attracted considerable attention, it was in political activity and constructive statesmanship that he was to gain his most lasting renown. As Gjerset has noted:

He became the peerless leader of his people in their struggle for national liberty and representative government. In all fields of activity his stimulating influence was so strongly felt that the progress made by the Icelanders in the nineteenth century is largely traceable to his guidance and initiative. 55

In 1841 Jon Sigurdsson founded and edited the periodical Ny Felagsrit (New Social Journal) in which he discussed the problems of the day. He wished to obtain three goals in particular, as speedily as possible: self government, general education and free trade. Self govern-

54Magnusson, p. 130. 55Gjerset, p. 376.
ment would include restoration of the Althing, with complete legislative power and control of the finances, and free trade would imply the abolition of the Danish monopoly. During his lifetime some progress toward some of these goals was made. The Althing was restored in 1845, although only as a consultative assembly; the trade monopoly was abolished in 1854; national finances were separated from those of Denmark in 1871; and in 1874 King Christian IX presented Iceland with a constitution on the occasion of its millenium and his visit to Iceland. After Jon Sigurdsson's death, his able assistant, Benedikt Sveinsson (1826-1899), carried on the struggle for national autonomy. He proposed a revision of the constitution, calling for considerable changes and more self government—a proposal twice passed by the Althing, but quickly vetoed by the king.

Jon Sigurdsson based his arguments for independence on the fact that Iceland was a distinct nation with its own language and culture. Gylfi Th. Gislason very definitely states that the fight for independence came about because the Icelanders possessed "... an ancient culture, to which they remained incredibly faithful for over a thousand years." He further states:

If Icelandic culture had not emerged in the Saga Age, it is doubtful whether the nation would have survived as such through the centuries of oppression
and misery, or would now live in an independent state and enjoy the standard of living it has attained.57

Education was one of Jon Sigurdsson's great interests, and he stressed the importance of establishing schools in Iceland. In 1842 he wrote an article in Ny Felagsrit, titled "Um Skola a Islandi" (On Schools in Iceland)58 in which he discussed education of two kinds; (1) practical education for farmers, tradesmen and the general public and (2) education for the elite. He suggested the establishment of primary schools in towns and villages and agricultural schools in each of the four quarters of the country; the provision of training for merchants, navigators and tradesmen in the lower division of the Latin Grammar School, along with a regular program for higher education; an increase in the length of the Latin Grammar School program from four to six years and adding subjects such as natural science, philosophy, modern languages, agriculture, singing, gymnastics, drawing, speech and pronunciation. In short, he suggested a thoroughgoing reformation and a new school system for the nation. In 1845 Jon Sigurdsson continued his efforts by writing a petition for higher education in Iceland with offerings in theology, medicine and law.59

57 Ibid., p. 89.
The time Jon Sigurdsson was writing his proposals, Iceland had very few schools. In 1801 the schools of Holar and Skalholt were merged with the Holavallaskoli in Reykjavik, but this school was closed in 1804 for lack of funds and because the building was in poor condition. In fact, during the year 1804–5 there was only one school in Iceland in operation, the Hausasdaskoli with twelve primary students. A private primary school established in Reykjavik with the aid of the Thorkilliis Fund operated from 1830 to 1848. The government became more directly involved in 1859 when the Althing passed a bill establishing a primary school in Reykjavik which opened in 1862. During the latter part of the century public primary schools were established in other parts of the country—Eyrarbakki (1852), Aukreyri (1870), Gardahreppur (1872), Brunnstadir (1872) and Isafjordur (1874).

The Latin Grammar School was reopened at Bessastadir in 1805 and remained there until 1846 when it moved to Reykjavik. Patterned after similar schools in Denmark, the curriculum emphasized Latin and Greek and included Icelandic, Danish, Hebrew, history, geography, arithmetic and theology.60 The school, still in operation today in its original building has had a number of out-

standing teachers and has educated leaders in many fields.

As the century progressed, several other schools were established: in 1847 a theological seminary in Reykjavik, in 1874 a Young Ladies School, in 1876 a medical college, in 1880 a secondary school at Modruvollur in the north of Iceland, and in 1882 a secondary school at Hafnafjordur near Reykjavik. The latter school, known as the Flensborg school, was founded in 1877 as a primary school through a private gift from the Rev. Thorarinn Bodvarsson (1825-1895) in memory of his son, Bodvar Thorarinsson (1850-1869) who died while a student at the Reykjavik Latin Grammar School. This school served from 1892 to 1908 as a teacher training school, 61 providing training for 121 teachers. 62

Four agricultural schools were established during this period--at Olafsdal (1880), Holar (1882), Eidum (1883) and Hvanneyri (1889). The schools at Holar and Hvanneyri continue to operate to this day, while the school at Olafsdal was closed in 1907 and the one at Eidum in 1919.

The extent of education in nineteenth century Iceland cannot be accurately estimated from the small number


62 Ibid., p. 84.
of its schools. Education took place elsewhere; the majority found it at home, with the assistance of widely circulated newspapers and magazines. Reading societies were common and at the close of the century there were between eighty and ninety such societies in Iceland. Gunnar Magnuss gives some idea of such education among the common people of Iceland during this period:

The common people's desire for education was without doubt great and they purchased and read such books as were published. When the Icelandic Literary Society was established in 1816, it quickly gained 400 members. A few years later when the Society for Northern Antiquities was established in 1825 and published the ancient sagas, a thousand Icelanders subscribed, of whom 500 were farmers and 200 laborers.

Gylfi Th. Gislason also stresses this love of learning so general among Icelanders at this time:

Although the Icelandic farmer and the Icelandic seaman in the latter part of the last century were very poor, they did not lack education in the best sense of the word... they had retained in their poverty a love of culture and a respect for knowledge.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century the public education movement gained momentum in Iceland. John Thorarinsson (1854-1926), principal of the Flensborg School and son of its founder, led the movement to its victory. He used his position as president (for

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63 Eliasson, p. 8; Josephson, p. 201.
65 Magnuss, Saga Althydufraedslunnar a Islandi, p. 73.
66 Gislason, p. 17.
67 Magnus, Saga Althydufraedslunnar a Islandi, p. 255.
thirty-one years) of the Icelandic Teachers Association (founded in 1889) to push for public education, and published articles on its behalf in Timarit um Uppeldi og Menntamal (Periodical of Pedagogy and Education) and other periodicals.

One of the most important persons in the public education movement was Dr. Gudmundur Finnbogason (1873-1944). Born in the Thingeyjarsysla district in the north of Iceland which took pride in its learned sons, he received his M.A. degree in philosophy from the University of Copenhagen in 1901. Later he attended the Universities of Paris and Berlin and in 1911 he received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Copenhagen. He was appointed a Professor of Psychology at the University of Iceland in 1918 and the Director of the National Library of Iceland in 1924. He had wide literary and philosophical interests and for many years he served as editor of Skirnir, the annual of the Icelandic Literary Society, of which he was President. A master of numerous languages and a prolific writer, including authoritative works on Icelandic culture and education, he was one of Iceland's eminent intellectual leaders during the first half of the twentieth century.

In 1901 Gudmundur Finnbogason received a grant from the Althing to study the educational systems of the other Scandinavian countries. In 1903 he published the
results of his investigation during a year and a half of travel in the Nordic countries in *Lydmentun* (Public Education). In this monumental and classic work on education, the first of its kind in Icelandic, he stressed the importance of free public education for Iceland such as he had observed in Denmark, Norway and Sweden where education was compulsory for children between the ages of seven and fourteen. In the spirit of Pestalozzi, Gudmundur Finnbogason wrote that although education begins at home where "mother love" is the foundation of all education, schools are also necessary because the home was unable to provide all the education a child needs. Traditionally home education in Iceland had centered around the ability to read and for a long time such reading materials were almost exclusively the ancient literature and (after the Reformation) religious works. At the beginning of a new century and of a new era in Icelandic history, Gudmundur Finnbogason and others realized the need for a broader education.

Although he stressed the importance of general education, Gudmundur Finnbogason saw the Icelandic language as the center of all education—"The mother tongue should be the 'apple of the eye' from the elementary

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69 Ibid., pp. 121, 126.
school through higher education. It is the path to understanding the deepest feelings of the nation. . . ."\textsuperscript{70} He proposed a free public system of education built on a nationalistic foundation whose aim would be to provide a general education.\textsuperscript{71} He also stressed the importance of libraries and a teacher training school in which the main subject would be Icelandic.\textsuperscript{72}

Shortly after Gudmundur Finnbogason returned to Iceland, he received an additional grant from the Althing to make a survey of educational conditions in Iceland—the first such survey in over 150 years since the days of Harboe and Jon Thorkelsson. He found, in 1903, only forty-seven school buildings in the country, many of them built for other purposes or in such poor condition they were unsuitable for education. Only one-half of the children between the ages of seven and fourteen were attending school and out of 415 teachers, only twenty-four had attended a teacher training school. In fact, 134 were entirely self educated.\textsuperscript{73} Concerning the preparation of teachers in Iceland at this time, Josephson says that

\ldots there are good reasons to believe that the traditional function of home instruction was in many ways superior to that provided by the new "professional"

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{70} Ibid., p. 63.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Ibid., pp. 140, 163.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Ibid., pp. 172, 197.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Magnuss, \textit{Saga Althydufraedslunnar a Islandi}, pp. 114-16.
\end{footnotes}
primary school teachers, many of whom were poorly prepared for their task.\textsuperscript{74}

Although many educational bills, especially after 1880, were brought before the Althing, the country was too poor to allocate much money for education. In 1878 the Althing made its first appropriation for primary education, but two years later appropriations for education amounted to only .7 of 1 percent of the national budget.\textsuperscript{75} Gylfi Th. Gislason writes of the condition of the country in 1874 when it celebrated the thousandth anniversary of its settlement:

The population was then about 70,000, or approximately as numerous as it had been one thousand years before. . . . The land was still tilled and the sea was still sailed by almost the same methods as a thousand years earlier. Iceland was probably at that time the poorest nation in Europe. And this poor, destitute nation was scattered along the coasts and valleys of an extensive land that has an area of . . . 40,000 square miles. Then there were no roads in the country in the modern sense of the word, no harbours, no lighthouses along its rocky coasts, and only very few small bridges despite the great rivers that surge down to the sea from the glaciers. The nation was engaged in primitive farming, fished in the sea almost entirely in open rowboats, and processed wool for domestic needs. At that time there were about 2,000 inhabitants in Reykjavik. There were no other villages, there was no schooling system in the country, apart from one grammar school and one theological seminary.\textsuperscript{76}

Despite such poverty, Gudmundur Finnbogason concludes his \textit{Lydmentun} (1903) with a challenge to the Ice-

\textsuperscript{74}Josephson, P. 234.

\textsuperscript{75}Magnuss, \textit{Saga Althyoufraedslunnar a Islandi}, p. 141.

\textsuperscript{76}Gislason, pp, 9-10.
landers for a national awakening and a renewed faith in their country:

We Icelanders are a small and poor nation. This is true. But how long are we to remain so? Are we a nation chosen to live in poverty, hardship and despair century after century, without a brighter day dawning upon this land—a day of faith in our country and nation, a day of gladness, and strength, and with renewed activity and full of promise.77

77 Finnbogason, p. 229.
CHAPTER IV

FROM HOME RULE TO INDEPENDENCE, 1904-1944

As the twentieth century emerged, few, if any, anticipated the great changes that would take place in Iceland—changes more profound and far-reaching than any experienced during the past millennium. Perhaps the words of Milton describe as well as any the new era that began to dawn upon Iceland:

Methinks I see a noble and puissant nation arousing herself like a strong man after sleep and shaking her invincible locks; methinks I see her as an eagle, mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam. . . .

Until the beginning of the twentieth century the Danes had always taken for granted that Iceland was an integral part of the Danish kingdom. To this view the Icelanders had never acceded and there was no doubt that the struggle would continue until Iceland gained full independence.

In 1904 Iceland received home rule. The first native Prime Minister was Hannes Hafstein (1861-1922), a political leader of wide appeal, perhaps second only to

Jon Sigurdsson, and a renowned poet. During the five years he served as Prime Minister, he helped to bring about much needed improvements in education, health services, commerce and communication.

The first decade of home rule was, unfortunately, characterized by political turmoil, and after Hannes Hafsteinn resigned in 1909, his successors made little headway until 1918 when the Danish government finally agreed to Iceland's demand for the recognition of her sovereignty.

On December 1, 1918 Iceland became a sovereign state, united with Denmark under a common king. According to the provisions of the "Danish-Icelandic Act of Union," Iceland was to have its own flag, its own currency and complete control over its internal affairs. Only in foreign affairs would Denmark act on Iceland's behalf. For the first time since 1262 Iceland had control over its own destiny.

It was an ambitious undertaking and problems such as communication and the building of roads and bridges, to mention only two, mounted large on the horizon. The fishing industry was just beginning to be modernized and industry was largely undeveloped. Yet during these years the Icelandic Steamship Line was founded, a Supreme Court

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was established, a minister plenipotentiary was appointed to Copenhagen and Iceland gradually took over the surveillance of its territorial waters.

These efforts were undertaken despite a very limited budget and a very small population:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>POPULATION OF ICELAND, 1801-1973</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1801 . . 47,240</td>
<td>1930 . . 108,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850 . . 59,157</td>
<td>1940 . . 121,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901 . . 78,470</td>
<td>1950 . . 143,973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910 . . 85,183</td>
<td>1960 . . 177,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920 . . 94,690</td>
<td>1970 . . 204,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973 . . 213,499</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1930 Iceland celebrated the millenium of the Althing with a celebration at Thingvellir which lasted three days. Forty thousand Icelanders participated and among the numerous dignitaries from many countries in attendance was King Christian X of Denmark and Iceland (who had visited Iceland in 1921 and 1926). The United States on this occasion presented Iceland with a statue of Leif Erikson sculpted by Sterling Calder and the English
"Mother of Parliaments" sent greetings to the "Grandmother of Parliaments."

This significant celebration was followed by the great depression which was especially difficult for Iceland as Professor Thorkell Johannesson of the University of Iceland points out:

The Kingdom of Iceland suffered harder times in the second decade of its existence than it had in the first. Iceland shared with other countries the suffering caused by the great world depression. A poor and tiny nation, grappling with the problem of making up as fast as possible for the exploitation and neglect of centuries, suddenly found itself face to face with a situation before which even the wisest and most respected of world statesmen stood helpless.3

With the coming of World War II Iceland was for the first time in its history drawn out of a thousand year isolation and placed in an important--and dangerous--position. In the late 1930's Hitler made overtures to Iceland with the view of establishing bases there. Realizing this danger, England suddenly and unexpectedly landed troops in Iceland on May 10, 1940. When these troops were needed elsewhere, they were replaced by American troops in July, 1941. For the first time in history there were troops in a country which had never known war.4 Nuechterlein has


4 Although the number of troops stationed in Iceland during World War II is not known, it has been assumed that the army of occupation equalled half (or more) of the population.
emphasized this "enormous impact" on Iceland:

The years 1940-1945, which brought to Iceland a military force that at times equaled its male population, had far-reaching effects on the nation's economy, its culture, the attitudes of its people, and its political life. Having been a relatively poor country prior to the war, struggling constantly for markets in which to sell its fish, Iceland suddenly found itself in the midst of unprecedented prosperity caused by foreign demand for fish and by demand from the occupation forces for labor. For a country which had been relatively isolated from the rest of the world for centuries, the new ideas, new products, and new ways of doing things resulting from contact with the foreign troops proved almost overwhelming to the local population—especially to the youth.5

Reactions of the Icelanders to these events were mixed. While many people welcomed the sudden and swift changes, many others feared that such changes, along with the presence of a military force in the country, presented a grave threat to the culture, language and traditions of the Icelandic nation. Nuechterlein further observes that:

Since Icelandic youth in particular had been exposed to foreign influences, it was natural that many teachers and clergymen were among the group of nationalists who waited impatiently for the end of the war so that Iceland could be free of the troops and return to the task of building up a strong national state without the presence of foreign influences.6

Nationalists did, indeed, long for a return to a pre-war pattern of life. Among them was Hannibal Valdimarsson, leader of the Social Democratic Party, who

6 Ibid., p. 34.
. . . believed that there should be as little contact as possible between Icelanders and the Americans in order to protect the purity of the language and culture of Iceland.\(^7\)

Much as many Icelanders longed for a return to the past, this was not to be. The twentieth century with all its problems and promises had finally come to Iceland, as Nuechterlein observes:

The world had suddenly changed for the long-isolated Icelanders; the younger generation was restless to learn more and to have more contact with the outside world than the older generation believed wise. Furthermore, having once tasted the fruits of the new prosperity, an increasing number of Icelanders was reluctant to consider a return to the so-called pre-war "normal" situation. A large proportion believed that it should be possible to continue to enjoy the high standard of living in the postwar period. New political forces were emerging which catered to the popular demand; and these new forces looked to the future rather than to the past for their inspiration.\(^8\)

During this period Denmark was also occupied by foreign troops—Nazi troops—and was unable to represent Iceland in foreign affairs. Provisions were made in the "Danish-Icelandic Act of Union" that after twenty-five years the union could be terminated if that were the desire of either country. There had been no doubt that the ultimate goal of the Icelanders was complete independence and the formation of a republic.

On May 17, 1941 the Althing unanimously adapted the following resolution:

The Althing resolves to declare that it considers Iceland to have acquired the right to a complete break-

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 116.  \(^8\)Ibid., p. 34.
off of the union with Denmark, since it now had to take into its own hands the conduct of all its affairs, Denmark being no longer able to deal with those matters which it undertook to deal with on behalf of Iceland in accordance with the act of union with Denmark: that on the part of Iceland there is no question of renewing the Act of Union, although it is not considered opportune at the present time, on account of the prevailing situation, to proceed to a formal dissolution of the union and the settling of a final constitution for the country, this however not to be delayed longer than the end of the war.9

During this period Iceland emerged from a primarily rural country to a predominantly urban one. Table 2 shows this change in population.

TABLE 2
PERCENTAGE OF URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION OF ICELAND, 1801-1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1801</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>99.4</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>85.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>86.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


a Towns and villages of 200 inhabitants and over.

This shift of population to urban areas brought about great social changes, not the least in the area of

education. For centuries the home, as has been observed, was the primary agency of education—a place where cultural traditions were passed down from generation to generation. With the growth of urban areas, particularly Reykjavik, and the development of an educational system, the school became the primary agency of education. One educator has observed this change as follows:

Before the greater part of the nation lived in rural areas and small fishing villages. Children grew up to take part in the work of their elders. The pattern of life was passed down from one generation to another and all education was built upon the experiences of the previous generations.¹⁰

Another educator, a Reykjavik principal, has also observed this change as follows:

Until the twentieth century the home was the source of education. Children worked with their parents and lived in the society of their parents, little changed from generation to generation. The home was the spiritual and practical school. There was the association of three generations. Grandfathers and grandmothers had great influence on the education of their grandchildren.¹¹

Kristjan Gunnarsson further observes that nowadays the home is so changed from what it had been for generations that it is little more than a resting place for two unlike generations:


Now the change not only affects the association between grandparents and grandchildren, but also between parents and children in urban areas. It is now increasingly the case that the parents are away at their work for long periods each day.

The home is little more than a resting place for people of two unlike generations, each with its own interests.\(^\text{12}\)

Reykjavik developed rapidly during the twentieth century. For the first time in the history of Iceland a metropolitan area developed—a cultural center with schools, museums, art galleries, theaters and a symphony hall. Today the Reykjavik area\(^\text{13}\) contains almost half the population of Iceland as Table 3 shows.

**TABLE 3**

**POPULATION OF REYKJAVIK AREA, 1801-1973**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1801</td>
<td>866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>7,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>29,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>79,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>95,011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>98,432</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


During the last two decades of the nineteenth century several bills relating to primary education had been brought before the Althing.\(^\text{14}\) Such legislation was

\(^\text{12}\)Ibid., p. 127.

\(^\text{13}\)The Reykjavik area comprises the city of Reykjavik, Kopavogur, Hafnarfjordur and other suburbs.

\(^\text{14}\)Gudmundur Finnbogason, Althingi og Menntamal
strongly opposed by a "pro-home education" faction which believed that home education was the foundation on which the education of the common people rested from generation to generation. This faction was always able to point out that home education had worked so well that the nation was entirely literate—*if* literacy be limited to the ability to read.

During this period Jon Thorarinsson, Gudmundur Finnbogason and others were untiring in their efforts for the cause of education. Hannes Hafsteinn who became prime minister in 1905 also wholeheartedly supported the cause. In 1907 an educational bill which made school attendance compulsory was passed by the Althing. Josephson has observed that "... the act of 1907, undoubtedly, marked the greatest step forward ever taken in public education in the country. By this act, the basis for a truly national system of education was finally established." Trail has elaborated as follows regarding this act:

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The greatest step in public education was made in 1907 when the Althing passed the Education Act which made school attendance compulsory. . . . From that time general interest in education began to assert itself. . . . The sponsor of the act was Jon Thorarinsson, member of the Althing, and later the first director of public education in Iceland. From that time on the progress of public education has been steady and rapid.17

According to the provisions of this act the responsibility of education to age ten rested with the home. From age ten to fourteen education became the responsibility of the public school. In addition this act laid down the minimum qualifications for public education, established school districts, provided for financial aid for education, outlined entrance and matriculation examinations and spelled out the duties of the Commissioner of Education.

By the time a student had completed his compulsory school attendance, he was expected to have some proficiency in Icelandic, penmanship, arithmetic, Christian doctrine, geography and singing.18

The Education Act of 1907 was amended in 1926 and 1936. The main changes in the 1926 amendment were that the Commissioner of Education was given permission to lower the school attendance age to seven years and pro-


visions were made for building schools in rural areas. In sparsely populated areas "circuit schools" were operated. This type of instruction allowed teachers to travel from farm to farm and offer instruction on a rotating basis. Boarding schools were also built in these areas. However, the length and quality of education in rural areas lagged behind that in urban areas such as Reykjavik.

The 1936 amendment made school attendance compulsory from age seven, lengthened the school year from one to two months over the previous minimum and divided the country into educational districts.

During this period standardized tests were developed, school inspectors were appointed, an educational advisory council (skolarad) was established and the State Textbook Publisher began operation.

The work of the State Textbook Publisher is to provide students at the compulsory stages of education with free textbooks which are often given to the students. It also sells reference books and various teaching aides for teachers. More recently it has maintained a collection of Icelandic and foreign textbooks.

20 For the test of the law see Josephson, pp. 377-82.
21 Jon Emil Gudjonsson, "Rikisutgafa Namsboka 30
The Reykjavik Grammar School also underwent some changes during this time. In 1904 instruction in Latin was reduced and Greek was discontinued, and instruction in Icelandic, modern languages, astronomy and natural sciences was increased. The school was divided into lower and upper divisions of three years each.\textsuperscript{22}

In 1937 new statutes divided the school into a lower division (\textit{gagnfraedadeild}) of two years and an upper division (\textit{laerdomsdeild}) of four years. The upper division after the second year was further divided into a language section and a mathematics section.\textsuperscript{23} Tables 4 and 5 show the courses taught in these divisions.

In 1930 a second grammar school was opened at Akureyri, a town in the north of Iceland and second in size to Reykjavik. It was founded on an existing secondary school (\textit{gagnfraedaskoli}) which had been established there in 1904 and which since 1908 had been permitted to offer the same instruction as the lower division of the Reykjavik Grammar School.

The Icelandic grammar schools may be likened to


\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid}, p. 86.
### TABLE 4
COURSES TAUGHT IN THE LOWER DIVISION OF THE REYKJAVIK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>First Year</th>
<th>Second Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic and mathematics</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural science</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total hours per week** 35 35

### TABLE 5
COURSES TAUGHT IN THE UPPER DIVISION OF THE REYKJAVIK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>First Year</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Second Year</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Third Year</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Fourth Year</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>English</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total hours per week | 35          | 35       | 35       |         | 35          | 35       |         | 35          | 35         |         | 35          | 35       |         | 35          |

the lower level of the American college and until 1942 they were the only institutions in Iceland from which students could enter the university after successfully passing the matriculation examination (studentsprof). 24

Trail has the following to say regarding the graduates of the Icelandic grammar schools:

This standing (graduates of these colleges) has for a long time been recognized by most European universities as equal to that of their own preparatory schools (Gymnasias, Lycees and Grammar Schools), and Icelandic graduates can enter these universities to study scientific course they wish without taking any special college courses. 25

A few schools in Iceland during the first decades of the twentieth century offered secondary education equivalent to the lower division of the grammar schools. The Flensborg School and the School for Young Ladies (Kvennaskolinn) which were established in the nineteenth century continued to offer secondary education. In 1928 the Reykjavik High School (gagnfraedaskola) was founded. It was and is a four year school operated by the city of Reykjavik. Its graduates may enter the upper division of the grammar schools. 26

Jon Sigurdsson had proposed that a university be

24 The studentprof is the same as the Danish studentereksamen. The Icelandic students who pass this examination traditionally wear white caps, a custom borrowed from Denmark in 1888.

25 Trail, p. 42.

26 Eliasson, Stutt Yfírlit, p. 39.
established in Iceland, and as early as 1881 Benedikt Sveinsson submitted a bill to the Althing to establish such an institution. On June 17, 1911 (the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Jon Sigurdsson) a university was established in Reykjavik which combined the theology seminary (founded 1847), the medical college (founded 1876) and the law school (founded 1908), and to which was added a Department of Philosophy. The beginnings were inauspicious with only eleven teachers and forty-five students (five in theology, seventeen in law and twenty-three in medicine).\textsuperscript{27} The first Rector, Dr. Bjorn M. Olason (1850-1919), in his inaugural address stated that the university would be an institution for teaching and research.\textsuperscript{28} Although a number of research institutes were founded, the university remained for a long time primarily a teaching institution. One of its strengths was its specialized role in preserving and studying the literature of Iceland. Trail says that:

Icelandic literature is stressed very much at the University. The Eddas and Sagas hold equally important places in the literature course and receive the major part of the instruction time. The predominant thought at the University is to train its students along conservative lines.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{27}Gudni Jonsson, Saga Haskola Islands [A History of the University of Iceland] (Reykjavik: Haskola Islands, 1961), pp. 21-35.

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., p. 29.

\textsuperscript{29}Trail, p. 45.
The university met in the Parliament building until 1940 when a large and modern building was built, largely through the efforts of Dr. Jon Johannesson, Rector of the University of Iceland (1932-1935 and 1939-1942) and Jonas Jonsson fra Hriflu. Writing in 1936 on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the University of Iceland, Dr. Richard Beck observed:

The work of the university has been carried out under serious handicaps, in cramped make shift quarters, with no auditorium or library facilities, with no center for student activities, and with such small salaries that the faculty members have not been able to devote all their time to their university work.30

It should be pointed out, however, that the university had a library which grew out of the separate departments of the three professional schools. Because the university was housed in the Parliament building, it was necessary to house a great part of the collections in the National Library where faculty and students were to have access to the books. Needless to say, this arrangement which lasted nearly thirty years, was inconvenient for the faculty and students and placed an added burden on the National Library which was becoming over-crowded.

During the seven sessions of the Althing between 1887 and 1907 the question of a teacher training school was much discussed. In 1907 legislation was finally passed

which created such an institution. The Act may be summarized as follows:

1. A Teacher Training School shall be established in Reykjavik.

2. The school shall be open to women and men and instruction shall be free.

3. The school shall be a three year school. The school year shall be from October 1 to March 31.

4. The subjects shall be: Icelandic, Danish, history, geography, natural science (with special emphasis on Iceland), arithmetic, geometry, writing, drawing, handicrafts, gymnastics, singing, Christian doctrine, pedagogy, education and student teaching.

5. The prime minister shall appoint three teachers. One teacher shall be the principal.

6. The teachers shall be obliged to provide free of charge a two month in-service course for teachers.

7. The Ministry shall have charge of the school and shall establish regulations for its operation.

8. The cost of the operation of the school shall be from the state treasury.31

The Teacher Training School opened on October 1, 1908, and at that time the teacher training division of the Flensborg school was closed.

In 1908 admission standards were issued which Josephson has summarized as follows:

1. To be admitted to the first class, the student must not be younger than eighteen years of age; to second class, not younger than nineteen; and to third class, not younger than twenty years of age.

2. He must have no contagious disease or physical handicaps that might harm the other students or prevent him from performing the duties of the teacher's profession. For this, the applicant must submit a written certificate.

3. He must have unspoiled morals.

4. He must demonstrate performance on an admissions examination at least to a certain minimal level. This examination includes the following subjects: Christian doctrine, reading, Icelandic grammar, spelling and punctuation, arithmetic, Danish, Icelandic history, geography with special emphasis on Icelandic geography, zoology, and botany.\textsuperscript{32}

In 1924 the school year was lengthened one month to include seven months of instruction and English was added to the curriculum. In 1943 the course of study was lengthened to four years and high school (gagnfraedaskoli) graduation was required for admission.

The program of the school was conservative and emphasis was placed on the study of Icelandic. Table 6 compares the curricula of 1908 and 1942-43.

At this time the Teachers Training School prepared teachers for the primary schools while the University of Iceland prepared teachers for higher levels. In 1942 a B.A. program was established at the university in the Department of Philosophy in a variety of subjects: Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, English, German, French, Latin, Greek, history, library science, geography, geometry, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, anatomy, botany, zoology and

\textsuperscript{32}Josephson, p. 337.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1908</th>
<th>1942-43</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>Danish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icelandic and world history</td>
<td>Icelandic and world history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Geography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>Mathematics (arithmetic and</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>geometry)</td>
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<td>Writing</td>
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<td>Drawing</td>
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<td>Handicraft</td>
<td>Handicraft</td>
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<td>Religion</td>
<td>Religion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>Singing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gymnastics (in the early days</td>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
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<tr>
<td>this included Health)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural history</td>
<td>Natural history</td>
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<td>Psychology of education</td>
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<td>(This included the Science</td>
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<td>of Teaching)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice Teaching</td>
<td>Practice Teaching</td>
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<td>English</td>
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<td>Biology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bible History</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Physics and Chemistry</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(combined)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Swimming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

hygiene. The main purpose of the B.A. program was to train teachers for the secondary, vocational and grammar schools. 33

The university training of teachers was constantly discussed during these years and in 1932 an Act was passed by the Althing to establish a department of education in the university—all to no avail. Such a department within the university had to wait until much later.

Schools such as the Marine School (founded 1891), the Commercial School (founded 1905), the Marine Engineering School (founded 1915), the School for Cooperatives (founded 1918), the Reykjavik Conservatory of Music (founded 1930) and the State Horticultural School (founded 1936) provided specialized education. In 1942 the Commercial School was granted permission to give the matriculation examination (studentsprof) for admission to the university.

Early in the century two "Folk High Schools" were established in Iceland. Sigurdur Thorolfsson who had come under the influence of the "folk school" movement while he was in Denmark established such a school at Hvitabakki in 1905 which operated until 1920. A year later Sigtryggur Gudlaugsson who had also been in Denmark established a similar school at Nupur which operated until 1929 when it became a district school. 34 The "folk school" movement,

33 Jonsson, pp. 141-49; Josephson, p. 527.

34 Gunnar M. Magnuss, Saga Althydufraedslunnar a
however, did not develop to any great extent in Iceland.

In 1928 the Althing passed a bill which established the Culture Fund (Menningarsjodur). The objectives of this fund were the promotion of general learning in the country, the provision for research into the natural resources of Iceland, the encouragement of the growth of national arts and the provision of scholarships for students going abroad to obtain higher degrees. A board of five members appointed by the Althing supervises this fund which is divided into three equal parts as follows:

1. One-third is set aside for use in publishing good native or translated works for general good and selected poetry and fiction.

2. One-third for use for scientific research of the country's natural resources and for publishing essays and treatises on the same.

3. One-third for use in buying objects of art for the State and giving prizes for plans of buildings, furniture and models of home handicraft. Also reproductions of works of Icelandic art for indoor decoration.35

The educational system during the first half of the twentieth century was under the Minister of Education and Church Affairs who was responsible for the administration of the schools. Below him was the Commissioner of Education36 who directed the operation of the system and who had con-

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35Trail, p. 84.

36The office of Commissioner of Education was
considerable responsibility and influence in educational affairs. The education system, however, was not unified, with the result that the Althing passed laws relating individually to a variety of schools. Because of this arrangement, schools grew up independent of each other and students were not always prepared to move easily from one stage of education to another.

The prevailing attitude toward education, especially on the part of the Althing, was conservative. It must be born in mind that during this period in Icelandic history the budget was extremely limited and revenues had to be given to such urgent projects as the building of roads and bridges and the development of communications.

Several educational leaders and professional associations did attempt to promote a more progressive attitude toward education. The Association of Icelandic Primary School Teachers, founded in 1921, was always in the forefront in the cause of education. Jon Thorarinsson, Director of Public Education from 1906 to 1908 and Commissioner of Education from 1908 to 1926, Jonas Jonsson fra Hriflu, Minister of Education and Church Affairs from 1927 to 1932 and Asgeir Asgeirsson, Commissioner of Education from 1926 to 1938 (except during 1931-34 when he served as created in 1908, replacing the Office of Director of Public Education which was created in 1906.
prime Minister and Freysteinn Gunnarsson and Helgi Eliasson took over his duties) were the leaders in education. Much of the progress and legislation relating to education during this period may be attributed in large part to the efforts of these men.

During the period prior to independence the educational system of Iceland grew considerably. In 1904 there were 6,795 students in all the schools in Iceland; by 1944 this figure had risen to 22,425. Education in Iceland continued to be greatly influenced by the ancient language and literature, especially the sagas. Trail has commented on these influences:

The most regulating factor of Icelandic schools and culture has been the language of the country. Prior to the 18th century probably the most developed languages in the world were Greek, Latin and Icelandic. The most remarkable thing about the language is the fact that the beginning child in school today can read the Icelandic written 1,000 years ago. The change during this period has been negligible.

Next to the language the Sagas are the most important as an influence on schools, education and culture of the country. Due to the isolation of the country the Sagas have had great influence, both past and present. In the past they were the guiding light of the people; to-day they are the historical importance of the country. These Sagas are quoted to-day and still exert an influence on the life of the people. It would be difficult to find a native in Iceland who has not read and re-read these Sagas. Students are examined in them in the schools.

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37 Eliasson, Stutt Yfirlit, p. 46.
38 Trail, p. 90.
During the period before World War II, Iceland continued to live in relative isolation and old traditions and institutions were preserved. Development in many areas continued to be slow and the nation continued to look inward, rather than outward, for new ideas. This was especially true regarding the educational system which, as has been noted, continued to be influenced by the ancient cultural tradition. The few changes that did take place were but a prelude to the profound changes that were soon to take place. Old traditions that had been handed down from generation to generation were soon to be examined and renewed in the context of a wider world view.
CHAPTER V

THE REPUBLIC--THE PROBLEM OF TRADITION AND MODERNIZATION; CULTURAL CHANGE AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

The Historical and Social Background

The struggles and desires of over a century finally culminated in 1944 in the establishment of a republic on the plains of Thingvellir where the first republic had been established over a thousand years before. Magnusson describes this great event in Iceland's history as follows:

The proceedings at Thingvellir on 12 June 1944 took place in the open air, as in old times. The day was cold and rainy, but nevertheless over 20,000 Icelanders assembled at this holiest of national shrines where so much of the nation's history had been enacted. When the foundation of the republic was formally declared by the President of the Althing, there were chimes from the old church at Thingvellir and a great hush fell on the crowd. Throughout the country the chimes echoed over the radio to which the rest of the population listened intently. It was an occasion never to be forgotten by those who experienced it.¹

Sveinn Bjornsson was elected the first president of Iceland, an office he held until 1952, when he was followed by Asgeir Asgeirsson who held that office until 1968. The

current president of Iceland, Dr. Kristjan Eldjarn, has held that office since 1968.

The present constitution of Iceland, based on the first Icelandic constitution of 1874, dates formally from the establishment of the republic. In addition to the provision for a president, it also provides for the Althing or legislative body (now consisting of sixty members), elected for a term of four years, and a court system. There are thirteen ministries, the most important being the office of Prime Minister. These ministries are as follows:

Office of the Prime Minister
Ministry of Culture and Education
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Agriculture
Ministry of Fisheries
Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs
Ministry of Social Affairs
Ministry of Health and Social Security
Ministry of Finance
Ministry of Communications
Ministry of Industries
Ministry of Commerce
The Statistical Bureau of Iceland

One of the smallest countries in the world, Iceland decided that a republic was a noble experiment despite the fact that: "Many authorities abroad doubted seriously that a population of 100,000 could maintain an independent and

2 The Althing may be dissolved and new elections held by a decree of the President upon the advice of the Prime Minister.

viable republic with the limited resources and the subarctic climate of Iceland."\(^4\)

As an independent republic, Iceland faced some difficult choices, chief among them membership in NATO and the continuance of a base at Keflavik with foreign troops. As has already been noted, many Icelanders wanted a return to "normalcy" after World War II. Nuechterlein, an authority on Iceland's foreign policy, notes that:

Only a few realists agreed with the eminent lawyer and later Foreign Minister, Bjarni Benediktsson,\(^5\) who wrote in 1943 that the Defense Agreement of 1941 with the United States marked the end of Iceland's neutrality and ushered in a new era wherein Iceland would be forced to choose between competing blocks of world powers.\(^6\)

Icelandic politics was then, as it is now, characterized by intense, often bitter rivalries and no issue was more hotly debated than that of membership in NATO and the presence of foreign troops in Iceland. The opposition to NATO membership was of two kinds--that of the communists (always a small, but very vocal, minority) and the non-communist nationalists. The latter agreed that membership in NATO and the presence of foreign troops would present a


\(^5\)He also served as Minister of Culture and Education and Prime Minister.

threat to the culture, language and nationality of the Icelanders.

On December 1, 1945 Gunnar Thoroddsen, a prominent young conservative and member of the Althing, as well as a Professor of Law at the University of Iceland, addressed the annual Students Day in Reykjavik. Speaking to a large student audience at the university, he:

"... warned that the United States request for bases on Icelandic soil constituted a serious threat to the nation's independence, as well as a threat to the culture and traditions of the nation."\(^7\)

Another leading politician, Dr. Gylfi Th. Gislason, a Social Democrat and a member of the Althing, as well as the Minister of Culture and Education from 1956 to 1971, said in a debate in the Althing in 1952:

"The history of the Icelanders and their fate through centuries makes the older people by instinct suspicious of foreign influences. On the other hand, the smallness of our society and the lack of excitement make the teenagers eager for change and everything foreign. For both these reasons the relations between Icelanders and other nations are somewhat different from what is customary among other nations."\(^8\)

However, during this period Icelanders did not isolate themselves from other nations. The person more than any other responsible for the direction which Icelandic foreign policy took at this time was Bjarni Benediktsson (1902-1970). Iceland entered the Keflavik Agreement in 1946, joined NATO in 1949 and concluded a Defense Agreement

\(^7\)Ibid., pp. 41-42. \(^8\)Grondal, p. 53.
with the United States in 1951 which permitted the United States to maintain a base and station troops in Iceland. Upon signing the NATO agreement in Washington on April 4, 1949, then Foreign Minister Bjarni Benediktsson commented on Iceland's special position:

The nations that are now forming this new brotherhood are unlike each other in many respects; some of them are the greatest and most powerful in the world; others are small and weak. None is smaller or weaker than mine--the Icelandic nation. My people are unarmed and have been unarmed since the days of our Viking forefathers. We neither have nor can have an army. My country has never waged war on any country, and as an unarmed country we neither can nor will declare war against any nation, as we stated when we entered the United Nations. In truth, we are quite unable to defend ourselves from any foreign armed attack.  

If some people feared, as indeed they did, that Bjarni Benediktsson's position jeopardized Iceland's culture and national identity, he had no such fears. In a speech at the University of Oslo on September 24, 1964, he said to a meeting of the Nordic Society and the Norse Icelandic Society:

Some have feared that if the Icelanders have a close association with other countries, it will lead to the loss of our language and unique culture. This I don't fear. Icelandic culture never blossomed as much as it did when the nation had contact with others during the Saga Age.  

He declared further: "The reason Iceland has made

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9 Nuechterlein, p. 91.

such progress in the last two or three generations is because it hasn't been afraid to learn from others."11

The Icelandic nation, despite the assurance of Bjarni Benediktsson and other Icelanders who were pro-Western that Icelandic culture and national identity were not in danger, continued to keep close surveillance on the Keflavik base. Only a small number of the men stationed there were permitted off base at any given time and even then they were obliged to obey a ten o'clock curfew—an agreement still in effect.

Things came to a head in 1961 when the Icelandic government granted the Defense Force permission to increase its television transmission from 50 to 250 watts. The limited transmission of only 50 watts did not reach the Icelandic populace, largely located in the Reykjavik-Keflavik area. However, the increased transmission did reach this area—at a time when Iceland did not have its own television. As a result, many Icelanders bought television receivers. Grondal notes:

As their number [i.e., families owning television receivers] increased, intellectuals began to see this American medium, which had entered so many Icelandic homes, as a cultural danger. More and more of them warned against this development.12

The zenith of the opposition came in March, 1964 when sixty prominent intellectuals13 signed an appeal to

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11Ibid.
12Grondal, p. 72.
13Grondal notes: "This was signed by a carefully
limit television transmission to the American base at Keflavik.

However, a considerable majority of the population of the Reykjavik-Keflavik area held the opposite opinion. Television viewers organized and an appeal, signed by 14,680 citizens, was sent to the Althing. Their appeal read in part as follows:

We the undersigned appeal to the Althing that it see to it that all those who want to and are able to receive television transmissions, wherever they come from, shall have an unlimited right to full freedom to do so.¹⁴

Dr. Gylfi Th. Gislason, who was at this time Minister of Culture and Education and whose ministry was responsible for Icelandic radio and television, and the American Ambassador, James K. Penfield, discussed this problem. For a time it appeared that the Icelandic government would side with the minority and limit the Keflavik base transmission.

While this debate was going on, the Icelandic State Radio had been laying the groundwork for Icelandic television transmission which began during October, 1966, at a selected group of sixty public figures, most of them writers, professors, other educators, artists, scientists, doctors and union leaders. Informally, it was pointed out that not one of them was a communist. Known opponents of NATO membership and the Defense Force were not invited to sign the appeal. This was to give the document more weight in political circles as well as with the general public." Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 73.
which time the American transmission was again restricted to the base at Keflavik. However, much of the foreign programs to which the intellectuals objected later appeared on Icelandic television.

During this same period Iceland experienced a prosperity unknown before. This prosperity had come mainly from the development of the fishing industry (which is today among the most modernized in the world) and the defense base at Keflavik. From 1952 to 1967, for example, the net income from the Iceland Defense Force ranged from 4.1 per cent to 23.2 per cent of the total currency income. This prosperity, so suddenly experienced by the Icelanders, according to Magnusson, had its drawbacks:

Wealth increased rapidly and an inflation set in. The standard of living rose sharply. But this new situation had obvious drawbacks, chief among them being a radical dislocation of traditional values and the demoralizing effect of easy money. The result was a nouveau riche vulgarity which had been almost unknown before the war.

This concern over the adverse effects of Iceland's prosperity is also expressed by Halldor Laxness, Iceland's eminent writer and 1955 winner of the Nobel prize in literature. Quoted by Gerald Clark, Laxness observes:

"I am beginning to fear here the same kind of moral decay [as in Germany during the 1920's]. Life was easier when the people were poor. The young are not making the right comparisons. They forget how much their

15 Ibid., p. 83.

16 Magnusson, p. 142.
fathers read. They think they were dummies for not making more money. "17

Along with this prosperity a rate of inflation has set in unknown in most other countries. Table 7 shows the rate of inflation in Iceland.

**TABLE 7**

INFLATION IN ICELAND, OTHER OEDC\(^a\) COUNTRIES AND THE UNITED STATES, 1950-1977 PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN CONSUMER PRICES IN PREVIOUS YEAR

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European OEDC</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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\(^a\)Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (formerly Organization for European Economic Corporation).

Inflation still continued to be Iceland's main economic problem—and "... there is scant reason to hope for swift progress toward economic health." 18 Because of this inflation people work as much as possible in order to have


the money to buy as much as possible before prices increase. As has already been observed, parents are often both employed, with the father frequently holding two jobs. The home, as has also been observed, has so changed in recent years that it is no longer a place of education where cultural traditions pass down from one generation to another. A contemporary Icelandic writer has observed this change in Icelandic society:

Though we possess a 1100-year history and culture and our roots go deep, the changes have been so rapid, society has been so transformed in recent years and everything is in such a state of flux that it is difficult for some people to find their feet.19

Iceland's prosperity, as has already been noted, has been based on its fishing industry which has been largely developed and modernized during the twentieth century, especially since World War II. A recent writer on Iceland has summarized this vital industry as follows:

The main source of Iceland's wealth is fish. Ninety-two percent20 of her exports are fish and fish products, and 20 percent of the population is engaged in catching and preparing these. About 850 vessels with a total gross tonnage of 78,000 carry some 6,000 fishermen, most of them to waters off the southwestern coast, one of the richest fisheries in the world.21

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20 According to Magnusson and others, the fishing industry exports has declined to about 75 per cent of Iceland's total exports by the mid 1970's. Magnusson, p. 213.

These rich fishing banks have been a danger, as well as an asset to Iceland's economy. For example, the herring which was so plentiful was so over-fished in the 1960's by European fishing fleets that it disappeared and had only recently appeared in sufficient quantity to be fished again. Iceland became alarmed when it was also found that cod, one of the most important species in Icelandic fisheries, was also over-fished.

In order to protect the fishing industry so vital to Iceland's economy, some drastic measures had to be taken immediately to conserve the fish. Such measures were taken when Iceland extended its territorial waters from three to four miles in 1952, to twelve miles in 1958, to fifty miles in 1972 and, finally, to 200 miles in 1975. This extension of territorial waters led to bitter clashes, especially with Great Britain which had fished in Icelandic coastal waters for centuries. During the last of these clashes, known as the "cod wars," Iceland broke off diplomatic relations with Great Britain, a fellow NATO member, and for a time, it seemed that Iceland would withdraw from NATO and demand the closing of the Keflavik base.22

Eventually Great Britain conceded to Iceland's demands and now Iceland maintains good relations with its

22 For an account of the first two "cod wars" see: Morris Davis, Iceland Extends Its Fishing Limits; A Political Analysis (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget; London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963).
former "cod war" enemy and complete jurisdiction over its territorial waters extending to 200 miles. During the ensuing period Iceland has been greatly concerned with marine conservation. A recent dramatic step was taken by the Minister of Fisheries when he banned cod fishing from December 20 to 31 last year.\(^{23}\)

Iceland is also more dependent on foreign trade than almost any other country, and this trade, as had already been noted, is based on the fishing industry. The danger of such a one-sided economy has been of increasing concern to Iceland during the last few decades and during this period mechanized industry has been gradually developed.

In 1951 the first step in this direction was taken with the building of the State Fertilizer Plant near Reykjavik and later a cement factory at Akranes, across the Faxa Bay from Reykjavik. The largest industry to date to be built in Iceland is the aluminum smelter at Straumvik, some ten miles south of Reykjavik, constructed in 1966 and operated by Icelandic Aluminum Company, a subsidiary of Swiss Aluminium Company of Zurich. The raw material (alumina) is imported and Iceland supplies the electrical power to operate the plant. In order to supply this power the National Power Company of Iceland (Landsvirkjan) was established in 1965. Its first task was to build a hydro

power plant in southwest Iceland with an ultimate capacity of 210 MW. Regarding this large industrial venture in Iceland backed by foreign funds, Magnusson says:

The combined project of smelter and power station represented a total investment of $151 million, and is by far the largest industrial venture even undertaken in Iceland. Aluminium amounted to about 17 per cent of total exports in 1973. The 550 employees of the smelter are among the highest paid workers in Iceland and their contribution to the national product is correspondingly high.24

Within the last decade or so Iceland has become increasingly aware of possessing, next to its fishing grounds, a great natural resource which could be used on a large scale. This resource is, of course, energy—in two sources: the hydro potential of the rivers and the vast geothermal potentials of underground steam and water.25 George R. Young writing for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland, says:

In these days it seems almost unbelievable that there should be a high-income western country which still has, easily available, nine times more hydroelectric energy resources than it is currently using. But such is the case of Iceland. When the existing hydro-power plants are joined in 1976 by the new 150,000 kilowatt unit, there will still be another 2.5 million kilowatts of capacity waiting to be tapped.26

24 Magnusson, pp. 218-19.

25 The city of Reykjavik is heated by natural hot water from below the ground. This provides an inexpensive and pollution free form of heating the city. Ultimately, it is expected that 70 per cent of all the homes in Iceland will be heated in such a manner.

26 George R. Young, Introducing Iceland (n.p., Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 197?), p. 6.
Not only is this energy cheap to produce, but it presents no danger to the physical environment:

Nor does the need to care for "the environment" place any serious obstacles in the way of development. Hydro-electric stations emit no chemical fumes, nor do they discharge warm water into the rivers, changing their ecological balance.27

Attractive as this "new" natural resource is, as a source of cheap electrical power for foreign industries and a source of income in a dangerously one-sided economy, Iceland is approaching the exploitation of this wealth with great prudence. Even the building of the aluminum plant was controversial, as Magnusson points out:

The aluminium smelter has . . . been a hotly debated issue in Icelandic politics, mainly because it is wholly owned by a foreign country, which is run according to a special law enacted by the Althing and which pays a price for its electricity consumption that is said to be far below production costs. The contract between the Government and the Swiss company is valid for twenty-five years, which is considered very unrealistic in view of the constant inflation in Iceland. . . . In this context it is also pointed out that the state budget of Iceland is so small that a mere handful of foreign companies could easily control the whole national economy.28

The controversy over industrial development in Iceland is further identified by Peter T. Kilborn:

Iceland used less than 10 per cent of its accessible power reserves. The Government is finding that since oil prices quadrupled a little over two years ago, it is becoming economical for some foreign industries to build factories here, rather than to buy oil to run the factories at home.

In one sense, the Government wants those industries because they can relieve the country's dependence on a

27 Ibid., p. 6. 28 Magnusson, p. 219.
single erratic industry—fishing. But Iceland is also finding itself up against some of the complicated conflicts that have been more common to large, heavily industrialized countries.

"Energy is the most valuable resource we have after the fish stocks," said Jakob Bjornsson, head of Iceland's National Energy Institute, which directs development of the country's power resources. "But there is a great debate over the desirability of these industries."

This debate centers around the issues of danger to the physical environment, the economy and the culture. Although hydro power stations themselves would present no immediate danger to the pollution free environment, large scale industry could present such a danger. Iceland does not have the necessary capital to develop large scale industry and must, therefore, depend on foreign investments, as had already been done with the building of the aluminum plant. Lastly, and perhaps most important, is the fear that such industrial development would endanger Iceland's culture. Gylfi Th. Gislason writes of this fear on the part of some Icelanders:

Those who fear the influence of foreign capital believe that it will gradually endanger Iceland's independence and distinctive culture. Some of these people say that Iceland has no need of industrial undertakings that cannot be established except in cooperation with foreign interests, Iceland's traditional occupations, fishing, small industry, and farming, can— they say— together with the expansion of trade, air and sea transport, provide the necessary progress. If the establish-

ment of new, large-scale enterprises is necessary and desirable and sufficient domestic capital is not available, then Iceland should establish and operate them herself, acquiring the necessary loans from abroad. The opinion has even been voiced that it would be better to put up with a rather lower standard of living without the participation of foreigners in the Icelandic economy than to base progress on foreign participation in the latter.30

Despite such fears, Iceland is on the threshold of an industrial revolution. Gardar Ingvarsson, an economist at the Central Bank of Iceland writes:

... it has been clear for some time that the resources of the sea are limited and fish production cannot be increased beyond certain limits without depleting the fish stocks around Iceland. To sustain further economic growth and to safeguard its already high living standards, Iceland must turn to its other major resource, namely energy, which can be exploited on a large scale.31

The greater part of the population, including Gylfi Th. Gislason, believes that foreign investment and technical knowledge will present no danger to the Icelandic culture:

... a large majority of the nation seems to think the necessary industrialization of Iceland during coming decades will only be assured with the help of foreign capital and the technical knowledge that can only be obtained abroad. Also, that matters can so be arranged that such cooperation would not entail any risk for Iceland's independence or culture.32

Gislason and others further believe that Iceland "... has the possibility of preventing trouble before it


32 Gislason, p. 61.
starts.\textsuperscript{33} Some of the guidelines to prevent troubles are suggested by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs:

Industrial development cannot be permitted if it means a demand for large number of workpeople. With unemployment at less than 1% of the workforce (a statistic that means that there are far more vacancies than people to fill them), there is no labour to spare.\ldots So new industries must be labour-saving.\ldots

Nor can the construction or operation of new industries involve any significant import of foreign labor. In such a small and homogeneous community--Iceland has a total population of about 210,000, with 80,000 in Reykjavik--even a few score of "foreigners" quickly become conspicuous and social frictions could arise. Nor will Iceland permit control of important sections of its economy to pass into foreign hands; any new foreign investment must be at least 51% Icelandic owned.\textsuperscript{34}

Currently under construction is a large ferrosilicican plant at Hvalfjordur, about 65 miles north of Reykjavik. This plant is a joint undertaking of the Icelandic State, which holds controlling interest, and the Elkem Spiergerverket of Norway. Jon Sigurdsson, director of the Icelandic company, has commented that the anti-pollution devices to be installed are so elaborate that they will collect no less than 99 per cent of all dust particles from the plant.\textsuperscript{35}

Icelandic Culture in a Multi-Culture Society

But what of this cultural heritage which Iceland seeks so jealously to guard? What is its place in contem-}

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., p. 63. \textsuperscript{34}Young, pp. 7-8. \textsuperscript{35}"Ferroalloy Production Here Next Year," \textit{News from Iceland}, No. 28 (March, 1978), p. 3.
porary Iceland which has seen great change during the last few decades? One writer comments:

Here the old and the new meet to a greater degree than in any other civilized country. Everywhere one looks there are signs of development and progress. In some ways the very ancient and the modern are engaged in a violent conflict. Sometimes the revolution and evolution are slow and hidden, but at other times they are rapid and perceptible as the country adjusts itself to the advancement of modern civilization elsewhere.36

The cultural heritage is foremost a literary one—an unbroken literary tradition going back to the earliest days of Icelandic history. It is a heritage shared by all Icelanders and one which binds them together in national unity:

As Jensen observes:

Much of the homogeneity of the Icelandic people is due to their familiarity of the ancient literature, which has never lost its hold on the people, for the voices of the masters have never been silenced. The literature is part of every Icelander's inheritance and education. Through their firm, unbroken, and magnificent literary background an artistic quality has been apparent, and today the taste of the Icelanders for literary polish in their present day reading is evident in the choice of their materials. So important do the people consider their many authors—poets, prose writers, and playwrights—and their contribution to the most appreciated of the arts that they are encouraged and honored by the Althing and are shown respect by all.37

The Icelandic language continues to be of prime importance in the cultural and literary heritage. The


37Ibid., p. 137.
language—"Iceland's most priceless inheritance and always the possession of the common people"\(^{38}\)—has remained unchanged since the days of the settlement. Helgi Saemundsson, Vice Chairman of the Education Council of Iceland, writes of this heritage:

The greatest achievement of the Icelanders has been the preservation of their language, which is still the same as was spoken the year 1000 in Scandinavia, the Faroes, Greenland, Northern Britain, parts of Ireland and France, and even as far East as Constantinople. The changes which have taken place are so small, in the written or spoken form, that they would be considered slight variations in other countries. Young people in Iceland can understand without difficulty books compiled in the monasteries during the early Christian period. Poems composed in the Norse tongue before the settlement of Iceland are also accessible to them. This is a priceless cultural heritage.\(^{39}\)

Although in present day Iceland "it is considered the thing to speak good Icelandic and to write the language as correctly as possible . . . ,"\(^{40}\) this was not always so. During the latter part of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, Icelandic was so influenced by the Danish language, which was widely spoken in Iceland at that time by government officials and merchants, that there was the danger that the Icelandic language would lose its purity. However, by the latter part of the nineteenth

\(^{38}\) Benediktsson, 2:139.


\(^{40}\) Matthias Johannessen, "We Are Not a Problem Child," \textit{Atlantica and Iceland Review} 19, No. 2 (1971): 58.
In the 19th century energetic efforts were made toward language purification. Today no foreign words, even scientific, are admitted into the language. The Icelandic word for television, sjonvarp, literally "to cast out to the sight," is based on native root words; in the same manner the word for computer is tolva, literally "to count with a mystical force."

Systematic efforts for making and collecting new words (nyyrdi) began in 1918 by the Association of Engineers (Verkfraedningafelagid) and their Word Committee (Ordanaefnd). Such efforts, however, were not supported by public funds until 1951 when the collecting and publishing of lists of new words was entrusted to the Dictionary Committee of the University of Iceland (Ordabokanefnd Haskolans). This was followed for a short period by a separate and informal New Word Committee (Nyyrdanefnd) until an Icelandic Language Committee (Islanzk Malanefnd) was formally founded in 1965 by ministerial decree. This is an advisory committee which is to "guide government agencies and the general public in matters of language on a scholarly basis."  

As a part of language purification, the Personal Names Act of 1923 banned the adoption of family names, al-

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though well-established ones (few in number) were permitted to remain. Thus, a son and daughter of Gudmundur Jonsson would be named Brandur Gudmundsson and Katrin Gudmundsdottir respectively. Even after she married, the daughter would remain Katrin Gudmundsdottir with a fru (Mrs.) in front of her name to indicate her married status. Thus far this system has worked well in a country with slightly more than 200,000 population and where "greetings to everyone from the President to the street sweeper are by tradition on a first-name basis." 43

The literary tradition, already alluded to, remains strong in the 1970's. According to Magnusson and others, the sagas are still widely read and the sagas figures are familiar to everyone. 44 Intellectuals are highly respected and "... are looked upon as the wardens of the cultural heritage," 45 although they may not necessarily be limited to those who are academically trained. This is especially true regarding the farmer and seaman:

The Icelandic farmer, not yet contaminated by the amorphous urban civilization, is a man worth meeting. Deeply rooted in old traditions, well versed in the Sagas and poetry, he is abreast of current events in the modern world, both at home and abroad, and discusses them intelligently with the visitor.

43 Magnusson, p. 173.
45 Magnusson, Northern Sphinx, p. 159.
Icelandic seamen... are voracious readers, often reciting whole collections of poetry by rote, and eager to discuss the newest trends in literature and the arts. It is not at all uncommon for farmers or seamen to take part in public discussions in the newspapers about the state of literature or the merits of the latest innovations in poetry.  

Not only are the sagas widely read, but their epic realistic style reigned supreme and was dominant in Icelandic prose writing until the mid-1960's with few deviations. Poetry, always of great interest to the Icelanders, is still written, published and read in great quantity:

A novelty at the third Reykjavik Arts Festival in 1974 was a "marathon recital" of poetry, where 20 living poets read from their works, 15 minutes each, to a packed auditorium.

In a unique way Iceland has been a country of books as far back as the twelfth century. Since 1887, when publishing statistics were first kept, nearly 20,000 titles have been published. Concerning this large number of books, Magnusson observes:

Considering that the population of Iceland during those 80 years has risen from a mere 75,000 to 200,000 (and is thus still one of the smallest nations on earth), the quantity of books published during the period if really enormous. The per capita output of titles is three or four times larger than that of other Scandinavian countries and about 20 times larger than that of the United States. About 500,000 copies of Icelandic books are sold each year in Iceland, or about 2.5 copies per inhabitant, whereas U.S. publishers sell about 700 million copies.

which means some 3.5 copies per inhabitant, but it should be kept in mind that the Icelanders also buy a great number of foreign books, English, German and Scandinavian.49

Table 8, compiled by one of the librarians of the National Library of Iceland, shows publishing statistics during this period.

It is not surprising that visitors to Iceland are amazed at the number of bookstores they see. The observation of a visitor to Iceland shortly after World War II is typical:

They are conspicuous in every town and even in the small hamlets. In Reykjavik there seem to be several in every block. Actually, in this city of fifty thousand there are between thirty and forty-one for approximately every twelve hundred people.50

A survey of business enterprises in Iceland in 1969 revealed 89 bookstores in Iceland, 38 of which were in Reykjavik.51

Between April and July of 1971 Richard Tomasson, of the University of New Mexico, conducted an empirical study of the reading habits, book ownership and familiarity with literature of a sample of Icelanders born during the first half of the century. Regarding this study, the author writes:


### TABLE 8

BOOKS PUBLISHED IN ICELAND, 1887-1966

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Books</th>
<th>Percentage Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temperance</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries, catalogs</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary history</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile (Icelandic)</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile (translations)</td>
<td>986</td>
<td>4.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters, essays, speeches</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry (Icelandic)</td>
<td>1,257</td>
<td>6.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry (translations)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiction (Icelandic)</td>
<td>1,128</td>
<td>5.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiction (translations)</td>
<td>2,429</td>
<td>12.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Icelandic works</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supernatural, dreams, occult</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics, political economy</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic sciences</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy, psychology, morals</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography, travel</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural history</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing, sailing</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amusements</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local politics</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music and other arts</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>4.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (includes textbooks)</td>
<td>1,109</td>
<td>5.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, commerce</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk lore</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography, genealogy</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not classified</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19,919</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8—Continued


Of the sample, which was roughly representative of the total adult population aged 21-70 in 1971, half were men and half were women, only 15 of the 100 had an academic secondary education (menntaskoli), and 29 had no formal schooling at all. The names and addresses of potential respondents were obtained randomly from the National Register. Fifty completed interviews were from Reykjavik; 17 from Hvolsvollur, a small farm village in the south; 17 from Stafholtstungnahreppur, a "typical" farm parish in Borgarfjordur; and 16 from Isafjordur, a fishing town in the northwestern peninsula. These three small places were chosen to approximate the residential and occupational characteristics of that half of the Icelandic population which lives outside of the Reykjavik metropolitan area.52

Tomasson's study revealed that in response to the question, "have you read a book during the last month?" 48 per cent had read none, 20 per cent had read one book, 19 per cent had read two books and 13 per cent had read three or more books. In response to the question, "how many books would you estimate you have read in the last year?" only 4 per cent indicated they had read none, while 4 per cent read one book, 20 per cent two books, 7 per cent three books, 10 per cent four books, 27 per cent five to nine books, 26 per cent ten to fifteen books and 19 per cent 20 or more books.53

52 Ibid., p. 75. 53 Ibid., p. 77.
In other words, 89 per cent of the sample claimed to have read three or more books during the previous year. The study also revealed that the respondents had a constant preference for Icelandic books, especially Icelandic fiction and poetry.\textsuperscript{54}

Considering the many bookstores and the quantity of books published in Iceland, it is not surprising that book ownership is high. Tomasson's study revealed that the median number of books in the 100 dwelling units of the respondents was about 200, the modal number was in the 200-300 range and the mean number about 338.\textsuperscript{55} Eight per cent of the respondents estimated their libraries to contain over a thousand books.\textsuperscript{56}

Regarding these figures, Tomasson writes:

I regard these estimates as having a high degree of validity though they may be a bit low because of books--frequently in bedrooms--that were missed by the respondents or myself. Individuals who lived alone and young married couples generally had fewer books than others. The only respondent in the sample without any books was the driver of a school bus who lived in a rented room.\textsuperscript{57}

Tomasson's study also revealed that the respondents had considerable knowledge of their native writers:

Indeed, 89 per cent of the respondents could name at least five living Icelandic authors, and 87 per cent could name at least five that were dead. Many were able to list a far greater number. All told, 64 living

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 78. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{55} Ibid. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 79. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 78.
and 55 deceased Icelandic writers were named by the 100 respondents.

When the Icelanders were asked to name deceased writers they did virtually as well as with the living. Most notable however is their overwhelming tendency to choose poets over other kinds of writers. The eight most frequently mentioned names are exclusively poets, and all but two of them lived in the twentieth century.58

Although Magnusson and others believe the sagas are widely read today and that the saga figures are still very real to the people today,59 Tomasson, to the contrary, believes that contemporary Icelanders are not as familiar with their sagas as earlier generations:

... my observation is that the great majority of the Icelanders, including active readers among them, have only a school book knowledge of the sagas.

Contemporary Icelanders are apparently further removed from them and more ignorant about their classical literature than was the case with earlier generations.60

The contemporary Icelander, inheritor of an aristocratic heritage, living in a classless society, a member of "... one large but not very harmonious family"61 and still "fiercely individualistic,"62 still continues to admire the literary and artistic figure. Tomasson's study revealed that his respondents when asked to name their most

58 Ibid., pp. 78-79.
60 Tomasson, pp. 86-87.
61 Magnusson, *Northern Sphinx*, p. 163.
62 Ibid., p. 160.
admired figure, living and deceased, tended to name a surprising large number of literary and artistic figures.\textsuperscript{63}

Another interesting study on the reading habits of the Icelanders, in this case that of Icelandic women born between 1940 and 1945, and living in Reykjavik, revealed a marked difference in the reading habits among two groups, university educated and non-university educated. When asked if they were presently reading a book, 59 per cent of the former group responded in the affirmative as opposed to 32 per cent of the latter.\textsuperscript{64} When asked about the use of their leisure time, four times as many university educated women indicated reading as a leisure time activity as non-university educated women.\textsuperscript{65}

Whatever the reading habits of the Icelanders may be, they continue to "... live in the past more than most other people."\textsuperscript{66} Magnusson sees this, however, as a source of inspiration and determination:

This lively sense of historical continuity is the mainspring of all national endeavors of Icelanders today. Their past glories as well as their age long misfortunes are sources of inspiration and determination to overcome obstacles on the road to self-realization.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{63} Tomasson, pp. 87-88.


\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., p. 106.

\textsuperscript{66} Magnusson, Northern Sphinx, p. 161.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., p. 2.
Looking upon Icelandic history as an "adventure," Gylfi Th. Gislason, states:

An understanding by the nation itself of the essence of this adventure provides the greatest impulse for its continuing to be Icelandic, to preserve everything that has made it Icelandic and to safeguard its independence and security.68

A recent example of the Icelanders' devotion to their history and literature was graphically illustrated when the ancient Icelandic manuscripts, long housed in the Arnamagnæan collection in Copenhagen, were returned to Iceland. Although Icelandic claims to these manuscripts encountered heavy opposition from the Danes, the Icelanders always considered it only right that they should be returned to the land of their origin.69 Dr. Jonas Kristjansson, Director of the Arnamagnæan Institute in Reykjavik, writes:

When the Icelanders began claiming their independence from the Danes in the nineteenth century, the idea gradually came to the fore that the Icelandic manuscripts ought to be included in the new order. The Icelanders have no old buildings and very few ancient artifacts. The manuscripts are beautiful and precious examples of craftsmanship, but above all they are treasuries of ancient literature and history. The hope of all Icelanders was that, with the recovery of their independence from Denmark, the manuscripts would return to the custody of the original owners.70

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68 Gislason, p. 8.


The Danish parliament finally agreed to the return of the manuscripts to Iceland. At long last on April 21, 1971 the first of the manuscripts reached Iceland. As the Danish naval frigate arrived with two of the most famous manuscripts, the Flateyrarbok and the Elder Edda, a huge crowd, including the Prime Minister of Iceland and an honor guard, gathered at the harbor to welcome them. In addition:

Most shops and offices were closed for the morning, while all school children were given a holiday for the whole day. The flag-bedecked streets of the Icelandic capital were thronged with happy people.71

Later that evening at an official ceremony in the Concert Hall of the University of Iceland, Helge Larsen, the Danish Minister of Education, presented the manuscripts to Gylfi Th. Gislason, the Icelandic Minister of Culture and Education.

Although the cultural heritage is still very strong and interest in genealogy, history and literature remain predominant, Iceland is not a museum of old relics and the window to culture is not open to the outside world only via Denmark as it was for centuries. The "hermit of the Atlantic" is now at the cross roads of European and American air travel. Each year thousands of passengers on Icelandic Airlines stop in Iceland, even though it be for a

brief refueling stop at the Keflavik International Airport. Tourism, as well as conferences in Iceland, is encouraged:

Travel has become a very integral part of life in this part of the world, and we would not wish to separate ourselves from that development. Both communications in general and many domestic services are being helped by tourism.72

Icelanders themselves are also traveling in greater numbers to other parts of Europe, America and the world. In proportion to the size of the population, Icelanders are among the most traveled people in the world:

[In contemporary Iceland there] ... is a strong craving for experiences of all kinds; this finds its outlet in travel and adventure, scholarly and artistic pursuits. ... This insatiable curiosity is nothing new, but goes back to the dawn of Icelandic history, when the Icelanders travelled over half the globe from America to Constantinople. Few people in the world travel more than Icelanders of today. In 1973 more than 20 per cent of the entire population travelled abroad.73

Cultural life in Iceland is now varied. There are two theaters in Reykjavik (with a large one in the planning stage) presenting Icelandic and foreign plays in translation, as well as opera and musicals. There is also a national symphony, as well as choral groups and other performing artists. Painting and sculpture are produced, exhibited and sold.74 This is in contrast to the period until the turn of the century when:

73 Magnusson, Northern Sphinx, p. 162.
74 There are very few Icelandic homes without original works of art.
cultural life, although vigorous, was highly uniform. It was confined to the literary arts, especially poetry, with a sprinkling of handicrafts and folk music. Painting, drama, and musical compositions were almost non-existent. 75

Magnusson further elaborates on this development of the arts in Iceland:

Variety and expression [in the arts] are greater than ever before. The search for meaningful modes of expression in all the arts is constantly going on. There is indeed an unbroken continuity in the cultural endeavors of the Icelanders, but the "new age" has vastly accelerated and diversified the developments, providing many new outlets for creativity, gathering impulses and ideas from abroad to be digested and re-cycled in the Icelandic context. 76 [Italics mine.]

One of the highlights of Icelandic culture during the 1970's is the Reykjavik Arts Festival. First launched in 1970, it continues to be sponsored by the state and the city of Reykjavik. Vladimir Ashkenazy, who is married to an Icelandic and who is a citizen of Iceland, has been its guiding light since its founding. International celebrities have performed at the festival, as was the case with the 1978 festival. 77 There is an emphasis on both native and foreign:

75 Magnusson, Northern Sphinx, p. 181.


77 "Among the well known international artists who will be performing in Reykjavik [at the 1978 Festival] are Mikhail Baryshnikov, Luciano Pavarotti, the pianist Oscar Peterson and the Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich who will play with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy" (Scandinavian Review 66, No. 2 [June, 1978]: 69).
... the benefit is twofold. First, those living here, artists and laymen alike, are treated to a dazzling range of perceptions from a larger world—including both what is time-honoured and emerging. In short, the horizon is pushed back, new vistas opened up.

Yet the vantage point remains essentially our own; after all, the show is on home turf. Which brings us to the second aspect of the Festival—the inevitable stock-taking that results from the juxtaposition of the international and what has flowered from native soil. It is a self-evaluation made possible only by a broadened overview.

If all past Festivals had a strong international flavour, Icelandic contributions each time got their deserved share of the applause—testimony to the fact that the arts are alive and well here. Indeed in fine shape, given all circumstances. The way we see it, they are building on their own foundations while drawing enrichment from outside currents—which is an evolution that can only be viewed approvingly [italics mine].

During recent years international conferences and other events have been held with increasing frequency in Iceland. In 1972 the International Chess Championship Match was held in Reykjavik—much to the delight of the Icelanders who are, more often than not, avid chess players and whose National Library houses one of the largest collections of books on chess in the world.

With respect to the media, Icelanders have great interest in newspapers. The publishing of newspapers began


in 1848 with the weekly Thjodolfur. During the following decades quite a number of newspapers were launched, some lasting only a few years; others, like Thjodolfur, lasting sixty years or more. At present over 100,000 copies of newspapers are printed daily (with the exception of Mondays). In Reykjavik alone there are six dailies, the most important and widely circulated (40,000 daily circulation) being Morgunbladid.

The Icelandic State Broadcasting Service was established in 1930 by a special law granting it monopoly of broadcasting in Iceland. Its role is defined by law as follows:

The State Broadcasting Service shall stimulate in general cultural development of the nation and encourage the proper use of the Icelandic language. It shall broadcast material concerning literature, art, science and religion, promote general education, and provide instruction in individual branches of learning. It shall present discussions of Icelandic social affairs in such a manner that the general public is enabled to appreciate the various opinions held. It shall maintain a news service and provide news commentaries. It shall broadcast varied entertainment features to suit people of all ages.

The material broadcast shall be so designed as to cover the various aspects of Icelandic national life, as well as to meet the needs and wishes of both the minority and the majority. It shall provide all the services which are possible in accordance with the technical equipment available, and which may be of benefit to the general public.

The State Broadcasting Service shall in all its activities honor basic democratic principles. It shall

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respect freedom of expression and maintain strict neutrality towards all political parties and policies in public affairs, professional organizations, associations and individuals.81

The staff of the Icelandic State Broadcasting Service includes:

..., program personnel and technicians, number [ing] 244 in 1973, 119 on the radio side and 125 on the television side. The executive board is composed of a permanent director, appointed by the President of the Republic, and three managers, of finance, radio and television, appointed by the Minister of [Culture and] Education, under whose Ministry the State Broadcasting Service comes. There is also a seven-man Council, elected every four years by the Althing and divided between the political parties. Its chairman is appointed by the Minister of [Culture and] Education. The Council decides and supervises the programme policies of both radio and television, and looks after the impartiality of the State Broadcasting Service in matters affecting politics, public debates and disputes, opinions, faiths and sects, associations and individuals.82

Icelandic television was introduced in 1966 under the auspices of the State Broadcasting Service, but it is an independent institution owned by the state. It operates six days a week (Thursday being a holiday) from 8 P.M. to 12 midnight and reaches about 97 per cent of the population. The content is about 30 per cent Icelandic, the remainder being foreign, of which about 40 per cent is from the Anglo-Saxon World, with Icelandic texts.83 The small content of


83 Magnusson, Northern Sphinx, p. 149.
Icelandic material is due to a lack of funds and personnel. The content of Icelandic radio, on the other hand, is almost exclusively Icelandic. In the spoken part of the program lectures of all kinds are most common (more so than in other Nordic countries), followed in frequency by readings from fiction and poetry. Radio plays are presented once a week and there are usually one or two serial plays during the winter months. During Lent Hallgrímur Petursson's *Hymns of the Passion* are read.  

One of the outstanding features of radio are the resumes of the editorials of all political papers in the country every morning, and the extensive reporting of the deliberations of the Althing while it is in session. The Althing has the unequivocal right to radio time whenever it pleases. This usually happens once or twice every session, and the broadcast debates go on for two whole consecutive evenings.  

Although by law directed to "... stimulate the general cultural development of the nation and encourage the proper use of the Icelandic language," Icelandic radio and television according to Vilhjalmur Th. Gislason, head of the state radio and television (and brother of Gylfi Th. Gislason), has also the responsibility to "... encourage an international outlook among Icelanders and link

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84 Ibid., p. 150.

them to foreign cultures that have been and always are of
great importance." 86

During the last few decades Iceland has experienced,
as has been observed, great social change. It has emerged
from an almost medieval civilization into the modern world.
At one time one of the poorest nations in the world, Iceland
today enjoys one of the highest standards of living in the
world. Its literacy rate may be the highest in the world,
and so likely is its inflation rate. While its citizens
may read more books per capita than in other countries, its
youth are dangerously involved with alcohol:

Drunkenness never before involved anyone below the
age of 19. Now 80 per cent in the 17 to 18-year-old
group have used liquor, mainly fairly regularly. And
the age has steadily dropped to 16, 15, 14 and now em­
braces 13 and 12-year-olds, among whom there are some
confirmed alcoholics. 87

This sudden transition has disrupted, among other
things, "... some aspects of family life, of critical
importance to a people determined to retain identity and
homogenity." 88

A recent British visitor in Reykjavik reflected on
the apparent state of affairs:

Standing on a main street in the red light of a
summer midnight watching endless recirculating carloads
of teenagers--some sober--you can feel little sense of

86 Gunnar G. Schramm, "The Coming of Television,"
87 Clark, p. B-8
88 Ibid.
the values of the classical literature of which the Icelanders are so proud.89

Yet he goes on to realize that "'culture' is not overtly in evidence precisely because culture pervades every aspect of Icelandic life."90

Despite these ominous signs much of the cultural heritage is still alive in Iceland and the country remains dedicated to preserve its unique heritage:

It has been the paramount aim of Icelandic policy throughout these years of rapid social and economic change to preserve the living traditions of language, literature and individual freedom handed down from the past, and to adapt it to the legitimate demands of modern society. It is on the achievement of this aim that most Icelanders would want to judge the success of their national endeavour.91

Theories of Cultural Preservation

Iceland is part of a shrunken world, brought about by the marvels of communication technology. Part of the price of this membership and its ensuing prosperity is the danger that Iceland's unique national identity and culture may disappear. This is, of course, a universal problem. One observer remarks that:

. . . the new uni-culture extracts a heavy toll for technology's convenience and accessability. Culture is


90 Ibid.

invaded by an encroaching, penetrating, universal sameness. . . .

. . . all over the world, human beings are losing their cultural identities, becoming instead an almost faceless, featureless mass, molded by technology into identical shapes.

This blurring of national, religious, and often racial identities finds common ground in the dissolution, first, of concern for cultural distinctives. In the name of progress, old customs, old values, give way to a vast, neutralizing effect of sameness.92

Looking upon Iceland as "... the world's last truly civilised country,"93 British journalist, John C. Griffiths, writes:

... the gravest threat to its civilisation comes from the prospect of limitless prosperity and its consequent social and demographic disruptions. Adversity, natural and man-made, the Icelanders have not only survived but transmuted over the centuries. It would be a tragedy reaching far beyond their rocky shores if they were unable to survive good fortune.94

Icelanders also share this concern about the preservation of their culture and national identity in this modern era. Dr. Gylfi Th. Gislason identified the problem in the Icelandic context as follows:

The problem confronting the people of Iceland today is not confined to the questions of how to safeguard their share in the technological development of our age and in the widening web of international relations, or how to take a responsible part in the efforts of international cooperation for the preservation of world peace. The specific problem facing the people of Iceland is spelled out in the task of adapting their culture to modern ways, preserving it without isolating it, re-

93 Griffiths, p. 180. 94 Ibid.
moulding its finest ancient elements into a new form that may serve as a foundation for new technological development and for a social structure, subject to unceasing change [italics mine].

After World War II some Icelanders wanted to return to a pre-war isolation to preserve their culture, language and national identity:

... there is a deep-rooted feeling among many small nations, not least Iceland, that it is easy to go too far by sacrificing national characteristics on the altar of a quest for greater prosperity. Of course isolation makes for a quieter life than continual contacts with other nations. Without doubt there are people who prefer peace and quiet in poverty to rush and bustle in prosperity, or who do not want to buy greater welfare by increasing contacts with other nations.

The great majority of Icelanders, however, did not and do not accept this view. On the other hand, they did not want to rush indiscriminately into closer contact with other countries. In order to assure prosperity and preserve their cultural heritage, they felt that a middle course must be followed. This is the view held by Dr. Bjarni Benediktsson and Dr. Gylfi Th. Gislason. Because both served as Ministers of Culture and Education, an office with "... a strong overall power position" in


96 Gylfi Th. Gislason, The Problem of Being an Islander, p. 68.

educational affairs of Iceland, their views on cultural preservation will be examined more closely.

Bjarni Benediktsson (1902-1970), along with Olafur Thors, also a member of the Independence (conservative) party and Prime Minister in 1942, 1944-47, 1949-50, 1953-56 and 1959-63, helped mold Icelandic foreign policy during the years following World War II. Both men were pro-Western and favored closer relations with other countries, especially the United States.

One of the eminent political leaders in Iceland, Bjarni Benediktsson was educated as a lawyer. He served as a member of the Reykjavik city council, a member of the Althing, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Culture and Education (1949-50 and 1953-56) and Prime Minister (1963-70). It was while he was serving as Prime Minister that his life was tragically ended in a fire at his country house at Thingvellir. Scholarly and well versed in Icelandic culture and history, as well as an eloquent speaker, he was considered "... one of the most effective and dynamic Ministers of Education prior to Gylfi Th. Gislason's appointment."98

In a speech in 1961, Bjarni Benediktsson posed the question: "Can such a small country maintain its own

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culture, develop a contemporary society and maintain a state with all its needs and obligations?" 99

This he definitely felt was possible—even despite a close relationship with other countries. He pointed out that Icelandic culture never flourished as it did when the nation had contact with other countries during the Saga age. 100 It was, indeed, during this period that Iceland borrowed the Latin language; and the Icelandic language which had only been a spoken language prior to this time was able to develop into a written language by using the Latin alphabet.

In a speech on November 4, 1954 before the Althing, at which time he was Minister of Culture and Education, Benediktsson identified the aspects of Icelandic culture which he felt were of most importance:

[Icelandic culture] is above all two-fold—a knowledge of the Icelandic classics and the Christian faith which have been our support through long periods of hardship. These should be the foundation on which the education of our youth is built. . . . 101

He felt that the University of Iceland should be the world's foremost center for research and teaching of Icelandic culture. 102 Speaking of the university, Bjarni Benediktsson noted:

The University of Iceland is part of the fruits of our faith in the power of the Icelandic spirit. It

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101 Ibid., 2:132. 102 Ibid., 2:128.
was the first institution the country established after gaining home rule, and it has proven to be one of the greatest forces for the renewal of Icelandic culture.103

Although Benediktsson was international in his outlook, emphasizing close ties with other countries, he looked upon Iceland as one large family in which every member is important:

In a literal sense we are all related. We need not go back more than 300-400 years to discover progenitors from whom everyone in Iceland is descended.

In such a small country, with less than 200,000 population, every individual is of great importance.104

His hope for this family was that:

... we will never lose our old language, nor the perseverance, courage and love of freedom which our Norwegian forefathers left to us and which the small Icelandic nation has preserved through long periods of adversity.105

One of the strongest supporters of an international outlook has been Gylfi. Th. Gislason (1917- ). He held the office of Minister of Culture and Education from 1956 to 1971, a period longer than any of his predecessors. His views are of great importance in any discussion of culture and education in Iceland because there, as in the other Scandinavian countries:

The most outstanding characteristics of the educational development in each country reflect a strong personal philosophy of those who have held the position of Minister of Education in each respective country. The difference which is obvious in the educational

103 Ibid.
104 Ibid., 2:113.
105 Ibid., 2:117.
developments in these five countries is, however, not related to comparable status-position (power and control) held and maintained by the Ministers, but rather through their power to promote and initiate changes, altering fundamental aspects in the "frame laws."\textsuperscript{106}

Gylfi Th. Gislason was born in Reykjavik where his father, Thorsteinn Gislason (1867-1838), was one of the most important and influential journalists in Iceland. He was also an accomplished poet and well-known for his support of aspiring writers and artists. His home was in many ways a center of political and cultural discussions which were bound to have a lasting effect on the young and highly-talented boy who grew up there. Such surroundings certainly inclined his mind toward social, cultural and educational matters which have ever since been his major concerns.

Educated in economics (he received his doctor's degree in this field at the University of Frankfurt-am-Main), he became a Professor of this subject at the University of Iceland, a post to which he has recently returned. In addition to serving as Minister of Culture and Education for a record length of time during a period of great social change, he also held other ministerial duties. During most of this period he was also Minister of Commerce. For many years he has been Chairman of the Icelandic Social-

\textsuperscript{106} Josephson, \textit{A Comparative Study of Educational Legislation}, p. 15.
Democratic Party, on whose behalf he was a member of the Althing from 1956 to 1977.

Despite his many important positions with their ensuing duties, Gislason found time to write *The Problem of Being an Icelander; Past, Present and Future* which is one of the most profound insights into the identification of Icelandic culture in the twentieth century. His views are, of course, his own—and they may be controversial, but they represent the thinking of the majority of the Icelanders and the policy which Iceland has followed in recent decades.

As already noted, Gislason viewed Icelandic history as:

".. . primarily a story of spiritual aspirations, of the splendid mediaeval culture of an independent and prosperous nation, of a centuries-old juxtaposition of poverty and poetry, of amazingly varied modern culture in a small, sovereign, technological society."

This culture has always been extremely important throughout Icelandic history, as Gislason and others have maintained. It has helped to sustain the nation during periods of great hardship and it provided the impetus for the independence movement.

This culture, founded on the language that was spoken in the northwestern Europe over a thousand years ago and shaped in the Edda poems and the Icelandic sagas, preserved the nation despite the domination of the Norwegian and Danish kings, kept it alive

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107 Gislason, *The Problem of Being an Icelander*, p. 87. See also Chapter I, p. 2 of this study.
during the misery and poverty of long centuries, when volcanic eruptions, sea, ice and pestilences threatened its very existence, and gave it that spiritual pride that is the basis of all national feeling and all national culture. And it was this culture that provided the impetus for the thrust toward independence. . . . The most important arguments advanced in favour of Iceland's right to independence were based on national feeling and culture. They were not primarily based on economic necessity, though it was considered that the economy would prosper better under Icelandic than foreign control. The main arguments were that Iceland was a distinct nation, with its own culture, which could only flourish in an independent state. 108

The ancient culture, according to Gislason, is still a living factor in Icelandic life. 109 Although modern culture in Iceland is varied, it has its roots deep in this ancient culture which provides a stimulus for future development in the areas of literature, art and music. An understanding of this heritage by the nation:

. . . provides the greatest impulse for it to continue to be Icelandic, to preserve everything that has made it Icelandic, and to safeguard its independence and security. 110

He goes on, however, to say that the Icelandic nation:

. . . must know and understand that it is living in a changed world, a new world. Its problem is to preserve that which is incredible and fascinating in the adventure of the Icelanders, while taking account of new perspectives and new tasks and, at the same time, belong to the modern technological age, sharing fully its material benefits. 111

The material benefits will, as has been noted, come

108 Ibid., p. 52. 109 Ibid. 110 Ibid., p. 8. 111 Ibid.
from industrialization. Iceland is on the threshold of a new era of large scale industry based on sources other than those which have been the base of the Icelandic economy:

The energy sources are available and the major foreign factors influencing this development seem very favourable. How fast Iceland undergoes this development and the transformation of life in the country that will follow, will depend solely on the initiative and wishes of its people.112

Concerning this development, Gislason asks the question, "Where is the necessary organizational and technological knowledge to come from?"113 His answer is:

Such knowledge is not and will not be in the hands of one or a few parties, at least not in the long run. Icelanders cannot expect alone to have at their disposal any such knowledge as will afford them a special position above other nations. The future is therefore bound to entail closer cooperation with the outside world than hitherto. Iceland is bound to take a continually increasing part in international commercial cooperation [italics mine].114

He further foresees a rapid development of industry if use is made of foreign investments and technical knowledge. Even though the majority of capital in some Icelandic firms might be foreign—or even if they might be entirely foreign—Gislason feels that if clear legislation is enacted concerning these investments, there should be no problems for Iceland.115 This view, of course, is very controversial and not shared by all Icelanders.

112 Ingvarsson, p. 216.
113 Gislason, The Problem of Being an Icelander, p. 60.
114 Ibid., p. 91.
115 Ibid., p. 62.
Gylfi Th. Gislason very definitely feels that Iceland cannot live in isolation and enjoy prosperity. He strongly urges the development of industry, and like Bjarni Benediktsson, he feels that Iceland, while enjoying close contacts with foreign countries, can preserve its national identity:

Icelandic history is in fact a graphic example of how a small nation can preserve its nationality, its language and its culture while enjoying close relations with other nations. In the present century understanding of the value of nationality and national values has grown to such an extent that even those nations ruling others make no attempt to mould them to their own pattern, as was the custom in earlier centuries, and people of many different nationalities live together in the same country. Cultural influence follows less in the wake of economic influence, though certainly a small nation needs to be on its guard in such matters. And the nations themselves, not least the small ones, have increasingly realized that inestimable values are associated with their nationality, language and history. They understand better in this century than ever before the necessity of preserving such values. This should reduce the danger for small nations of closer international relations. 116

Although Gislason has a deep understanding of and concern for Icelandic culture, he feels that it must not impede progress:

Technological developments and economic progress may make old customs and manners unnatural. The latter can become an obstacle to progress. If so, they must be changed or abandoned. 117

It is here that Gislason feels is the most difficult task facing the Icelandic nation—that of distinguishing the essentials of Icelandic culture from the non-essentials.

116 Ibid., p. 68. 117 Ibid., p. 88.
Looking upon culture as an evolutionary process, which involves preservation and renewal, he cautions against "creating" a national culture where it has already taken root, as is certainly the case with Iceland:

Culture is not created from a special base. It just grows. And it may be nursed. In the same way, care must be taken to prevent love of national culture from degenerating into conservatism or chauvinism.118

Gislason concludes his study of Icelandic culture and history with the question as to whether the Icelandic nation in the future can expect as much support from its culture as it has in the past, and to which he replies: "the greatest difficulty in being an Icelander today consists in the fact that this question must be answered in the negative."119

His conclusion is based on the following:

The problems ahead do not concern the preservation of national identity and language in the face of foreign oppression or in poverty and misery. They do not concern the reclamation of lost independence. Nor do they concern the ability to replace primitive methods of production by newer and more efficient ones. They concern the ability to participate in major projects of construction and technology, in world trade, and in international cooperation for national defence and the preservation of peace. A varied and flourishing culture can contribute to the preservation of national identity and language. It can be a source of strength in a struggle for independence. And it can increase practical knowledge. But it will not automatically improve the ability of a nation to discharge new tasks in the field of major projects, international commerce or defence matters.120

118Ibid., p. 88.  
119Ibid., p. 90.  
120Ibid., pp. 90-91.
The cultural preservation and renewal of which Gislason speaks centers around the school which has replaced the home as the primary transmitter of the cultural heritage. However, in Iceland, as in the other Scandinavian countries, the educational system faces the problem of social change:

The major problems in the educational systems seem to be related to social change, or adjusting the institutional mechanism to new conditions, changed values, and increased rate of change.121

The educational system in Iceland has taken cognizance of this change. In the introductory volume of the current curriculum guide, The Ministry of Culture and Education states:

The changing conditions of our society have made the work of the school more difficult. The school must work together with the home to prepare the student for life in a democratic society which is in constant change. It must assure that the student have some insight into the cultural institutions and to know their value, while at the same time it must assure that he is prepared to become a part of the new society and changing culture.122

Gylfi Th. Gislason, noting this change, has written:

... today one not only needs to know more than before, but what he needs to know is different. Our knowledge is not only increasing, but it is also changing.123

121 Josephson, A Comparative Study of Educational Legislation, p. 27.


This change in education in Iceland has gradually taken place during the twentieth century. Previously education was centered in the home where it was primarily literary with emphasis on the Icelandic classics, poetry and religious works. When the schools took over the task of education, this exclusively literary tradition gave way to a broader pattern of education. This has, of course, been a gradual and continual process:

With such a dominantly literary tradition, the educational system itself has been inevitably an emphatically literary one until the last quarter of a century. Even now there is a heavy verbal and literary emphasis, with scientific subjects playing a secondary, if rapidly increasing, role. The major difference is that education is now more formalized and much less an integral part of family life than it was. As we saw... the role of the family is still important in the rural areas; but, with the concentration of population in Reykjavik, the urban pattern of education sets the pace.124

According to Gislason, the work of the school in this changing society is to provide the necessary preparation for maturity:

The school must educate the student so he acquires the ability to become a free man, knowing how to apply his knowledge for his own development and advancement. The school must cultivate in the student an outlook that will make it easier to perceive and understand change without forgetting the values of the old. [Italics mine.]125

This preparation for life, as Gislason sees it, involves not only teaching but also moulding the student

124 Griffiths, pp. 163-64.
125 Gislason, "Hlutverk Skolans a Taekniold," p. 199.
and instilling in him moral values. Education is not only an end in itself, but an opportunity, especially to teach moral values. He asks, "what good is education if it does not produce a good man?" 127

The good man, Gislason believes, should be patriotic. The work of the school should go beyond just providing a knowledge of the country, its language and its history:

The work of the school is not only to assure that we learn to know our country, but also that we learn to love it; not only that we know our native language, but that we esteem and honor it; not only that we know our nation's history, but that we understand its significance for the present and future. This will make us better and happier persons. 128

Gislason very definitely maintains that the school must change as society and knowledge change, especially in a technological age which is beginning to have greater impact on all institutions, including the school, in Iceland. He also strongly maintains that the school must transmit cultural values.

He feels that the school has great value in society. Looking back upon the progress that Iceland has made during a brief period in which it developed from one of the poorest nations to one of the most prosperous nations in the world,


127 Ibid.

128 Ibid., p. 425.
he attributes this phenomenal progress—in part—to education:

The first task is to educate the people. Only when that has been done is there hope of lasting improvement in economic affairs and public health. Here in the North, just south of the Arctic Ocean, Iceland succeeded in one generation in solving a problem [i.e., poverty], which in fact is similar to that which the wisest men now say will take generations to solve in other parts of the world.129

The real explanation for this "miraculous" transformation, according to Gislason, is basically found in the cultural heritage:

The truth is that it could not have happened if the Icelanders, despite their poverty, had not possessed an ancient culture, to which they had remained incredibly faithful for over a thousand years.

[They] were quick to assimilate new techniques and working methods because they had retained in their poverty a love of culture and a respect for knowledge.130

When public education was introduced to Iceland there was almost universal literacy based on a cultural heritage which was the possession of everyone. Obviously it was easier to introduce and develop an educational system in a country with such a high literacy rate.

But how does this culture which has done so much for Iceland fare within the educational system today? To be sure, the language is diligently taught and is the basis for all other studies. The main work of the school has been

129 Gislason, The Problem of Being an Icelander, p. 17.
130 Ibid.
to train its students in the use of this language which involves a study of the literature which is so much a part of the cultural heritage.131

Important as these subjects may be in schools of Iceland, a Reykjavik principal has noted: "The knowledge which the generation now growing up receives of the ancient Icelandic literature in the schools is what they find in a carefully prepared text book."132

No less an authority on Icelandic culture than Dr. Sigurdur Nordal has made this observation:

The youth of Reykjavik may have greater knowledge in some matters than the rural population. This knowledge, however, is all the same porridge served in the same bowl; no individual possesses any unexpected knowledge. The same process affects more and more areas of culture. The resulting cultural monotony, which will increase steadily in the future, is a more serious problem than many people realize.133

A recent visitor in Iceland has made the following observation:

The truth of the matter is that the young are differently educated; they can no longer all concentrate on literacy at the expense of numeracy, when the materialistic society which their elders have created demands technical and scientific expertise rather than


verbal facility. Certainly, the preoccupation with the less admirable aspects of their materialistic society and the extent of hostility towards, or ignorance of, their traditional literature, are depressingly widespread. Whereas formerly it was a matter of prestige to know the Sagas, prestige is now rather a matter of having them. As one scholar rather sadly put it to me: "Sagas by the metre are what count."134

Whatever the state of the cultural heritage may be in Iceland today, although it is not as bad as the British visitor observed, the fact remains that this heritage will be preserved and renewed primarily within the educational system. It is in this context that educational developments since the founding of the republic will be considered.  

134 Griffiths, p. 164.
CHAPTER VI

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS, 1944-1977

The Educational System

Since the establishment of the Icelandic republic in 1944 educational developments have been far-reaching. This has been especially true during the 1970's to the present. Educational legislation concerning the organization of the entire education system has been passed by the Althing. As part of this legislation, a bill completely reorganizing primary or compulsory education has been passed, and currently before the Althing are two important bills concerning secondary and adult education. The Teacher Training School has been reorganized as the University College for Teacher Training at the higher educational level. New schools, emphasizing newer concepts of education, have been built and older schools have been reorganized on this pattern.

For a long time traditional values prevailed in the educational system of Iceland which was organized on rather conservative lines. However, since the establishment of the republic, there has been increasing public interest in education, as well as demands from educators that the educa-
tional system be brought up-to-date and that new priorities be established. Speaking of this period,¹ Josephson writes:

It is obvious from a great variety of sources, especially the newspapers, that the nation as a whole is not only expecting but demanding revolutionary action in the nation's education. Public realization of the intrinsic value of education has probably never been as great in Iceland as it is today.²

The Ministry of Culture and Education has become increasingly sensitive to the public interest in education and is in the process of making profound changes in the nation's educational system to bring it up-to-date and make educational opportunities equally available to everyone.³

The Icelandic educational system is highly centralized under the Ministry of Culture and Education. Educational institutions in Iceland, with the exception of a few schools, such as the two agricultural schools at Holar and Hvameyri which are under the Ministry of Agriculture and a few vocational schools which are under other Ministries, are under the Ministry of Culture and Education. The few private schools which operate in Iceland must conform to the


²Ibid., pp. 565-66.

³Interview with Hordur Larusson, Director of the Division of Educational Research and Development, Ministry of Culture and Education, Reykjavik, September 8, 1977.
educational standards established by the Ministry and are open to inspection.

The Ministry is headed by the Minister of Culture and Education who is appointed by the Prime Minister. He is responsible for policy, organization and control of education at all levels. The Ministers of Culture and Education who have served during this period are shown in Table 9.

TABLE 9
MINISTERS OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION IN ICELAND 1944-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bjorn Thordarson</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brynjolfur Bjarnasson</td>
<td>1944-1947</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eysteinn Jonsson</td>
<td>1947-1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bjarni Benediktsson</td>
<td>1949-1950, 1953-1956</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bjorn Olafsson</td>
<td>1950-1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gylfi Th. Gislason</td>
<td>1956-1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnus T. Olafsson</td>
<td>1971-1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vilhjalmur Hjalmarsson</td>
<td>1974-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Iceland. The Ministry of Culture and Education.

Under the supreme authority of the Minister of Culture and Education the Secretary-General of the Ministry serves as its administrative director. Within the Ministry there are eight divisions, each headed by a director. The divisions are as follows:

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1. The Division of Cultural and Youth Affairs which has charge of the rights of authors; child welfare; sports; the Physical Education Training School of Iceland; the Sports Fund; the Icelandic Sports Association; the Youth Association of Iceland; the Young Men's Association of Iceland; the National Theater of Iceland and other theaters; art exhibits; the Cultural Fund; art, music and dance schools; personal and place names; the State Radio Service; the National Symphony Orchestra; the Conservatory of Music of Iceland; the Fund for Authors and Artists; loans to artists; the national parks; conservation of nature, animals and birds; the National Library of Iceland; the Library of the University of Iceland; public libraries; reading societies; school libraries; the National Museum of Iceland and other museums; the National Archives of Iceland and other archives; the National Gallery of Art and other galleries.

2. The Division of Higher Education and International Affairs which has charge of the University of Iceland, the University College for Teacher Training and other institutions at the higher education level; the Technical College of Iceland; research institutions; the Manuscript Institute of the University of Iceland; study grants and loans; Nordic and other cultural cooperation; the Nordic House in Reykjavik and other cultural establishments; associations in international organizations, such as the
Council for Cultural Cooperation and UNESCO; and the Icelandic Language Committee.

3. The Division of Educational Research and Development which has charge of research in education; experimental education; the preparation and evaluation of curriculum guides; educational planning; the preparation and evaluation of examinations; special education; psychological services; advise and guidance in planning time schedules and length of courses, as well as class size; and assists the Division of Building in planning school facilities.

4. The Division of Building which has charge of the development and building of school facilities. It keeps abreast of the latest developments in school facilities in Iceland and in other countries. It works with the Division of Finance and Planning in yearly and long term assistance for the development of school facilities.

5. The Division of School Administration which has charge of compulsory education in areas not assigned to other divisions; the hiring of principals and teachers of the compulsory schools and their continuation divisions; school inspection; teacher assignments; leaves of absence; in-service training; health services in the schools; the School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; the teaching of the blind; and the teaching of exceptional children.

6. The Division of School Finances and Planning which has charge of the annual and long term financing of
school construction and operation. It prepares the educa­tional budget as approved by the Althing.

7. The Division of Financial Transactions and Book­keeping which keeps the financial records of the Ministry which are open to public inspection and assists in preparing the budget.

8. The Division of Vocational and Technical Educa­tion which has charge of technical education at the compul­sory level; vocational education and vocational schools; the Nautical College; the Fishing Industries School; nursing schools; domestic science schools; commercial schools; the Hotel and Restaurant Service School; arts and crafts schools; the School for Pre-Primary Teachers; the placement of teachers in these schools; adult education; correspon­dence schools; evening schools; radio and television instruc­tion; and nursery schools and summer camps for children.

The Ministry of Culture and Education maintains an office for the general public which also keeps the Ministry's archives.

The supervision of the day-to-day activities of the schools of Iceland were for a long time administered by the Office of Education which was headed by the Commissioner of Education. This office operated until 1971 when it was dis­continued and incorporated within the Ministry of Culture and Education as the Division of School Administration, cur­rently headed by Sigurdur Helgason. Although the responsi­
bilities and duties of the Commissioner of Education increased considerably during this period, according to Josephson, the Commissioner's administrative role became less precise as educational activities developed and became more intricate. Various duties were gradually assigned to other personnel and offices within the Ministry of Culture and Education with the result that the authority of the Commissioner of Education decreased.

During the entire period, Helgi Eliasson (1904- ), one of Iceland's most eminent educators, held this office. Possessing a profound knowledge of the history of education in Iceland, he also kept abreast of the latest developments in education in Iceland and abroad. In addition to his many duties as Commissioner of Education, he also found time to participate in many educational and cultural commissions, committees and conventions in Iceland and overseas. He has authored, compiled and edited a great many articles, pamphlets and books (both in Icelandic and English) on education in Iceland.

For the purpose of administration of education at the compulsory level, the country is divided into eight regions (fraedsludaemi) as follows:

1. The city of Reykjavik

2. The Reykjanes region (which includes the Reykjavik suburbs of Seltjarnarnes, Kopavog and Hafnafjordur

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5 Josephson, p. 600.
and the towns of Keflavik and Grindavik)

3. The Western region
4. The West fjords region
5. The Northwest region
6. The Northeast region
7. The Eastern region
8. The South region: 6

In each region the board of education (fraedslurad) composed of five to seven members representing local councils within the region and the regional director of education (fraedslustjori) appointed by the Ministry of Culture and Education are responsible for the administration of schooling at the compulsory level.

The regional board of education has the following duties:

1. The administration of education within its region as specified by the Ministry of Culture and Education and the local school boards.

2. The execution of directives pertaining to education in the region and regarding the annual budget, as well as long range and other plans as specified in specific directives.

3. The supervision of the local school boards in the region.

4. The submission of proposals for the solution of educational problems by the regional director of education to the Ministry of Culture and Education. The supervision of the regional office of education.

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5. The holding of conferences for new teachers, the supervision of such teachers and the guidance of such as requested by principals.

6. The creation of educational positions as needs arise.

7. Other matters relating to its work as specified in this law and additional directives. 

The regional director of education represents the Ministry of Culture and Education and the local school boards of the district. He should reside at or near the regional office of education. He is also director of the regional board of education.

The duties of the regional director of education, as specified by law, are as follows:

1. He has the responsibility to see that current educational directives concerning teaching and administration are carried out in the schools at the compulsory level and other schools which are supported by the state and the region.

2. He has supervision over the preparation of the annual budget for the schools at the compulsory level in his region. After reviewing the budget, he forwards it to the Ministry of Culture and Education.

3. He has, as representative of the Ministry of Culture and Education, supervision and management of all educational facilities in the region.

4. He has supervision over instruction in the schools at the compulsory level in the region and keeps abreast of the accomplishments of the students as directed by the Division of Educational Research and Development of the Ministry of Culture and Education. He also keeps abreast of conditions within the schools as pertain to the level of teaching and learning and the condition of educational facilities for the students.

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7 Ibid., chap. 2, article 12.
5. He arbitrates differences which arise between principals, teachers and teacher councils.

6. He consults with teachers and principals in matters involving a breach of contract.

7. He has supervision of counseling and psychological services in the schools at the compulsory level.

8. Working with principals, school physicians and psychologists, he is aware of those students who are not making normal progress because of physical or mental difficulties; he makes provisions for instruction according to their abilities.

9. He assumes other duties as prescribed by this law, or assumes duties which the Ministry of Culture and Education or the regional board of education assigns to him.8

The educational regions of Iceland are subdivided into school districts (skolakverfi). In each district there is a school board, members of which are elected by the local authorities. (In Reykjavik, however, the work of the local school board is assumed by the regional board of education.)

The local school board has the responsibility to see that all children of compulsory school age receive an education as specified by law. It is also responsible for the maintenance of adequate school facilities in its area of jurisdiction.9

For a long time there was no single piece of legislation that governed the entire school system. Concerning this period, until the end of World War II, a Reykjavik principal has written:

8Ibid., chap. 2, article 14.
9Ibid., chap. 2, article 19.
schools, apart from primary schools and some secondary and district schools, had been established one by one by various laws, but without any relationships to other schools. They had their own entrance requirements and entrance examinations. 10

As early as 1925 Jon Ofeigsson, a head teacher, who had spent the academic year 1924-25 abroad, where he became acquainted with other educational systems, proposed a unified educational system in Iceland in order to facilitate the transfer from one level to another. 11

Legislation enacted in 1946 finally unified the entire educational system into four levels whereby each level was built upon another. These levels were primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education and higher education. Also, by this act, compulsory education was extended to age fifteen, with primary education ending at age thirteen. In other words, primary education consisted of six years of schooling from age seven to thirteen. An examination and certificate (barnaprof) was given to those who completed this stage of education.

Lower secondary education was divided into three types of schools with courses of study ranging from two to four years:


1. Junior secondary schools (unglingaskoli) provided a two year course of study. These were located mainly in small towns and rural areas and attended by students between the ages of thirteen and fifteen. They provided education in grades seven and eight. Sometimes continuation divisions providing an additional two years of study were added to these schools.

2. Middle schools (midskoli) provided a three year course of study for youth between the ages of thirteen and fifteen in grades seven, eight and nine.

3. High schools (gagnfraedaskoli) provided a four year course of study covering grades seven, eight, nine and ten. These schools were divided into academic and vocational divisions. The former division prepared students for entrance to the grammar schools.

Upper secondary education was provided in the grammar schools (gymnasia), the Teacher Training School and various technical and vocational schools which included the commercial schools, the Domestic Science School, the Nautical School and the two agricultural schools. Figure 2 shows the Icelandic school system at these levels.

During these years educational research and evaluations of the nation's educational system were gradually undertaken. In 1958 Dr. Gylfi Th. Gislason, the Minister of Culture and Education, appointed a committee to examine the Icelandic school system and to make suggestions as to the
Fig. 2.--The School System of Iceland, 1946-1974
operation and legal enforcement of education. Majority and minority reports were submitted by the committee in 1959. In 1963 Wolfgang Edelstein began preliminary research on the school population of the country, the format and methodology for Edelstein's research being identical to surveys then recently completed in several European countries. Josephson comments on the significance of this research:

Since this is the first research of its kind conducted in Iceland, it should be considered as a major work and, although there may be some obvious shortcomings, it marks the beginning of scientific studies concerning the educational system of the nation.

In 1965 an Educational Investment Planning Project (coordinated by the Economic Institute of Reykjavik for the Ministry of Culture and Education) was established to investigate the financial implications of Iceland's school system. In 1966 the Reykjavik Office of Education, which had been established in 1943, published a survey report and detailed future plans for the location of pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. Also in 1966 a unit for educational research was established in the Ministry of Culture and Education which two years later became the Ministry's Division of Educational Research and Development.

The examination of the Icelandic school system revealed an urgent need for educational reform. Jonas B.

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13 Ibid., p. 562.
Jonsson (1908- ), an outstanding educator and Director of the Reykjavik Office of Education, noted in the preface to the Edelstein survey, as quoted by Josephson:

"... extensive changes and improvements are required, both with regard to elementary and junior secondary school education, and undoubtedly also on the grammar or 'gymnasium' level. One of the ways that merits consideration is that of integrating the entire school system, or making it comprehensive, from the elementary level right up to the university level. This is the policy that seems to be gaining support in many quarters."14

A report of the Icelandic Ministry of Culture and Education for UNESCO's International Bureau of Education stated:

One of the main problems facing Icelandic school authorities today is directly related to the educational system itself. As in many other European countries, the Icelandic system at the secondary school level is a two-track system. The one track, for the more academically gifted, leads up through gymnasium to university, but the other track (10 years compared to the other of 13) is a dead end with very little direct connexion with other schools except some vocational ones. The system is very selective and until recently only 9 or 10% of the year-group graduated from the Gymnasium, but this percentage has been slowly increasing and reached 13.2% in 1969. In recent years there has been an increasing demand from those trapped in the second track for an opening of the system.15

On July 4, 1969 Dr. Gylfi Th. Gislason appointed a committee to investigate the educational laws of 1946 concerning the school system, primary and secondary education--also to propose reforms. The members of the committee were:

14Ibid., p. 561.

Birgir Thorlacius, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Culture and Education (who acted as the chairman of the committee); Andri Isaksson, then Director of the Division of Educational Research and Development of the Ministry of Culture and Education; Gunnar Gudmundsson, a grammar school principal; Helgi Eliasson, the Commissioner of Education; Kristjan J. Gunnarsson, a secondary school principal; Sveinbjorn Sigurjonsson, a primary school principal; Jonas B. Jonsson, the Director of the Reykjavik Office of Education; and Johann S. Hannesson, a principal. Assisting the committee were Indridi H. Thorlaksson, a member of the Ministry of Culture and Education, and Dr. Thuridur J. Kristjansdottir, an educator. This committee met from July 11, 1969 to November 25, 1970. On July 3, 1972 Magnus Torfi Olafsson, the Minister of Culture and Education, formed a second committee to which he appointed: Birgir Thorlacius (who served as its chairman); Andri Isaksson; Indridi H. Thorlaksson; Ingolfur A. Thorkelsson, a teacher at the Reykjavik Girls School; Kristjan Ingolfsson, a primary school teacher and Pall Lindal, a lawyer and chairman of the Union of Icelandic Municipalities.16

In addition to the numerous meetings of the two committees, a conference, attended by representatives of thirty-eight educational and political organizations, was

held in Reykjavik on December 11, 1969 to discuss the proposed legislation. Copies of the bill were sent to every school, local school board and regional board of education in the country, with a cover letter from the Ministry of Culture and Education. In this way the bill was widely discussed throughout the country by educators and politicians.

The bill concerning the school system was passed by the Althing and signed by the President of Iceland on May 21, 1974. This was the first major legislation affecting the entire school system since 1946. Its main provisions are:

1. Compulsory school attendance is raised from fifteen years of age to sixteen.

2. The school system is divided into three stages: compulsory education, secondary education and higher education. At the first stage are compulsory schools; at the second stage are general secondary schools which include comprehensive schools, grammar schools (gymnasia) and vocational schools, and at the third stage are the University of Iceland and other comparable institutions.

3. Compulsory schools are to be attended by children and youth from age seven to sixteen.

4. Secondary schools are two to four year schools. They may grant the matriculation examination (studentsprof) for entrance to the university.

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17 For the text of the Iceland, Althing, Log um Skolahverfi [A Law Concerning the Educational System], no. 55, 95th session, 1974, see Appendix C-I.

18 Compulsory education is conducted in the grunnskoli, literally "basic school." Education at this level is often considered primary and secondary. According to this law, however, secondary education is a separate stage.
However, the University of Iceland and the Ministry of Culture and Education may stipulate other entrance requirements for admission to various departments of the university.

5. Education is free in all schools at the compulsory level.

6. Equal rights are granted to all students and teachers, regardless of sex.

7. Educational opportunities should be made as equally available as possible for everyone.

8. Financial assistance is to be given to any student attending the compulsory school if there is a need. This legislation and other legislation recently enacted, as well as important educational bills currently before the Althing, are profoundly changing the educational system of Iceland. Such legislation is the response of the government and educators to changes in society. An editorial in Menntamal states the course which the nation has taken regarding education:

The country directed its policy to widening educational opportunities and has placed increasing emphasis on equal educational opportunities. It is primarily as a result of changes in society that compulsory education has been lengthened and a new and closer relationship has been established between compulsory and secondary schooling. These educational changes, according to law, are to be carried out over a period of ten years. Inequalities in educational opportunities will, of course, take time to correct. This is especially true concerning rural areas where, 

19Iceland, Althing, Log um Skolahverfi, articles 2-10.

for example, the school year may last only seven or eight months or less. In the very few places in the country where the "alternating teaching scheme" (whereby traveling teachers give instruction at different farms) exists, the children receive only approximately three-and-a-half to four months of formal schooling a year. Children and youth attending school in Reykjavik and other towns and villages, on the other hand, receive nine months of instruction during the standard school year which runs from September 1 to May 31. These conditions are being corrected, as Andri Isaksson, Professor of Education at the University of Iceland, has noted:

In rural areas the official policy is to have, wherever possible, primary schools that provide bus transport for the children. Where this is not feasible because of local conditions, boarding schools are the commonest solution, and in 1971-72 there were 50 primary boarding schools in rural areas. In some very sparsely populated regions where there is no boarding school, instruction is given by travelling teachers who spend one to three weeks on different farms, teaching the children there along with those of the nearest neighbouring farms. This ancient scheme is gradually being replaced by boarding schools, and in 1971-72 there were only 8 school districts in the country which still provided instruction in this manner.21

All public education in Iceland is free--from the compulsory stage through the university. Small fees are charged for textbooks used after the period of compulsory

education, for some materials used in handicraft classes and for registration at the university.

At the compulsory level of education the state pays the salaries of the instructional staff and administrators. Initial construction of school facilities is paid by the state and their maintainance is paid from local funds. The cost of transportation of students is shared by the state and the local authorities, with the state providing 50 to 85 percent of the costs. Health and psychological services, as well as counseling, are financed equally by the state and local authorities.  

Schools at the secondary level and the institutions of higher education are supported entirely by the state. Most of the private schools (which are few in number) receive some aid from the state.

In 1973 nearly 17 percent of the national budget of Iceland was allocated to educational and cultural purposes.  

In 1977 this figure was nearly 20 percent, representing an amount of 13.5 billion Icelandic Kronur. This large portion of the state budget allocated to educational and

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22 Iceland, Althing, Log um Grunnskola, chap. 14, articles 78-86.
23 Isaksson, p. 321.
25 As of December 1, 1977, the rate of exchange was 212.3 Icelandic kronur to the United States dollar.
cultural affairs in a country which, like the other Scandinavian countries, strongly supports welfare programs, is possible because Iceland does not maintain an armed force or spend any money on defenses.

Considering the small population of Iceland, the total number of students under instruction, as shown in Table 10, is high.

The latest statistics available from the Ministry of Culture and Education reveal that during the 1976-1977 school year 45,706 students were enrolled in compulsory schools, staffed by 2,386 tenured and 610 part-time teachers. During this same period approximately 11,500 students were enrolled in various types of secondary schools, 2,760 at the University of Iceland and 329 at the University College for Teacher Training.

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26 In 1971 the population of Iceland was 204,578.
27 Figures for secondary school enrollment are not complete for this period.
TABLE 10
STUDENT ENROLLMENT, TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS
IN ICELAND, 1971-72

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>No. of Schools</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>No. of Tenured Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>27,727</td>
<td>1,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General secondary school, Lower stage</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>15,712</td>
<td>844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General secondary school, Upper stage</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>12,000&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,000&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>445</strong></td>
<td><strong>58,344</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,555</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<sup>a</sup>Approximate figures.

<sup>b</sup>The School of Arts and Crafts and the Music Conservatory are included in this figure.
Pre-School Education

Until recently there was very little education at the pre-school level in Iceland. The first such school was established as an experimental school in the Autumn of 1967 at the Myrarhus School in Seltjarnarnes, a Reykjavik suburb, under the leadership of Pall Gudmundsson, the school's principal, who had observed similar schools when he was in Denmark a few years earlier. The school was conducted for six year-olds and charged a tuition of 450 kronur per month. The endeavor was very successful, having gained considerable interest and support on the part of the parents.

On December 2, 1969 the Reykjavik authorities gave permission to establish pre-schools in the city. Principals of twelve primary schools in the city selected thirty-five teachers to conduct these classes. Prior to the beginning of the program these teachers attended 135 class sessions in


pre-school education conducted by the Reykjavik Office of Education.\textsuperscript{31}

These pre-primary classes were conducted during the 1970-1971 school year at twelve Reykjavik primary schools and attended by 1,255 children who were six years of age. Classes were also established at the Laboratory School of the Teacher Training School and two private schools which were attended by 271 children. In all about 95 percent of the six year old age group in Reykjavik were enrolled in these classes.\textsuperscript{32}

This program, the first of its kind in Reykjavik, was highly successful. Without a doubt, the large attendance, showed that pre-primary education filled a great need and that parents would support the program. Since that time such classes, as well as play schools and nurseries, have become increasingly popular in an urban society where many mothers are employed. During the following school year (1971-1972) there were 2,678 pupils enrolled in pre-primary classes.\textsuperscript{33}

In 1971 the Training School for Nursery and Pre-Primary Teachers, which had been established in 1946 as a


\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 123. \textsuperscript{33}Isaksson, p. 321.
semi-official institution by the "Sumargjof" (literally Summer Gift) Organization for Child Care, had an enrollment of 275 students. During the first twenty-five years of its operation, this school has graduated 275 students.34

In 1974 educational legislation brought pre-primary education into the school system which only eight years earlier, when Josephson wrote his study, was not the case.35 Local school authorities now have the right to establish pre-primary classes for six-year-old children, as well as for five-year-old children, in conjunction with and under the administration of compulsory schools, and with the approval of the Ministry of Culture and Education. Concerning the status of teachers of these classes, the 1974 law states:

Pre-primary teachers should have completed teacher training or have a teaching certificate. They shall be paid the same as teachers of grades one to six of the compulsory school. Those who have completed a course of study in pre-primary education shall have priority in assignment to pre-primary classes.36

The tremendous growth of pre-primary education during the first half of the 1970's follows the pattern of bringing education from the home to the school. This development, certainly brought about by changes in Icelandic

34 Valborg Sigurdardottir, Fostruskolinn 25 Ara" [The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Training School for Nursery and Pre-Primary Teachers], Menntamal 45, No. 1 (1972): 50.
35 Josephson, p. 684.
36 Iceland, Althing, Log um Grunnskola, chap. 12, article 74.
society, all but marks the end of home instruction which has been so much a part of education in Iceland for centuries.

**Primary Education**

For nearly thirty years, or until 1974, primary education in Iceland was based on the 1946 law. During this period the primary schools were divided into two sections: a lower section composed of grades one, two and three (attended by students age seven to nine) and an upper section composed of grades four, five and six (attended by students age ten to twelve). At the end of each three-year section a standardized test in reading, writing, arithmetic and other basic subjects was administered. Students who successfully completed the upper section examination received a primary school certificate which was required for admission to the final two years of compulsory education at the secondary level. This certificate, however, was not used as an obstacle, and virtually all pupils went on with full-time education.

The school week was six days, with a class period lasting forty minutes. In Reykjavik and other towns students attended as many as 980 class periods during the school year of eight to nine months. In rural areas, however, students attended fewer class periods during a much shorter

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37 Josephson, p. 592.

38 Isaksson, p. 314.
school year. In some places students received only 400 class periods of instruction during a school year.\textsuperscript{39}

The curriculum of the primary school, patterned after those in the other Scandinavian countries, was traditional. Helgi Eliasson, Commissioner of Education during this period writes:

"Most Icelandic schools have been based on the examination system, and still are. The work of schools has been aimed mainly at preparing their pupils to pass examinations. More than a quarter of a century ago thought was first given to making the work of the schools freer and abolishing, or at least reducing, the examinations. But so far there has been little change, except that most examinations are now written."\textsuperscript{40}

The curriculum guides published by the Ministry of Culture and Education continued to stress the basic subjects, especially the language. Table 11 shows the curriculum adopted in 1960 for the primary schools and used until very recently.

As time went on and social changes took place in Iceland, it became increasingly apparent that educational changes at the primary level, as well as at other levels, would have to be made. A rather lengthy article in Menntamal commented on the state of affairs in education as follows:

The work of compulsory education is to prepare students for life and work in society. Unfortunately,

\textsuperscript{39}Josephson, p. 593.

\textsuperscript{40}Quoted by Josephson, p. 594.
### TABLE 11

**PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM, 1960**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>The Lower Section</th>
<th></th>
<th>The Upper Section</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hours per Week</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hours per Week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 1 Grade 2 Grade 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 4 Grade 5 Grade 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading, Writing and Arithmetic</td>
<td>14 14 0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>7 7 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment study</td>
<td>3 5 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>3 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>2-3 2-3 2-3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>4 5 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>0 0 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Christian Doctrine</td>
<td>2 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>0 0 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>History, Geography, Science</td>
<td>5 6 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>0 0 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Crafts</td>
<td>2 2 3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts</td>
<td>0 0 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>1 1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>0 0 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>2 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free period</td>
<td>0 0 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>2-3 3-4 3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>19-20 21-22 24-25</td>
<td></td>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>29-30 31-32 32-34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

experience has shown that schools have placed more emphasis on book knowledge than practical training. 41

The committee which Dr. Gylfi Th. Gislason appointed in 1971 to investigate the school system and to make proposals for new legislation was also assigned the task of examining primary, or basic, education and making proposals for changes at this level. 42 Among the important subjects this committee considered were: the place of the school in contemporary Icelandic society, equalization of educational opportunities, educational research and the provision of counseling and psychological services in the schools. 43

The proposed legislation concerning basic education was widely discussed by the public and in the newspapers, as well as within educational and political circles. A bill was submitted to the Althing in 1971 and a revised bill was submitted in 1973. After lengthy consideration by the Althing, this bill, effecting major changes in primary education, as well as secondary education at the lower stage, was passed and signed by the President of Iceland on May 21, 1974. 44

42 Iceland, Althing, Frumvarp til Laga um Grunnskola [A Bill Concerning the Compulsory School], 94th session, 1973, p. 27.
44 For the English translation of the law see Appendix C.
This law, in accordance with the Law on the Educational System which was signed by the President on the same date, was directed to education at the compulsory level from age seven to sixteen. By these two laws all compulsory education is provided at one stage in the educational system, replacing the system in force since 1946 whereby compulsory education was provided at two levels and in different types of schools. By providing all compulsory education at one level and in one type of school, the compulsory or basic school (grunnskoli), this legislation was designed to make educational opportunities more equally available for all students at this level everywhere in the country.

In addition to granting more authority to the educational districts and their directors, as well as to principals and local school boards, this law makes provision for a number of other changes such as in-service training of teachers and sabbatical leaves after five years of teaching, a minimum school year of seven to nine months in all schools and the provision of counseling and psychological services in the schools. This law is to be gradually enforced over a period of ten years, with the provision, however, that compulsory education to age sixteen be instituted in all parts of the country within six years of the passage

Prior to this law teachers had to have ten years of teaching experience to qualify for a sabbatical.
of the law. The law also stipulates that the Ministry of Culture and Education prepare an interim report on the implementation of the provisions of the law, especially regarding compulsory education to age sixteen, by 1978 to be submitted to the Althing. The Ministry of Culture and Education is currently preparing this report.

One of the great needs of education in Iceland has been to define the place of the school in a society which has experienced much change since major legislation regarding the Icelandic school system was enacted in 1946. This new law defines the place of the school as follows:

The task of the compulsory school is, working with the home, to prepare the student for life and work in a democratic society which is continually changing. The work of the school shall be based on forebearance, Christian virtues and democratic cooperation. The school shall cultivate in the student a broad outlook; the ability to make mature choices; and understanding of Icelandic society, history and national characteristics; and a knowledge of the obligations of the individual to society.

The school shall attempt to provide instruction conforming to the nature and needs of the students. It shall contribute to the maturity, physical health and intellectual development of all students.

The compulsory school shall provide opportunities for its students to acquire knowledge and experience. It shall seek to cultivate in its students study habits whereby they may continue to pursue knowledge and develop maturity. The work of the school shall also be

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46 Iceland, Althing, Log um Grunnskola, chap. 15, article 88.

to lay the groundwork for independent thinking and cooperation with others.\textsuperscript{48}

Education should determine its goals in view of an ever changing and emerging technological society, a fact pointed out in the current curriculum guide: "the work of the school changes as it adopts its goals from its immediate surroundings and contemporary Icelandic society."\textsuperscript{49}

During recent years much discussion has centered around the curriculum of the compulsory stage of education. Educators and the public have felt that as times and conditions change, the curriculum of the school must also change. At present, the following areas of study, according to the Law Concerning the Compulsory School, should be taught at this level:

1. The Icelandic language, its use in speech and writing, as well as its historical development.

2. General mathematics.

3. Music, art and handicraft to provide a knowledge of aesthetics and art appreciation.

4. The social sciences as they relate to the world and immediate surroundings, past and present, including Icelandic and world history, sociology and geography.

\textsuperscript{48}Iceland, Althing, Log um Grunnskola, chap. 1, article 2.

5. Christianity, ethics and major religions of the world.

6. Physical science, biology, local geology, physics and chemistry.

7. Foreign languages, with consideration given to those that relate to the origin of Iceland, Nordic culture and communication with other countries.

8. Domestic sciences.


10. Practical studies.

11. Electives, practical and theoretical, in the upper grades.\(^50\)

The Icelandic language receives the major emphasis, and during the first three years of compulsory education it accounts for about a half of the weekly class schedule. More emphasis is now given to science and foreign languages (Danish and English) which are taught at an earlier level than before. The area of practical studies may include work experience gained outside the school.

During the first seven years of compulsory education everyone is required to take the same subjects. During the last two years there there are electives which students may choose. In grade eight a student may take three hours of electives and in grade nine this is increased to twelve to sixteen hours. In grade nine core courses consist of the following subjects: Icelandic, mathematics. English, Danish

\(^{50}\) Iceland, Althing, \textit{Log um Grunnskola}, chap. 5, article 42.
and physical education. All students must take these subjects. The electives during the ninth year are: history, sociology, geography, biology, chemistry, physics, art, handicrafts and other subjects in the areas of vocational studies, domestic science, music and art. Table 12 shows the weekly class schedule for the compulsory school.

The Danish language has always been taught in Icelandic schools and during the period Iceland was under Danish rule, this language served as a means of communication involving politics, culture and commerce. Now that times have changed and English is so universally used, some teachers are questioning the value of teaching a language used by only a small number of people. A recent article in Morgunbladid suggested that instead of emphasizing the learning of a Scandinavian language which is not widely spoken, emphasis rather should be given to learning English, German and Spanish which are widely spoken.

Today the reason for teaching Danish before any other foreign language in the Icelandic schools is to

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52Ibid., p. 3.

### TABLE 12

**THE CURRICULUM OF THE COMPULSORY SCHOOL, 1977-1978**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Younger Division</th>
<th>Older Division</th>
<th>Youth Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>4 5 6</td>
<td>7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Icelandic</strong></td>
<td>10 10 10</td>
<td>9 9 8</td>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; 5 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics</strong></td>
<td>4 4 4</td>
<td>4 5 5</td>
<td>5 5 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Danish</strong></td>
<td>3 3 3</td>
<td>3 4&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; 4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td>3 4&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; 4 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical education</strong></td>
<td>2 2 2</td>
<td>2 3 3</td>
<td>3 3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment study</strong></td>
<td>3 4 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Christian doctrine</strong></td>
<td>1 2 2 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History, sociology, geography</strong></td>
<td>4 3 3</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; 4&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biology, chemistry, physics</strong></td>
<td>2 3 3</td>
<td>4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Music</strong></td>
<td>1 1 1</td>
<td>1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arts and crafts</strong></td>
<td>4 4 4 4</td>
<td>4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domestic science</strong></td>
<td>2 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; 12-16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals**  20 21 26 31 33 35 37 37 33-37

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<sup>a</sup>May be reduced one hour per week.
promote and preserve the Nordic culture. Gylfi Th. Gislason gives the following explanation:

The first foreign language taught in Icelandic schools is not English, the world language, but Danish, the language of a small Nordic people; but the learner who has mastered the Danish language, will be in a position to understand Norwegian and Swedish as well. This shows how great an importance is attached in Iceland to the fostering and preservation of cultural relations with kindred peoples of the North. Practical considerations must take second place here.54

Other foreign languages, however, are not neglected. Because of Iceland's unique position as a small country maintaining communications and trade with the world, knowledge of foreign languages is very important, as Andri Isaksson explains:

... we traditionally teach more foreign languages to each student than probably any other country. It is no wonder that a country with such a small population and such a great need of trade and cooperation with other countries gives high priority to foreign language teaching.55

The new Law Concerning the Compulsory School directs the Ministry of Culture and Education to publish new curriculum guides to reflect new changes in education. Thus far the following guides, prepared by the Ministry's Division of Educational Research and Development, have been issued:


Almennur Hluti (General Considerations); Modur (The Icelandic Language); Erlend Mal, Enska og Danska (Foreign Languages, English and Danish); Kristinfræði (Christian Doctrine); Tutnandi (Music); Edlis- og Efnafraedi (Physics and Chemistry); Skolaithrottur (Physical Education); Mynd- og Handmennt (Arts and Handicrafts); Heimilisfræði (Domestic Science); and Samfelagsfræði (Social Studies). 56

While these curriculum guides do not lay down a rigid course of study to be adhered to by all schools, they do suggest broad areas of study to be covered. They suggest goals and methods to achieve them. The curriculum guide relating to the Icelandic language, for example, suggests the following areas to be covered in grades one through nine: (1) listening, speaking and dramatic expression; (2) reading; (3) writing; and (4) philology and grammar (including a history of the Icelandic language). 57 Within each of these four broad areas are numerous goals to be achieved at various levels of compulsory education.

The curriculum guide for the social sciences notes that changes in society necessitate a continual acquisition

56 At the time of this study further curriculum guides in biology and mathematics were anticipated.

of new knowledge. In order to provide a basic understanding of man's place in this changing society, this guide suggests, in Pestalozzian tradition, a gradual teaching of man's history and social conditions from the immediate surroundings to the world at large as follows:

Grade 1. The family and the school.

Grade 2. Different conditions in Iceland in the country, the village and the city.

Grade 3. The relation of man to his environment (as, for example, the Eskimo and the Transvaalilian).

Grade 4. The habits and customs of mankind during different periods (including, among others, the early settlers of Iceland).

Grade 5. A general survey of Europe.

Grade 6. The explorations and discoveries of the Europeans.

Grade 7. Living conditions and ecology in Iceland during the past and at present.

Grade 8. Industrial and social revolutions in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Grade 9. Developments in contemporary society.

Although considerable attention is given to covering European, as well as American, African and Asian, history and social conditions during the nine years of compulsory schooling, Icelandic history and culture are taught at every


59 Ibid., pp. 20-22.
level. In grade nine, for example, the main emphasis is to be given to contemporary Icelandic society and its problems, the place of Iceland in the world and youth's place in this society.60 This emphasis given to contemporary Icelandic society and the place of youth in it very definitely reflects the thinking of Gylfi Th. Gislason and others.

According to the provisions of the new law one examination is now given to all students at the completion of their compulsory school schooling.61 Known as the grunnskolanprof, it replaces the two examinations (midskola­prof and gagnfraedaprof) previously administered to all students at the lower stage of secondary education. The new examination consists of four parts: the Icelandic language, mathematics, a foreign language (Danish or English) and one subject to be changed from year to year.62 Part of this final examination is prepared by the Ministry of Culture and Education.63

Other examinations may be given during the period of compulsory education, as, for example, comprehensive examina-

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60 Ibid., p. 22.


62Thorlacius, p. 6.

63Interview with Hordur Larusson, Director of the Division of Educational Research and Development, the Ministry of Culture and Education, Reykjavik, September 12, 1977.
tions during the third and sixth grades; however, these are not administered for the purpose of selecting students for additional education or streaming. Concerning the examinations, the Ministry of Culture and Education has stated:

Comprehensive examinations in grades three and six are primarily given to provide the school with information on the student's progress in various subjects in relation to defined goals of education and the accomplishments of other students at the same level throughout the country.64

In addition to examinations, teachers are to provide reports on the student's progress at this level. The current thinking is that any evaluation of a student's progress must include that of his teachers. In contrast to the past when examinations were primarily given to select students for additional study in academic or vocational areas, today "... the main purpose of examinations is to encourage and help students in their studies."65

The required level of proficiency on examinations and as provided by teacher reports is not as high as in the past. After completion of compulsory education, a student

64 Iceland, Ministry of Culture and Education, Division of Educational Research and Development, "Raduneytid Hefur Akvedid Eftirfarandi um Prof og Vitnisburdur i Grundskola og 10 Bekk Skolaarid 1976-'77" [Resolutions of the Ministry of Culture and Education Concerning Examinations and Evaluations in the Compulsory School and Grade 10 During the 1976-77 School Year], Directive No. 19, December 9, 1976 (Reykjavik: Menntamalaraduneytid, Skolarannsoknadeild, 1976), pp. 1-2. (Mimeographed.)

65 Iceland, Althing, Lög um Grunnskola, chap. 7, article 56.
who has achieved a "C" average or better (on a grading scale of A-E) on the final comprehensive examination and an average of 4 or better (on a grading scale of 1-10) in all his courses, may proceed on to any secondary school in the country. 66

Compulsory schools currently have the option of operating on a five or six day week, with most of them now being open five days per week. The total hours of weekly instruction, however, has not decreased; in fact, in some grades they have increased by an hour or so. The average class period remains forty minutes, with the principal having authority to lengthen it to no longer than eighty minutes or shorten it to no less than twenty minutes. 67

Secondary Education

The entire educational system in Iceland is, as has been noted, in the process of undergoing profound and far-reaching changes. This is especially true regarding secondary education which operated until very recently under the 1946 law which divided secondary education into two levels:


67 Iceland, Althing, Log um Grunnskola, chap. 5, article 44.
lower and upper. At the lower level were three different types of schools: junior secondary schools (unglingaskoli) of two years, middle schools (midskoli) of three years and high schools (gagnfraedaskola) of four years. These schools at the lower level were intended to prepare students for a vocation or further education. At this level they were streamed into vocational or academic lines. The only way to the prestigious gymnasium was by way of the middle and high schools. The all-important exam was the Middle School Examination (midskolaprof) which granted admission to the gymnasium and, of course, ultimately to higher education. Concerning this examination Andri Isaksson says:

This examination . . . covers the whole of the advanced theoretical subsection of the lower secondary school. . . . Until 1969 entrance to the grammar school (gymnasium) was virtually controlled by this examination, with an average of 6 on a 10 scale as the pass mark. About 35% of each age group normally try this examination, of whom approximately 70% pass, i.e., about 25% of each age group.68

Once a student was streamed into vocational or academic line, there was very little chance of later making a change. Regarding this very rigid system, Josephson observes:

The streaming procedures of secondary schools are evidence of attempts to provide a variety of instruction, but in practice they have become mainly a classification scheme based on ability. The best students are usually selected for the three-year academic program. The least academically talented students are generally placed in

the practical lane, and those in between are placed in
the theoretical lane of the four-year program.69

In 1969 by an amendment to the existing educational
law, two year continuation divisions were established in
connection with the two year lower secondary schools. One
of the purposes of establishing these divisions was to facil-
itate horizontal transfer into grammar schools. 70

The curricula of the three lower secondary schools
were basically identical in the various vocational lines
and the academic line, with much more emphasis placed on
academic subjects in the academic line leading to the gram-
mar school. The 1946 law on secondary education states:

In the academic division at least three-fourths of
the time shall be devoted to academic subjects, and one-
fourth to vocational and non-academic subjects. The
main emphasis shall be placed on Icelandic and Icelandic
studies, arithmetic, mathematics and foreign languages. 71

At the upper level of secondary education were the
grammar schools and vocational and technical schools (which
included until 1970 the Teachers Training School).

When the 1946 Law Concerning the Grammar Schools was
passed by the Althing, there were only two such schools in
the country--one in Reykjavik and the other at Akureyri. At
present there are seven grammar schools in Iceland--three in

69 Josephson, p. 616.
71 Armann Snaevarr, Lagasafn Islenzk Log 1 Oktober
1973 [A Collection of Icelandic Laws As of October 1, 1973]
2 vols. (Reykjavik; Domsmalaraduneytid, 1974) 2:713 (i.e., column
713).
Reykjavik (the Reykjavik Grammar School, The Hamrahlid Grammar School and the Gnodarvog Grammar School) and four in other parts of the country (at Kopavog, a Reykjavik suburb; Isafjordur; Akureyri and Laugarvatn). An eighth grammar school is currently under construction at Egilsstadir in the east of Iceland.

The 1946 law did little more than legalize the then existing regulations. The most important change was that it changed the grammar schools from six year schools to four year schools, with the first two years of education being provided at the lower level of secondary education. The main purpose of these schools continued to be the preparation of students for the university. Organized on an annual academic calendar and having only two divisions--language and mathematics/science, they were very traditional in their curricula and structure. Instruction was organized around examinations and memorization was stressed. Emphasis was placed on the teaching of Icelandic and foreign languages--Danish, English, German, French and Latin. (Until as late as 1968 Latin was required in the mathematics/science division.) Natural science, physics, chemistry and mathematics were required in both divisions, but emphasized in the mathematics/science division. During the first three years a total of thirty-six weekly class hours were required, and during the last year thirty-five hours were required.

72 Armannsson and others, p. 88.
In 1963 Gylfi Th. Gislason, the Minister of Culture and Education, appointed a committee composed of seven members to examine the then current law and operation of the grammar schools. The members of the committee were Armann Snaevarr, President of the University of Iceland; Birgir Thorlacius, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Culture and Education; Broddi Johannesson, President of the Teacher Training School; Johann S. Hannesson, Rector of the Laugarvatn Grammar School; Jon Gislason, Principal of the Commercial School of Iceland; Kristinn Armannsson, Rector of the Reykjavik Grammar School; and Thorarinn Bjornsson, Rector of the Akureyri Grammar School.

This committee prepared a questionnaire which was sent out to teachers and other educators, professional educational organizations and university and grammar school students and graduates, as well as principals of secondary and primary schools. In response to the questionnaire, the main criticisms concerning the grammar schools were as follows:

1. The instructional programs were too narrow and too little choice was given between the different subjects.

2. Textbooks were generally considered insufficient.

3. Too little emphasis was placed on the development of independent work habits and too much time was used for recitations.

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73 Josephson, p. 700.
4. Too many foreign languages were taught, especially in the Division of Mathematics.

5. Instruction in a number of important subjects, such as fine arts and philosophy, was not provided.

6. The number of subjects which are mandatory for each student was too many, and none were taught thoroughly.

7. The graduation age is generally considered too high.\textsuperscript{74}

In 1969 a new law was passed concerning the grammar schools. Its main provisions were:

1. There shall be as many grammar schools as is necessary, with at least three in Reykjavik and one in Akureyri, Laugarvatn, Isafjordur and the east of Iceland.

2. The goal of the grammar school is to develop the maturity of the students, provide them with a general education following the middle school, to prepare them for university study and for life and work in society.

3. The grammar schools are four year schools for men and women.

4. An experimental grammar school may be established and will not be bound by the provisions of this law.

5. Entrance shall be granted to those holding the certificate from the middle school (midskolaprof) or by equivalent education as determined by the director.

6. The curriculum shall be based on a credit system, with 144 credits necessary for graduation (students-prof). Core courses shall consist of at least 100 credits, the major area of study of at least 24 credits and electives of at least 14 credits. The purpose of the core courses is to provide a general education for all students; the purpose of the major area of study is to provide a depth of study in a selected area. Both areas provide preparatory education for entrance to the university.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., pp. 700-01
7. Only university trained teachers may be assigned to the grammar schools.\textsuperscript{75}

As can be seen, the provisions of this law attempt to remedy some of the criticism of the grammar schools. One of the most important changes has been the reorganization of the grammar schools on a semester basis. According to this arrangement, a final exam is given in each subject at the end of each semester and at the end of four years of study a comprehensive examination is administered.\textsuperscript{76} The curriculum has been expanded and additional fields of study have been added to include modern and ancient languages, physics, natural sciences, social sciences and music.\textsuperscript{77}

One of the most innovative grammar schools in Iceland currently is the Hamrahlið Grammar School (College) in Reykjavik which was organized in 1972 on a unit-credit system. The main purpose of the school is to prepare students for further study, usually at the university, or for a vocation. However, more independence is given to the students in the selection of courses and the pace at which they wish to pursue their studies.\textsuperscript{78} Commenting on this arrangement,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75} Snaevarr, 2:703-9.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Armannsson and others, p. 106.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Iceland, Ministry of Culture and Education, "School Systems, a Guide--Iceland" (Reykjavik: Menntamalaraduneytid, 1977), p. 4. (Mimeographed.)
\item \textsuperscript{78} Arni Bodvarsson and Johann S. Hannesson, "Afangakerfi Menntakolans vid Hamrahlið" [The Unit-Credit System at the Hamrahlið Grammar School], Menntamal 45, No. 5 (1972):192.
\end{itemize}
Gudmundur Arnlaugsson, the school's principal writes:

Unlike other Icelandic upper secondary schools, Hamrahlid College is organized on a unit-credit basis. Two class hours for one semester (13 teaching weeks plus a ten-day examination period) constitutes one unit. All courses are semester courses of two or three units and finish with an examination. A total of 132 units is required for graduation. The normal period of study is four years (eight semesters), but by selecting special double-courses or in other ways taking more than the normal load, able students can finish in three and a half (in exceptional cases three) years.79

The program for all students consists of three parts: (1) a common core, (2) a field of specialization and (3) electives to give a total of 132 units of credit. The common core, consisting of 74 units of credit and required of all students, is as follows:

Icelandic language and literature ........ 15 units
Danish (continued from the middle school) .. 6 units
English (continued from the middle school) .. 9 units
A third foreign language (French, Spanish, Russian, German or Italian) ........ 12 units
Mathematics .................................. 12 units
History ....................................... 8 units
Biology ....................................... 4 units
Geology ...................................... 2 units
Chemistry .................................... 3 units

Sociology .......................... 2 units
Typing ............................ 1 unit.

There are six areas of specialization at present as follows: (1) modern languages, (2) ancient languages, (3) natural sciences, (4) physics and mathematics, (5) social sciences and (6) music. Table 13 shows the requirements in these fields of specialization.

The course offerings are numerous at the Hamrahlid Grammar School. The 1976 Catalog of Courses lists the following offerings: literature (in original language or translation), Danish, chemistry, physics, English, Esperanto, social studies, French, Faeroese, Greek, statistics, philosophy, Icelandic language and literature (12 courses), Italian, geology, Chinese, geography, Latin, dramatics, biology, fine arts, law, anthropology, painting, Norwegian, Russian, history, psychology, Spanish, administration, astronomy, mathematics (19 courses), Swedish, music, religion, typing and German. 81

The school year, having two semesters, is from September 1 to May 31. The daily schedule contains eleven class periods of forty minutes from 8:15 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. In addition, there is an evening program from 5:30 to 10:30

80 Ibid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of Specialization</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modern Languages</td>
<td>Icelandic 3 (units), English 9, Third foreign language 4, Fourth foreign language 12, Physics 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical Languages</td>
<td>Icelandic 3, Latin 18, Greek 4, History 2, Physics 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>Chemistry 10, Biology 6, Geology 3, Mathematics 9, Physics 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics and Physics</td>
<td>Mathematics 12, Physics, 12, Chemistry 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>Sociology 6, Politics 4, Law 3, Economics 5, Psychology 4, Philosophy 3, Mathematics 5, Physics 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Theory of music 8, Ear training 4, History of music 4, Formal analysis 4, Applied music 12, Physics 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

which is well attended. Currently about 900 students are enrolled in the day program, with 40 full time and 40 part time teachers employed at the school. About 30 percent of the students complete the four year program in three and one-half years, and some even complete the program in three years. Most of the graduates of the school go on to the university of Iceland, with a considerable number going to universities abroad. 82

Although considerable freedom is allowed at the Hamrahlid school, the students are highly motivated under this program and their achievement level is high. A recent survey revealed that at the end of the 1973 term the grade distribution was as follows: A-66 percent, B-19 percent, C-11 percent and D-4 percent. 83 This school, while offering a broader education and more freedom than was found in the traditional grammar schools, has preserved at the same time much of the best that was found in traditional education.

Another recent development in education, perhaps the most important of the decade thus far, has been the rise of the comprehensive high school. This type of school, patterned after similar schools in the United States and

82 Interview with Gudmundur Arnlaugsson, Principal of the Hamrahlid Grammar School, Reykjavik, September 13, 1977.

Europe, is entirely new in the Icelandic school system. Intended to make maximum use of school facilities and teaching staff (an important consideration in a country with a small population) and to eliminate the dual track system, this type of school is being developed very rapidly in Iceland. Actually patterned after pending legislation regarding secondary education before the Althing, there are already four such schools in the country.

The first comprehensive high school was opened in the Autumn of 1975 in the Breidholt section of Reykjavik, an area of recently built hi-rises and homes where the population has risen to 18,000 in a very short time. Permission to establish the Breidholt Comprehensive High School (Fjolbrautaskolinn i Breidholti) on an experimental basis was provided by a law passed by the Althing on April 5, 1973. This law reads as follows:

"1. The Ministry of Culture and Education and the City of Reykjavik are granted permission to operate an experimental school to be known as a comprehensive high school.

"2. The school shall be under the administration of the Ministry of Culture and Education as part of the Reykjavik educational region.

"3. The Ministry of Culture and Education shall establish the curriculum and regulations for the school as recommended by the Reykjavik Board of Education. These regulations shall relate to the subjects to be taught, the levels of instruction and the

84 Interview with Gudmundur Sveinsson, Principal of the Breidholt Comprehensive High School, Reykjavik, September 27, 1977.
preparation of students for further education at other institutions, including the University of Iceland.

"4. The state shall provide 60 percent and the City of Reykjavik shall provide 40 percent of the initial costs of the school. The salaries of the teachers and principal shall be paid by the state. Other operating costs shall be paid equally by the state and the City of Reykjavik.

"5. Additional regulations relating to the administration of the school and its finances shall be developed by the Ministry of Culture and Education and the City of Reykjavik.

"6. The Ministry of Culture and Education is granted permission to establish additional comprehensive high schools in other educational regions according to the provisions of this law."

The Breidholt Comprehensive High School currently has four divisions: (1) a grammar school division, (2) a trade and technology division, (3) a commercial division and (4) a sociology and education division. Within a short time the school anticipates adding divisions of health sciences, domestic sciences and art. The only entrance requirement to the school and to any division is a matriculation certificate from the compulsory school.

The school operates on a two semester system, with the Autumn semester from September 1 to January 14 and the Spring semester from January 15 to May 31. The school is

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organized as a unified school on a multi-building campus, with additional building currently under construction.

Like the Hamrahlid school, the unit-credit system is used. There is a core, consisting of 22 units of credit, which is required of every student regardless of division. This core consists of courses in Icelandic, Danish, English, sociology, arts and crafts. For matriculation \(\text{(studentsprof)}\) which grants admission to the university, additional core courses of 77 units of credit are required, as well as courses in the areas of specialization and electives.\(^87\)

The grammar school division is sub-divided into three lines: (1) languages, (2) natural sciences and (3) physics, each of which is a four year program leading to the certificate of matriculation. Other divisions are also sub-divided into two, three and four year programs in various areas. Students completing a four year program in any division are awarded the matriculation certificate \(\text{(studentsprof)}\) and may continue their education at the university.

By offering such a program, as well as allowing transfer from one division to another, the Breidholt Comprehensive High School became the first school in Iceland at the secondary level to essentially eliminate the dual track system and allow any able student who so desires to prepare for university entrance.\(^88\)

\(^87\)Ibid., p. 87.

\(^88\)The Breidholt Comprehensive High School, Reykjavik,
The Breidholt Comprehensive High School began its third year of operation in September, 1977 with an enrollment of 725 students of whom 400 were new students. In his address opening the school year, Gudmundur Sveinsson, the principal, noted that these students were distributed as follows: 140 in the grammar school division, 130 in the trade and technology division, 175 in the commercial division and 280 in the sociology and education division. Anticipated enrollment when the school is fully completed is between 1,200 and 1,400 students.

The course offerings are extensive which is necessary in a school which prepares students for university entrance and a great number of vocations. The current catalog list offerings in seventy-six areas. In the area of Danish, for example, ten different courses are listed, ten in physics, thirteen in chemistry, eighteen in English, six in French, five in nursing, ten in carpentry, fifteen in Icelandic literature, eleven in biology and related sciences, six in the arts, eleven in handicrafts, twelve in mathematics,


89"Fjolbrautaskolinn i Breidholti [The Breidholt comprehensive High School], Timinn, September 17, 1977, p. 4.

90Interview with Gudmundur Sveinsson, Principal of the Breidholt Comprehensive High School, Reykjavik, September 27, 1977.
as well as numerous courses in various areas of technology.

Since the Breidholt school opened, three other comprehensive high schools have come into operation in Iceland. The Keflavik Comprehensive High School opened in 1976 with an enrollment of 240 students. When it began its second year of operation, the enrollment had increased to about 500, of whom 340 were new students. It is anticipated that the enrollment will increase to 650 in 1978. The third comprehensive high school began operation when the century old Flensborg School in Hafnafjordur was reorganized on this basis.

The fourth comprehensive high school in Iceland was opened on September 12, 1977 at the town of Akranes, across the Faxa bay from Reykjavik. This school, which also includes a compulsory school division, opened with an enrollment of 470 students, with 170 students studying at the secondary level.

The comprehensive high school which began operation


"Nemandum Fjolbrautaskola Sudurnesja Fjolgadi um Helming" [Enrollment at the Sudurnes Comprehensive High School in Keflavik Has Nearly Doubled], Morgunblaðið, September 6, 1977, p. 31.

"Fjolbrautaskolinn a Akranesi Settur [The Comprehensive High School at Akranes Opened], Timinn, September 16, 1977, p. 24."
as experimental schools by a special law will likely set the pattern for secondary education in Iceland. At present it is certainly one of the most important and rapid developments in education in Iceland.

While these important educational developments were taking place another school was slowly being developed at Skalholt, the ancient episcopal seat and center of learning. The nine-hundredth anniversary of Skalholt in 1956 renewed interest in restoring this place around which so much of Iceland's history had been centered. As part of this restoration a magnificent church was built.

The present Bishop of Iceland, Sigurbjorn Einarsson (consecrated 1959), who is deeply interested in the religious and cultural heritage of his people, has taken an interest in establishing a school at Skalholt. In 1972 a folk school, patterned after similar schools in Scandinavia, was opened at Skalholt. Regarding the purpose and work of this school, its rector, Rev. Heimer Steinsson, writes:

The Skalholt School is operated on the foundation of the Christian faith and to preserve the Icelandic cultural heritage. It also endeavors to provide each student with a clear and broad outlook. The school is open to all men and women eighteen years of age or older, regardless of educational background, degrees or certificates.94

Although the school does not follow a strict cur-

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riculum, students are obliged to take thirty-five hours of "courses" each week during the seven month school year from October to April (lengthened to nine months by the 1977 law). These courses are grouped into the following areas (courses which are underlined are required of all students):

| I | Icelandic language and literature | 6 hours a week |
|   | Icelandic history                | 2 hours a week |
|   | English                         | 4 hours a week |
|   | Danish                          | 4 hours a week |
|   | German                          | 4 hours a week |
|   | Latin                           | 2 hours a week |
|   | Mathematics                     | 4 hours a week |
|   | Physics                         | 2 hours a week |
|   | Natural history                 | 2 hours a week |
|   | Bookkeeping                     | 2 hours a week |

| II | Cultural history                | 1 hour a week |
|    | Current affairs                 | 2 hours a week |
|    | Psychology                      | 2 hours a week |
|    | Sociology                       | 2 hours a week |
|    | Contemporary history            | 2 hours a week |

| III | Christian doctrine              | 2 hours a week |
|     | Lectures on various subjects    | 2 hours a week |
|     | Ethics                          | 2 hours a week |
Biblical interpretation 2 hours a week
History of philosophy 2 hours a week
Religions of the world 2 hours a week

IV

Singing 1 hour a week
Instrumental music 2 hours a week
Swimming and gymnastics 2 hours a week
Handicrafts 4 hours a week
Typing 2 hours a week

Within the school a home atmosphere is maintained and students are encouraged to foster a feeling of fellowship amongst themselves. Each student is assigned a "house father" or "house mother" who provides guidance in the area of the student's studies, as well as guidance for future plans for a vocation or further study. The following regulations prevail within the school:

1. The school is a home and this atmosphere should be cultivated by everyone.

2. Punctuality in arising, attending classes, at meals and at retiring is required.

3. Good housekeeping and cleanliness are to be maintained throughout the school. Students assist with the cleaning, making of their beds, dishwashing and other duties.

4. Students are permitted to be away from the school only on weekends and during vacations. Weekend passes are issued only once a month. All students are to be present at least one Saturday evening each month to participate in school programs and fellowship.

\[95\] Ibid., pp. 2-3.
5. Smoking is not permitted in the instructional areas of the school.

6. Drinking of alcoholic beverages is forbidden.\(^96\)

From 1972 until 1977 when legislation concerning the Skalholt School was passed by the Althing, the school was operated and financed by the Lutheran State Church of Iceland. The main points of the 1977 legislation are as follows:

1. The Skalholt School is under the administration of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

2. The Skalholt School operates in the spirit of the Scandinavian folk school. The purposes of the school are to allow its students to gain knowledge and develop maturity, as well as a deeper understanding of current social and cultural conditions.

The school also operates to preserve the Icelandic cultural heritage and its work is based on the foundations of the Christian Church.

3. The school operates nine months a year and has permission to operate a summer session. The school's curriculum may be divided into courses.

4. The instructional program of the school is divided as follows:

A. The general division to provide general secondary education for students who have completed their secondary education or who have left school and want to resume their education.

B. The open studies where students may select studies in the area of Icelandic language, history and literature, Christianity and other religions, the history of ideas and philosophy, current history and sociology, and preparations for youth and other social work.

Students in the general division are to pursue one

\(^{96}\) Ibid., p. 3.
area of study in the open studies division. Students in the open studies division may attend classes offered in the general division.

C. Self directed study and research are offered annually as conditions permit to interested students for long or short periods of time.

All instruction is offered on a free pattern in the spirit of the Scandinavian folk school. There are no examinations, but progress reports are given to students who request them.

5. Entrance requirements are that a student be eighteen years of age or older and have completed his compulsory education. The rector may grant exceptions and the school board may with the approval of the rector issue additional entrance requirements.

6. The school operates as an independent institution with the church council handling its financial affairs. The administration of the school is in the hands of the rector and a seven man school board. The Bishop of Iceland is the chairman of the school board. The church council and the Ministry of Culture and Education select other members for a four year appointment to the board. The duties of the school board are to select the rector and teachers, to determine the curriculum and issue regulations concerning the operation of the school subject to the approval of the church council and the Ministry of Culture and Education.

7. The rector has charge of the daily operation and management of the school, as well as the budget. The rector and assigned teachers have the same rights and obligations as other civil servants.

8. The state shall provide up to 80 percent of the operational costs of the school. The Ministry of Culture and Education approves the annual budget.

During the current (1977-78) school year 38 students are enrolled in the Skalholt School. In addition to the

rector, there are two teachers. Student fees for room and
board are 280,000 kronur per year. Since the school was
established about 160 students have attended.99

Various types of secondary schools provide vocational and technical training.100 According to the provi-
sions of the Law Concerning Compulsory Education the
Ministry of Culture and Education has issued a comprehensive
guide to educational opportunities available in the country
after the completion of compulsory education. This guide
describes all the schools at the secondary and higher educa-
tion level currently in operation in Iceland.101

Agricultural education is provided at the two agri-
cultural schools at Holar and Hvanneyri. The entrance
requirements to these schools are that the applicant have
completed his compulsory education, have been engaged in
farming for at least one year and be at least seventeen
years of age.102 The program at the schools is both practi-


99 "Stofnad Nemandasamband Skalholtsskola" [The
Skalholt School Student Alumni Association Formed], Morgun-
bladid, June 12, 1977, p. 7.

100 For a history of the development of these schools see Josephson, pp. 626-75.

101 Iceland, Ministry of Culture and Education, Nam
ad Loknum Grunnskola [Education After the Completion of Com-
pulsory Education] (Reykjavik: Menntamalaraduneytid, 1977).

102 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
cal and academic. The one year program leads to a certificate in agriculture (bufraediprof). Students may continue for another year of advanced studies at both schools and for a third year of studies at the Hvanneyri school. For additional education in this field students must go abroad. The curriculum consists of Icelandic, mathematics, sociology, physics, chemistry, geology, physiology, physical education and various branches of agricultural science. The students are also instructed in the practical side of farming. 103

A horticultural school is operated at Reykjum i Olfusi. The purpose of this school is to provide practical knowledge of market gardening. The course of study is three years (the school year lasting from October 15 to April 15, with an additional two months being given to practical assignments). In connection with this school, a course of study in landscaping and ornamental gardening is offered. 104

There are two nautical schools in Iceland—in Reykjavik and on the Westmann Islands. The purpose of these schools is to train ships' officers. Instruction is offered in the following four areas: (1) a seven month training for the First Fisherman's Certificate, (2) a fifteen month training for the Second Fisherman's Certificate, (3) a

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104 Iceland, Ministry of Culture and Education, Namad Loknum Grunnskola, p. 10.
twenty-three month training for the Mate's Certificate and
(4) a twenty-eight month training for the Master's Certifi-
cate for State Patrol Vessels. Entrance requirements are
that the applicant have had at least twenty-four months
experience after fifteen years of age as a deck hand or
sailor, that he have no impairments (including color blind-
ness) in vision and hearing, that he know how to swim, that
he have no contagious disease, that he have no criminal
record and that he have completed the equivalent of high
school (gagnfraedaprof). 105

The Reykjavik Nautical School (founded 1891) and
the Westmann Island Nautical School (founded 1964) are
extremely vital parts of the Icelandic educational system, as
Josephson observes:

Considering the importance of fishing to the Ice­
landic nation, it is vitally important that nautical
training be of the highest quality. It is also im­
portant that the regular crew members receive proper
training in utilizing and handling the expensive equip­
ment and tools of the modern fishing vessels and other
merchant ships. 106

Closely connected with nautical education are the
mechanical engineering schools. The purpose of these is to
train engineers for ships and mechanics for factories,
electric power stations and other similar types of work.
The course of study is divided into four stages (of eight and
a half months each) to provide specific qualifications both
in marine and industrial fields. The fourth stage also

qualifies one to work at power plants and other large scale establishments. The Mechanical Engineering School in Reykjavik offers all four stages, the one in Akureyri offers three stages and the schools at Keflavik, Isafjordur and the Westmann Islands offer the first two stages.  

Entrance requirements to these schools require that the applicant be at least eighteen years of age, have obtained the Middle School Certificate or its equivalent and have some educational background or experience in engineering.

As Iceland is developing its power intensive industries, these schools are becoming increasingly important. The Mechanical Engineering School in Reykjavik began its sixty-second year of operation with about 400 students and a number of applicants not being admitted and being placed on a waiting list because of lack of facilities and equipment.

The Commercial School of Iceland (founded 1905) and the Cooperative Society Commercial School (founded in 1916 in Akureyri) operate in Reykjavik and Bifrost in the Borgarfjord district respectively. Originally offering six year

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107 Iceland, Ministry of Culture and Education, Namad Loknum Grunnskola, pp. 41-42.
108 Ibid.
109 "Taepilega 400 Nemandur i Velskola Islands" [About Four Hundred Students Are Enrolled in the Mechanical Engineering School], Morgunbladid, September 15, 1977, p. 23.
programs, these schools now offer one, two, three and four year programs in various commercial areas. The fourth year program leads to the studentsprof which grants admission to the university.110

The purpose of the commercial schools is to train its students for general office work, accounting, administration and various other positions in business and government.111 In addition to offering subjects in the field of business, stress is also placed on instruction in foreign languages. It should also be noted that business education is also offered at the comprehensive high schools.

Trade and technical training is provided at the Reykjavik Trade School (founded 1904) and other trade schools throughout the country; The Technical School in Reykjavik (which began operation in 1964) and at the comprehensive high schools. Concerning this type of education at the time of his study, Josephson notes:

Trade and technical education has been the fastest expanding category of vocational training during the last two decades. The Reykjavik Trade School has led in this development, as can be noted in the number of expanding programs and in the rapidly increasing student population.112

110 In 1942 the Commercial School of Iceland, by adding two additional years to its program, became the only school, apart from the grammar schools, in Iceland to grant the matriculation examination (studentsprof) for admission to the university.

111 Iceland, Ministry of Culture and Education, Nam ad Loknum Grunnskola, pp. 42-43.

112 Josephson, p. 635.
The trade schools offer a variety of courses for students interested in qualifying for the trades and to some extent for industrial workers. Apprenticeship can be completed in two ways: through a special contract with a master craftsman or firm or in the school. The latter course has been increasingly the case during the last few years. 113

The Technical School in Reykjavik offers preparatory and advanced courses in various fields. After one to two years of preparatory courses, students continue an additional one and a half years to become technicians, two years to become laboratory technicians or three and a half years to become engineering technicians. Concerning the work offered at this school, the Ministry of Culture and Education notes:

Technicians take courses in one of the following fields: construction, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, technology of fisheries, also medical laboratory techniques. Engineering technicians can take courses in construction technology and one year in mechanical and electrical technology but these latter courses of study have to be concluded abroad. 114

Education in the health fields is offered in a number of schools. Nursing instruction is offered at the Nursing School of Iceland (which provides advanced study in a number of specialized areas such as psychiatric nursing, obstetrical nursing and gerontological nursing). In 1974


114 Ibid., p. 7.
the University of Iceland instituted a three year program in nursing in connection with the Department of Medicine. During the June, 1977 commencement of the University of Iceland the first group of fourteen students in this program received the B.S. degrees in nursing.115

The School for Mid-wives offers a two year program and its current enrollment is around fifteen. The Pharmaceutical Association of Iceland offers a three year program of theoretical and practical studies in pharmacology and the School for X-Ray Technicians offers a two and a half year program.116

Education in the arts is offered at a number of schools. The Arts and Crafts School in Reykjavik offers a two year basic program in a number of fields such as painting, sculpture, graphics and art education. The School for Actors provides a three year program and instruction in ballet is offered by the National Theater of Iceland.117

There are over thirty music schools in Iceland. Most of them are evening schools and private, although they receive funds from the state. The oldest, largest and most

115"Fyrstu Hjukrunnarfraedungarnir fra Haskolanum Islands Brautskradir" [The First Group of Nursing Students Received Their Degrees from the University of Iceland], Morgunbladid, June 28, 1977, p. 19.

116Iceland, Ministry of Culture and Education, Nam ad Loknum Grunnskola, pp. 21-22.

117Ibid., pp. 34-36.
prestigious is the Reykjavik Conservatory of Music (founded 1930) and headed for many years by Dr. Pall Isolfsson, a renowned organist and composer. Training of church organists is offered at the Music School of the State Lutheran Church of Iceland.¹¹⁸

Various other schools offer training in domestic science, aeronautics, stewardess training, hotel and restaurant management, radio and telegraph operation and other subjects. Local authorities, aided by the state, provide evening classes and the Federation of Icelandic Cooperatives and the National Trade Union Federation jointly maintain a correspondence school. Language schools are well attended, with English being one of the languages most frequently studied.

Entrance requirements to the trade and vocational schools require usually a minimum of a compulsory school certificate, although some schools, as has been noted, do have additional requirements.

There are special schools for handicapped students. Although a few of these schools are at the secondary level, most of them are at the compulsory level. There were eleven such schools in operation in Iceland in 1971-72, with most of them located in Reykjavik. These include schools for

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 36.
the deaf, blind, paralyzed and mentally handicapped.  

At present secondary education in Iceland is in a period of transition. There is no single piece of legislation, apart from the 1946 secondary school act, which covers this level of education. Special legislation has been enacted, for example, to permit the establishment of comprehensive high schools and the different types of schools just alluded to often operate under various laws and regulations. Legislation enacted in 1974 concerning the entire educational system and compulsory education, as well as changes in society and population shifts, necessitate a change in the existing organization of secondary education in the country. The existing laws at this level simply do not relate to a developing technological society in which education, often in newer and specialized fields, is becoming increasingly important.

As already noted, Gylfi Th. Gislason, and other educators have felt the need for an educational system relevant to the changing conditions in Iceland. This is especially true concerning the vital area of secondary education. With a very small population, half of it concentrated in the Reykjavik area and the other half scattered in small

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villages and sparsely populated areas, it had become increasingly evident that it is prohibitively expensive, if not impossible, to provide quality education equally accessible for everyone.

On November 24, 1974, Vilhjalmur Hjalmarsson, the Minister of Culture and Education, appointed a committee to examine the secondary level of education and propose changes to coordinate education at this level. Four members from the Ministry of Culture and Education were appointed to this committee: Hordur Larusson, Director of the Division of Educational Research and Development, who was the chairman of the committee; Arni Gunnarsson, Director of the Division of University and International Affairs; Indridi H. Thorlaksson, Director of the Division of Building; and Stephan Ol. Jonsson, Director of the Division of Vocational and Technical Education. 121

The committee met for nearly twenty months and on July 21, 1976 presented its proposals to the Minister of Culture and Education. Later that year, on October 8 and 9, meetings were held in Reykjavik to discuss the proposed legislation. These meetings were attended by forty-three educators representing virtually all schools at the secondary level, as well as the University of Iceland and the University College for Teacher Training. 122

121 Ibid., p. 7. 122 Ibid., pp. 77-78.
On February 21, 1977 the Bill on Secondary Education was brought before the 98th session of the Althing. The main provisions of the bill are:

1. Anyone who has completed compulsory education may continue his education for one to four years at the secondary level in preparation for a vocation or entrance to the University of Iceland.

2. Adequate educational institutions at this level shall be provided for everyone, regardless of where they live in the country.

3. All secondary schools shall be coordinated to provide secondary education in eight main areas, which are further subdivided into various areas of study. Each area shall provide general and preparatory education of one, two, three and four years leading to a vocation or further study.

4. The curriculum of all secondary schools shall be arranged around a unit credit system. Each credit shall be transferable from one division to another.

5. Curriculum guides for each of the eight major divisions, in which goals and preparatory training for a vocation or further education shall be outlined, shall be published.

6. The eight main divisions shall be offered in secondary schools as conditions permit. In each educational region at least one secondary school shall offer comprehensive education.

7. Secondary schools shall be the main centers for this type of education. Instruction, under the supervision of the school, may be given in other places, such as technical, trade and business establishments.

8. The local authorities shall be involved with the administration and costs of operating these schools.

9. Additional regulations may be issued with respect to each division.124

123 See Figure 3.

124 Iceland, Althing, Frumvarp til Laga um Framhaldsskola, pp. 8-9.
Fig. 3.--Proposed Coordination of Secondary Education, 1977

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
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<th>19</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>22</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Year</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Divisions**

1. Grammar School
   - Agriculture
   - Scientific Agriculture

2. Agricultural
   - Nursing Assistants and Beauticians

3. Health
   - Health Services and Medical Records
   - Pharmacy and X-Ray Technicians
   - Specialized Nursing
Fig. 3.—Continued

4. Domestic Sciences

5. The Arts

6. Technology and Trades
### Fig. 3.—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
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<td>Divisions</td>
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</tbody>
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#### 7. Education

- Physical Education and Recreation
  - General Education
    - Preprimary & Child Development
      - Advanced Study
  - Physical Education and Recreation

#### 8. Commercial

- Bank, Postal and Insurance

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*Note: Diagrams represent a flow of courses and divisions across different ages and school years.*
Fig. 3.--Continued

Symbols

☐ General education

A Right to go on for further education

B Examination

C Theoretical and practical instruction

D Vocational training

→ Entrance to the University of Iceland, The University College for Teacher Training and other higher educational institutions

The goals of secondary education are also given, both in terms of changing conditions in Icelandic society and the preservation of cultural values. These goals are as follows:

1. To provide the students with the necessary knowledge and training to enter a vocation.

2. To provide the students with the necessary preparatory education for further education.

3. To provide the students with knowledge that will allow them to use the cultural heritage we possess in both their work and leisure.

4. To promote moral values and virtues among the students and to instruct them in the area of living and working with others in society.

5. To provide the students with the necessary background and information to develop an independence in thinking regarding important issues.\(^{125}\)

The cost of this proposed education will be shared by the state and the local authorities. Salaries of teachers and administrators, counselors and librarians will be paid by the state. Initial building costs, including library facilities, will be paid by the state on a formula based on total floor space. Other operational costs will be shared equally by the state and local authorities. Students will be required to purchase their textbooks.\(^{126}\)

This proposed legislation is currently being discussed in the Althing, as well as among educators and the general public. Articles concerning this bill, discussing

\(^{125}\) Ibid., p. 11. \(^{126}\) Ibid., p. 5.
its merits and shortcomings and offering additional proposals, appear frequently in the newspapers. Although no date is set for the passage of this legislation, once it is enacted, it is expected that it will take five years to implement its provisions. However, much that the bill proposes is actually taking place in the newly established comprehensive high schools. The Breidholt Comprehensive High School is currently offering instruction in four of the main areas, as outlined in the proposed legislation, and will soon add two other areas of study.

**Adult Education**

A recent and much discussed development in Icelandic education is adult education. Although correspondence and evening classes, such as those at the Lauglaekjarskoli High School in Reykjavik, have been offered for awhile, it is only recently that adult education has been available at the upper level of secondary education. The Hamrahlid Grammar School in Reykjavik, which began offering adult education classes in 1972, is by far the largest program in the country. In the Autumn of 1975 The Akureyri Grammar School established its Adult Education division. Operating on a semester system (with the Autumn semester running from the beginning of October to the end of January and the Spring

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127 Interview with Gudmundur Arnlaugsson, Principal of the Hamrahlid Grammar School, Reykjavik, September 13, 1977.
semester from the beginning of February to the end of May), the school offers Adult Education classes in the evenings from 6:15 to 10:35 Monday through Friday and on Saturday from 2 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. There are no entrance requirements to this program, apart from being at least twenty-one years of age. The educational program is based on the individual's educational background. A total number of 132 credits\(^{128}\) is required for matriculation (studentsprof) which must be completed in a period of no longer than seven years.\(^{129}\)

Students may enter either of two divisions--language or natural sciences/mathematics--in the Adult Education program. For graduation the following credits are required:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Natural Sciences/Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Icelandic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danish</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>French</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature (general)</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{128}\) One credit is given for each hour a course meets each week (i.e., a course meeting three hours per week earns three semester hours of credit).

Currently no law relating to adult education has been enacted. On October 26, 1971, Dr Gylfi Th. Gislason appointed a committee to formulate proposals for a bill on adult education. Appointed to the committee were: Rev. Gudmundur Sveinsson (chairman), who later became the principal of the Breidholt Comprehensive High School when it opened in 1975; Stephan Ogmundsson, a printer; Dr. Matthias Jonason, a professor at the University of Iceland; Andres Bjornsson, the director of the State Radio; Gunnar Grimsson, representing the Union of Icelandic Municipalities; Sigridur Thorlacius, the president of the Woman's Association of Iceland; and Jonas B. Jonsson, Director of the Reykjavik Office of Education. In 1973 when Jonas B. Jonsson left the committee, Rangar Georgsson, a school representative from Reykjavik, was appointed to the committee.131

The committee made a thorough study of adult education in the other Scandinavian countries and sought the views and opinions of twenty-eight different parties which

130 Ibid., p. 8.
131 Iceland, Althing, Frumvarp til Laga um Fullordinsfraedslu [A Bill Concerning Adult Education], 98th session, 1975, pp. 5-6.
included educational regions and schools, as well as business, labor, social and cultural organizations.\textsuperscript{132} During October of 1973 a series of three meetings was held to acquaint representatives from these organizations with the work and proposals of the committee.\textsuperscript{133}

At its fiftieth meeting, on May 10, 1974, the committee finally approved and forwarded its proposals to the Minister of Culture and Education. Some of the reasons for adult education which the committee suggested were:

1. To provide an opportunity for the people to receive training for a vocation in which they have an interest or need.

2. To provide in-service and additional training which is necessary in some areas because of changes in the various occupations.

3. To provide instruction to enable citizens to become more aware of changing conditions in order to be able to participate more fully and intelligently in the affairs of a democratic society.

4. To provide for a more rewarding use of leisure time.\textsuperscript{134}

This thinking, which reflects the opinions of Gylfi Th. Gislason and others, is certainly in keeping with a realistic outlook in a rapidly changing society which necessitates changes in education at all levels, not the least in assisting the more mature generation which had received a more traditional education and who are still in the

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., pp. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., p. 8.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., pp. 63-64.
labor force to keep abreast of the changing times.

The Bill Concerning Adult Education was brought before the Althing in 1976. Some of its provisions include:

1. The aim of adult education is to provide an opportunity for the continual development of all citizens, both as individuals and as members of society.

2. Adult education (or life-long learning) should be a part of the educational system.

3. Adult education can take three forms: (a) academic, which provides a basic education, (b) vocational and in-service training to provide training related to the labor market and (c) leisure courses to increase one's knowledge and cultural background.

4. Adult education is to be provided by the state, educational regions and local authorities, as well as business, educational, cultural and other associations.

5. The state and local authorities shall be responsible for the financing of adult education.

6. An Adult Education Council of nine members (two from society at large, four from the labor market and three from education) shall be established to assist in planning of adult education.

7. The qualifications, selection and pay scale of adult education teachers shall be the same as that for compulsory teachers.

8. The Ministry of Culture and Education shall issue regulations concerning the operation of adult education.\textsuperscript{135}

This proposed legislation currently being discussed in the Althing, as well as among educators and the general public, would have far reaching effects by bringing adult education within the country's educational system, as well

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., pp. 1-5.
as involving business and other sectors in this type of education. This intended legislation follows in the trend of bringing education at all levels within the educational system, or at least under its control, and by so doing, the long tradition of home education so much a part of the national life is finally coming to an end.

Teacher Training

For many years progress in the area of teacher training was slow. Although many teachers and other educators called for a change, it was not until recent years that significant progress in this area had been made. Teachers in the elementary schools continued to be trained at the Teacher Training School in Reykjavik, while teachers at the secondary level generally received their training at the university. Concerning the status of teachers in Iceland, Josephson has observed:

The status-position of primary and lower secondary school teachers is low (compared to other professional groups with similar educational backgrounds).

The status position of upper secondary school teachers and university professors is high but unstable.136

For the greater part of this period the Teacher Training School remained below that of university level,

if not even below the level of the grammar schools. According to the 1943 law, admission requirements to the school included a middle or high school certificate,\(^{137}\) but "... this was not enforced until 1952 and even after that exceptions for admission were commonly made."\(^{138}\)

In 1963 legislation was enacted concerning the Teacher Training School. The main provisions of this law were:

1. An advanced program of one year was to be added to the program to grant the studentsprof.
2. A preparatory division was to be added to the school to train teachers in specialized areas.
3. Practice teaching was to be increased.
4. More freedom in the curriculum was to be permitted.\(^{139}\)

This legislation apparently did have some effect on enrollment which increased from 180 in 1960 to 821 in 1967.\(^{140}\)

Although this legislation was a step in the right

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\(^{139}\) "Log um Kennaraskola Islands" [The Law Concerning the Teacher Training School of Iceland], *Menntamal* 36 (January-April 1963): 11.

\(^{140}\) "Kennaraskolinn 60 Ara" [The Sixtieth Anniversary of the Teacher Training School], *Menntamal* 41 (January-April 1968): 60; Broddi Johannesson, "Kennaraskolinn og Kennaramenntunin" [The Teacher Training School and Teacher Training], *Menntamal* 42 (September-December 1969): 278.
direction, Josephson has observed that "... it leaves many questions unanswered, problems unsolved, and many issues untouched."\(^{141}\) Some of these were the relationship of the Teacher Training School with the University of Iceland, the need for university status for the school and the provisions for educational research and in-service training for teachers.

The Association of Icelandic Primary School Teachers, which has always been in the forefront of improvements in the education of teachers, set forth the following resolutions at its twenty-first biannual meeting in 1970:

1. The current legislation regarding the Teacher Training School of Iceland needs to be re-examined with the end of raising the level of the school to university status.

2. Provisions for in-service training of teachers needs to be made.\(^{142}\)

That same year Gylfi Th. Gislason appointed a committee to examine the current laws concerning teacher training and to make proposals for new legislation. In 1971, only a year after the committee was formed, the Act Concerning the University College for Teacher Training was passed by the Althing. The main points of the act are:

1. The University College for Teacher Training shall be an institution for scholarly research and training in the field of education.

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\(^{141}\) Josephson, "Education in Iceland," p. 683.

\(^{142}\) "Stefna S. I.B. i Menntun Kennara" [Proposals of the Association of Icelandic Primary School Teachers Concerning Teacher Training], _Menntamál_ 43 No. 3 (1970): 92.
2. The University College for Teacher Training and the University of Iceland shall coordinate their research and programs so as to avoid duplication of efforts.

3. The University College for Teacher Training shall prepare teachers for schools at the compulsory level.

4. The school shall constantly keep abreast of the newest trends in educational thinking and innovations and their applications to education in Iceland.

5. The school shall in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Education provide in-service training for teachers at the compulsory level. An organized course of study shall be offered so as to provide information regarding the newest innovations in education.

6. Entrance requirements to the school shall include the studensprof from the grammar school.

7. The course of study shall be three years and the school year may not be shorter than eight and a half months or longer than nine months.

8. The school shall be divided into two divisions: general education training and handicraft training. Core courses, as well as courses in a major area of study and electives shall be required.

9. Assigned teachers shall have the ranks of professor, docent and lecturer. Professors are appointed by President of Iceland and docents and lecturers are appointed by the Ministry of Culture and Education.

10. A division of educational research shall be established in which specialists in psychology, education, pedagogy, sociology and computer science shall be appointed.

11. The University College for Teacher Training shall establish a practice and experimental school.

12. After five years of service, a teacher may apply for a sabbatical leave.\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{143}Snaevarr, 2:684-93.
After many years of struggle, the Teachers Training School finally achieved higher education status which is reflected in the name change to the University College for Teacher Training. The first students studying under the new organization began their studies in the Autumn of 1971. The last students under the old system graduated with a teachers certificate in 1973.

Josephson's observation regarding the progress made at the time the 1963 legislation was passed is also true regarding the situation eight years later: "the realization of the importance of teacher training has taken a long time and has cost the Icelandic people dearly in misused intellectual resources."  

The University College for Teacher Training under the 1971 law continued to be under the over-all supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Education. The administration and daily operation of the school is under the University College for Teacher Training board and the rector of the school.

The curriculum, as directed by this law, is divided into five main areas of study as follows:

1. **Education courses**: Psychology, education, pedagogy, educational history and practice teaching.

2. **Social science courses**: sociology, history, morals, religion and Christian doctrine.

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3. **Language courses:** Icelandic and Icelandic studies, Danish and English.

4. **Science courses:** physics, chemistry, biology, geography and mathematics.

5. **Art courses and practical subjects:** penmanship, typing, drawing, music, drama and physical education.145

In addition to the University College for Teacher Training and the University of Iceland, several other schools in Iceland train teachers in various fields. The Domestic Science School, requiring a studentsprof for admission, offers a three year course of study. The Physical Education Training School of Iceland, located at Laugarvatn, also requiring a studentsprof for admission, offers a two year course of study. The Arts and Handicrafts School in Reykjavik operates a division for the preparation of art and handicraft teachers. Entrance requirements include the minimum of a compulsory school certificate. The school offers a two year preparatory course, followed by two years of art education. The Reykjavik Conservatory of Music offers a three year course of study for the training of music teachers. Entrance requirements also include the minimum of a compulsory school certificate and that the applicant be at least eighteen years of age.146

Teacher shortage continues to be a serious problem

145 Snaevarr, 2:687.

146 Iceland, Ministry of Culture and Education, Nam ad Loknum Grunnskola, pp. 32-35.
in the Icelandic school system. Josephson notes at the time of his study that:

Although the Teacher Training School provides training, theoretical only, for primary school teachers who will teach in schools through the compulsory stages, a great number of graduates from the school have actually accepted positions as secondary school teachers because of a lack of qualified applicants.\textsuperscript{147}

So acute has been the shortage of teachers that during the 1968-69 school year, for example, it was noted that only 16.5 percent of the teachers of academic subjects in the high schools had full qualifications.\textsuperscript{148} In some cases the teachers knew little more than the students.\textsuperscript{149}

As the 1977-78 school year began, an article in Morgunbladid, the nation's largest daily, stated that persons with qualifications for teaching can receive higher wages in other fields with the result that a great shortage of teachers continues.\textsuperscript{150}

It is not uncommon for teachers, because of their low salaries, to hold another job. Unless teachers'

\begin{footnotes}
\item[147] Josephson, "Education in Iceland," p. 676.
\item[149] Ingolfur A. Thorkelsson, "Kennaramentun og Kennaraskortur" [Teacher Training and Teacher Shortage], Menntamal 43 No. 3 (1970): 100.
\item[150] "Afstada Rikisins til Menntadra Kennara Verdur ad Breytast" [The Position of the State Concerning Qualified Teachers Ought to Change], Morgunbladid, September 4, 1977, p. 2.
\end{footnotes}
salaries are brought more in line with those of persons in other fields with similar educational backgrounds, the situation is not likely to improve. Josephson's advice at the conclusion of his study is still valid today:

Good education is always expensive but rewarding. The nation as a whole needs to become aware of this fact, and with this in mind salaries should be determined on a far wider scale than is at present the case.\textsuperscript{151}

The Law Concerning the University College for Teacher Training contained the provision that it should be reexamined no later than two years after it took effect.\textsuperscript{152} Therefore, on November 29, 1972 Mangus Torfi Olafsson, the Minister of Culture and Education, appointed a committee whose membership included Dr. Broddi Johannesson, Rector of the University College for Teacher Training; Arni Gunnarsson, Director of the Ministry's Division of University and International Affairs; and Jonas Palsson, Principal of the Practice and Experimental School, to consider the 1971 legislation and suggest proposals for changes. In 1975 when Baldur Jonsson was appointed Rector of the University College for Teacher Training, he became a member of the committee; later that year two additional members were appointed to the committee.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{151} Josephson, "Education in Iceland," p. 740.
\textsuperscript{152} Snaevarr, 2:693.
\textsuperscript{153} Iceland, Althing, Frumvarp til Laga um Kennaraha-skola Islands [A Bill Concerning the University College for Teacher Training], 98th session, 1976-77, pp. 9-10.
The committee held fifty-nine meetings in which it considered teacher training in Iceland, as well as in other countries. Acting on the proposals of the committee, Vilhjalmur Hjalmarsson, the Minister of Culture and Education, presented to the ninety-eighth session of the Althing a Bill Concerning the University College for Teacher Training which contain the following new provisions:

1. The University College for Teaching Training shall be the main center for all scholarly research in education.

2. The school shall train all teachers at the compulsory and secondary level.

3. The school shall train teachers in specialized areas at the compulsory level.

4. The school shall establish a B.A. program in education, as well as programs leading to higher degrees.

5. The Ministry of Culture and Education may extend by one year the teacher education program.

6. The school shall be organized on a unit-credit system.

7. The Practice School for Teachers shall coordinate its work with the Division of Educational Research and Development of the Ministry of Culture and Education.154

This proposed legislation, currently being discussed by the Althing (as well as among teachers, other educators and the general public) would bring about major changes in the training of teachers and in educational research. The training of secondary school teachers and the conducting of

154 Ibid., p. 10.
educational research now taking place at the University of Iceland would be transferred to the University College for Teacher Training or at least would come under its supervision. The same would apply to other schools in the country training teachers in specialized areas.

The B.Ed. program, according to this bill, would require a total of 105 credits (30 in basic education core, 30 in an area of specialization and 45 electives). Needless to say, this provision allows considerable freedom in course selection. The B.A. program instituted at the University of Iceland in 1975, would also be transferred to the University College for Teacher Training. The bill also makes provision for study toward advanced degrees in education.

Higher Education

At present there are two institutions of higher education in Iceland—the University of Iceland (founded 1911) and the University College for Teacher Training (founded 1971 out of the Teacher Training School). The University of Iceland, organized from its conception and operating according to law as a research and teaching institution, has developed both in scope and depth. Original faculties have been extended and new ones added during these years. Currently there are eight faculties offering courses of study varying from three to seven or eight years leading to

155Snaevarr, 2:667.
the kandidat (candidatus), B.A. and B.S. degrees.

The Faculty of Theology (one of the original four faculties) offers a five year program in theology leading to the candidatus theologiae degree. During the first fifty years of the university, 294 students have studied in this area, of whom 209 have received degrees. The greater number of the graduates have gone on to become clergymen in Iceland. 156

The Faculty of Law (one of the original faculties) has a five year program leading to the candidatus juris degree. During the university's first fifty years, 815 students have studied law, and of these 436 have received their law degrees. 157

The Faculty of Medicine (one of the original faculties) has several programs. The program leading to the candidatus medicinae et chirurgiae degree (which allows one to practice medicine) is six or seven years long. The first part of the program in pharmacy is offered at the university, but the second part has to be taken abroad, with most students going to Denmark to complete their studies.

In 1973, as already noted, a Division of Nursing, offering a four year program toward the B.S. degree, was

157 Ibid., pp. 120, 123.
established within the Faculty of Medicine. This program has grown rapidly and currently there are eighty-six students enrolled in nursing studies.

The most recent program in the Faculty of Medicine is the one for medical technicians established in 1976. The course of study toward the B.S. degree is four years, with the first two years being taken at the university and the last two at various medical institutions. Currently there are eighteen students enrolled in the program.

For many years this faculty had the largest enrollment, though this is no longer true. During the first fifty years 1,174 students were enrolled in medicine, dentistry and pharmacy within the faculty, of whom 467 received degrees.

The Faculty of Philosophy (one of the original faculties) has grown considerably to include numerous programs leading to the B.A. and candidatus degrees. Originally instituted in 1942, the B.A. program has been expanded to include studies in the areas of Icelandic, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, English, German, French, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Russian, history, literature,

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159 Iceland, Ministry of Culture and Education, Nam ad Lokum Grunnskola, p. 45.

160 Jonsson, pp. 120, 123.
linguistics and philosophy. The length of study in these areas is three years, with an additional year of study required for preparation for teaching in these areas.

Beyond the B.A. program there is a two to three year course of study in Icelandic literature, linguistics and history, as well as in English, leading to the Kandidatsprof (candidatus magisterii).  

The Faculty of Social Studies, one of the newest at the university, offers courses of study lasting three years toward the B.A. degree in sociology, psychology, political science, education and library science.

The Faculty of Engineering and Science, originally established in 1945 as the Faculty of Engineering, has experienced tremendous growth, and at present its enrollment is second only to that of the Faculty of Philosophy.

Just prior to World War II there were only between forty and fifty technologists in the country (all trained elsewhere). At the close of the war a study revealed that the nation's needs for university educated technicians and

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161 Armann Snaevarr, "Um Haskola Islands" [The University of Iceland], Menntamal 34 (May-August 1961): 92; Iceland, Ministry of Culture and Education, Nam ad Loknum Grunnskola, p. 45.

162 Iceland, Ministry of Culture and Education, Nam ad Loknum Grunnskola, p. 45.

163 Ibid., p. 46.
scientists had increased so greatly that the current situation was most unsatisfactory. 164

The program instituted in 1945 covered the first part of the full engineering curriculum as taught at other Scandinavian technical universities. Graduates of the engineering program in Iceland, therefore, had to go abroad, mainly to Scandinavia, to complete their studies. In 1965 courses in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geology and geography were added to this faculty, mainly to train teachers for secondary schools. In view of this extension of instruction, the faculty was renamed the Faculty of Engineering and Science in 1969. 165

In 1970 new B.S. programs were initiated in engineering (four years) and in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geology and geography (three years). Concerning these new programs, Magnus Magnusson, a Professor of Physics at the university, writes:

The engineering degree will qualify graduates as general engineers in the fields of civil, mechanical and electrical engineering. A large number of the graduates are expected to go abroad for postgraduate or specialized studies. In addition to the four-year programme in civil, mechanical and electrical engineering there is a two year programme in engineering science and in chemical engineering. Students in these fields must go abroad to complete their studies. The B.S. degree in mathematics and the sciences is intended for future teachers below the university level, for training research assistants, students in these fields must go abroad to complete their studies. The B.S. degree in mathematics and the sciences is intended for future teachers below the university level, for training research assistants,
as a preparation for graduate studies, and as a general university education. A graduate programme within this faculty is not envisioned at the present time.166

This faculty which has already experienced much growth will be increasingly important in the future as industry is developed in Iceland and the need for engineers, technicians and scientists will undoubtedly increase.

The Faculty of Business Administration, which was formally established in 1962, grew out of the Division of Business Administration and Economics which was established within the Faculty of Law in 1941. This faculty offers a four year program leading to the candidatus oeconomiae degree, and is at present the fourth largest faculty in the university.167 Concerning this program, Josephson observes:

The curriculum in economics and commerce is much like that of the higher commercial schools in the other Scandinavian countries and Western Germany. Considerable emphasis has been placed on foreign language competency.168

The Faculty of Dentistry operated as a division of the Faculty of Medicine from 1945 to 1972 when it was organized as a separate faculty. The course of study is from six to seven years.169

166 Ibid., p. 324.
167 Iceland, Ministry of Culture and Education, Nam ad Loknum Grunnskola, p. 46.
169 Iceland, Ministry of Culture and Education, Nam ad Loknum Grunnskola, p. 46.
The University of Iceland has doctoral programs. For this degree no course work beyond the equivalent of a master's degree is required. The only requirement is a written dissertation which must be defended. Very few doctorates have been awarded by the university, but persons holding such degrees have the right to lecture at the university in their field of specialty. 170

Although the University of Iceland was conceived as a research as well as teaching institution, very little research was conducted there during the early years of its operation. The first laboratory, the University Laboratory for Bacteriology and Pathology, was established in 1917, but in 1934 it was moved into a new building of the State Hospital with which it has since been associated. 171

The University Research Institute established in 1934 was from the beginning only formally connected with the university, although it was conceived as a nucleus for a faculty of natural sciences. It consisted of three divisions for research in industry, fisheries and agriculture. In 1965 its formal connection with the university was finally severed when independent Applied Research Institutes were set up. By 1971 the last of these institutes moved out

170 Snaevarr, Lagasafn, 2:675.
171 Jonsson, pp. 183-86.
of the original Research Institute building on the university campus. 172

In 1945 the Institute of Experimental Pathology was established under the aegis of the Faculty of Medicine to pursue projects primarily in animal pathology and virology. 173

In 1957 a Physics Laboratory was set up in the university and in 1964 the University Computing Center was established with a small computer. 174

The University Science Institute was established in 1966 as an independent division within the university and occupies a building which had been erected with the support of the United States Government which had donated a sum of money for this purpose on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the university. This institute is the main center for research in oceanic and climatological conditions in Iceland. In 1972 the Computing Center was incorporated into the Science Institute which in addition has divisions of mathematics, physics, chemistry and geophysics. 175

Research in Icelandic language, literature and history is carried on in the Faculty of Philosophy. Part of this research is involved with the compiling of a dictionary

172 Magnusson, p. 326.


174 Magnusson, p. 326. 175 Ibid.
of the Icelandic Language from 1540 which will eventually be published in a multi-volume set. Funds for this project were provided by the Danish-Icelandic Fund established as part of the 1918 Act of Union. 176

One of the newest and most important research institutions in the area of Icelandic culture is the Manuscript Institute of the University of Iceland which was established in 1969 by the Law Concerning the Manuscript Institute of Iceland. 177 The main provisions of this law are as follows:

"1. The work of the Manuscript Institute of Iceland is to assist in increasing our knowledge of Icelandic literature, language and history, past and present, by scholarly research and the publication of Icelandic manuscripts and works relating to them.

"2. A committee composed of three university professors, the director of the National Library of Iceland, the director of the National Archives of Iceland, the director of the National Museum of Iceland and the director of the Manuscript Institute of Iceland has administration of the Manuscript Institute of Iceland.

"3. Divisions within the Manuscript Institute of Iceland may be established. The main division shall have charge of the research and the publication of the manuscripts and works about them.

"4. The Director of the Manuscript Institute of Iceland shall be a professor in the Faculty of Philosophy. The staff of the Institute shall include specialists in the field of Icelandic studies.

176 Snaevarr, "Um Haskola Islands," p. 93.
177 Snaevarr, Lagasafn, 2:678-79.
"5. The Ministry of Culture and Education may issue additional regulations concerning the Manuscript Institute of Iceland."\textsuperscript{178}

In 1969 a large building on the university campus was completed to house the Manuscript Institute of Iceland and the manuscripts which later arrived have been housed there. The University of Iceland, as Bjarni Benediktsson and others envisioned, has finally become the world's main center for scholarly research in Icelandic literature, language and culture. Concerning this work, Dr. Jonas Kristjansson, the Director of the Manuscript Institute of Iceland, has written:

The Icelandic sagas and Eddic poems are a notable chapter on the history of world culture, and the manuscripts that preserve this literature the most treasured heritage of the Icelandic people. They have therefore no more solemn duty than to guard this heritage faithfully and to bring forth its fruits in new works.\textsuperscript{179}

Other research in the area of Icelandic studies is carried out by the Icelandic Literary Society. Concerning this society which has been active in promoting such studies since its founding in 1816, Dr. Vilhjalmur Ludviksson, a chemical engineer, writes:

The annual periodical of the society, Skirnir, contains articles on various matters of general cultural interest, literary and historical essays, reviews and so forth. It has been published regularly since its foundation and is thus the oldest literary journal with

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.

an unbroken history in any of the Nordic countries. The Society also publishes learned monographs and editions, chiefly in the field of Icelandic literature and history.\textsuperscript{180}

The Icelandic Patriot's Society (founded 1871), the Icelandic Archaeological Society (founded 1879), the Icelandic Natural History Society (founded 1899), the Icelandic Historical Society (founded 1902) and the Icelandic Early Text Society (founded 1928) all publish original monographs in various fields relating to Iceland. The Icelandic Early Texts Society, for example, has (as of 1974) published sixteen volumes of a projected thirty-five volume scholarly edition of the Icelandic classics.\textsuperscript{181}

The Cultural Fund (founded 1928) and the Fund for the Promotion of Science and Humanitites (established in 1957 by an act of the Althing) are both active in promoting research and in providing grants and scholarships for this purpose. The Cultural Fund, one of the biggest publishing concerns in Iceland, for example, encourages the study of Iceland's nature, chiefly by granting scholarships and assisting with the publication of books in this field. It also provides scholarships and grants to aid music and the fine arts of Iceland.\textsuperscript{182}

Other types of basic and applied research are carried

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., p. 366. \textsuperscript{182} Ibid., p. 364.
out by national research and developmental organizations, some of which maintain ties with the university. All such research in Iceland is coordinated by the National Research Council (Rannsoknarad Rikisins), established by the 1965 Act Concerning Applied Research. The function of the council, a government body responsible to the Ministry of Culture and Education and composed of representatives from the University of Iceland and development and research organizations, according to Vilhalmur Ludviksson, is:

... to advise the government on matters of scientific and technological development, to strengthen the total research effort, to promote international cooperation in research and to initiate work in areas where research effort is lacking.\textsuperscript{183}

Entrance to the University of Iceland, according to law, is open to anyone who has a matriculation certificate (studentsprof) from any school in Iceland which has been authorized to grant such a certificate. Additional entrance requirements, however, may be established by the various faculties for admission to their programs.\textsuperscript{184} There is no numerous clausus restricting the number of students who may attend the university. As the number of secondary schools authorized to grant the matriculation certificate and the population continue to increase, enrollments at the University of Iceland will also increase. The Breidholt Comprehensive High School (established in 1975) will be awarding its first matriculation certificates in 1979 to the first

\textsuperscript{183}Ibid., p. 363. \textsuperscript{184}Snaevarr, Lagasafn, 2:672-73.
group of students who have completed their four years of study and requirements for this certificate. When the Bill Concerning Secondary Education is passed, there will be, in addition to the schools presently granting the matriculation certificate, other secondary schools which will prepare students for entrance to the university.

Ten years ago Armann Snaevarr, Rector of the University of Iceland, noted that 80 percent of the students who graduated from the grammar schools, and the very few other schools which granted the matriculation certificate went on to attend the University of Iceland. In 1973 statistics show that 18.6 percent of the nineteen year old age group in Iceland received the matriculation certificate and projections indicate that by 1981 this figure will increase to 25 percent. The already increasing enrollment at the University of Iceland is expected to reach over 3,200 by 1981.

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186 The University of Iceland, Reykjavik, "Tengsl Haskola Islands vid Adra Skola" [The Relationship of the University of Iceland with Other Schools] (Reykjavik: Haskola Islands, 1976), p. F.3. (Mimeographed.)

187 See Table 14.

188 The University of Iceland, Reykjavik, "Tengsl Haskola Islands vid Adra Skola," p. F3.2.
### TABLE 14

NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND, 1911-1977

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty of Theology</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1977</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Medicine</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technicians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Philosophy</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>748</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Social Studies</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>294</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Engineering and Science</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>538</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Business Administration</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>374</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Dentistry</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>1,928</td>
<td>2,818</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the anticipated increase in enrollment and the fact that students will be entering the University of Iceland from a greater variety of secondary schools and with different preparations than was provided in the traditional grammar schools, the university felt the need to make a thorough study of preparatory training for university entrance and the possibilities of employment for persons holding university degrees.

On December 22, 1972 the Vice Chairman of the University Council appointed a committee, known as the Tengsl-anefnd (The Committee on the Relationship of the University of Iceland with Other Schools) to consider these problems and to suggest proposals. Appointed to the committee were representatives from all the faculties, as well as two representatives from the Student Council of the university. During 1973 and 1974 the committee met forty-three times and the following year submitted a lengthy and comprehensive report, "Tengsl Haskola Islands vid Adra Skola" (The Relationship of the University of Iceland with Other Schools). In summary the committee suggested that university preparation be equivalent to that provided for the traditional matriculation certificate and consist of at least thirteen years of schooling from age seven. More specifically the committee made numerous suggestions concerning preparatory

\[189\text{Ibid., p. 8.}\]
training for entrance to the various faculties. For example, the committee suggested that a knowledge of German is more important than French for study in numerous areas, among them medicine, pharmacy, psychology, technology and the sciences.\textsuperscript{190} The study also revealed that in almost all areas of study at the university, the textbooks most frequently used were written in English.\textsuperscript{191}

During recent years a debate has centered on whether the Icelandic system of education is attempting too much by allowing an increasing number of students to obtain university degrees in relation to society's needs.\textsuperscript{192} The committee's report acknowledges that too many students are preparing for some fields, but not enough students are preparing for other fields which include, as might be expected, teachers of mathematics, physics and chemistry in the secondary schools.\textsuperscript{193}

The University of Iceland, although under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and Education has always had a considerable degree of autonomy. The administration of the university, according to the Law Concerning the

\textsuperscript{190}Ibid., p. 15.
\textsuperscript{191}Ibid., p. F.1.11.
\textsuperscript{192}"Too Many Holding University Degrees?" \textit{Atlantica and Iceland Review, Supplement,} No. 2 (1974): 7.
\textsuperscript{193}The University of Iceland, Reykjavik, "Tengsl Haskolans vid Adra Skola," p. F.4.10.
University of Iceland, is vested in the Rector, the University Council and the Dean of Administration.\textsuperscript{194}

The Rector is elected from among the professors of the university for a term of three years (and is permitted to be re-elected) by the full time academic staff and by representatives of the student body. He is responsible for the overall management of the university and also functions as its chief representative. The University Council, composed of the Deans of the Faculties, one representative of the academic staff other than the professors and two representatives of the student body, is responsible for general matters. The Dean of Administration has charge of the daily operations of the university.\textsuperscript{195} Students have representation in all bodies of the university and from the beginning have had considerable voice in the operations of the university.

The individual faculties have considerable freedom in teaching, setting admission standards and establishing examinations. The basic administrative unit for each faculty is the faculty council composed of the permanent staff and two student representatives. The professors of each faculty elect a Dean who, along with other duties,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{194} Snaevarr, Lagasafn, 2:667.
  \item \textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 2:268-69; Magnusson, p. 327; The International Encyclopedia of Higher Education, 5:2106.
\end{itemize}
convenes the faculty council. 196 Concerning the autonomy of the faculties, it has been said that the University of Iceland is many schools under one administration. 197

The teaching staff of the University of Iceland is divided into the ranks of professor, docent, lecturer (full time, part time and visiting). Professors are appointed by the President of Iceland on the recommendation of a selection committee composed of specialists in the field concerned. Docents and lecturers are appointed by the Ministry of Culture and Education. 198 Most of the visiting lecturers are from other countries and have short time appointments.

Concerning the teaching staff, the following is recorded:

Permanent teaching staff at the university level must be Icelandic citizens; foreign instructors may receive teaching appointments on a yearly basis. The Icelandic degree required to instruct at the tertiary level is the candidatus; however, some teaching staff hold doctoral degrees from foreign universities. All staff in higher education institutions are civil servants and their salary is determined by a wage agreement between the Association of Graduate Civil Servants and the Ministry of Finance. 199

The teaching staff has, of course, increased along with the student enrollment. When the University of Iceland opened in 1911 there were only eleven teachers. 200

199 The International Yearbook of Higher Education, 5:2107.
200 Magnusson, p. 325.
During the 1976-77 academic year there were 183 full time teachers and 273 part time teachers. 201

The State treasury, as well as other sources provide the finances for the operation of the university. In 1934 the university was granted permission to operate a national lottery and in 1941 the university movie theater was opened. 202 Currently the university is engaged in a vast building program designed to increase facilities by 400 percent by 1980. 203 Much money has been directed to buildings recently completed or in the process of construction. Last year construction began on a new facility to house the National Library of Iceland and the University of Iceland Library which for many years had operated in limited quarters. Although the two libraries will share the same building, their collections will remain distinct.

Because a number of subjects are not taught at the University of Iceland, either at the basic level or more often at the advanced level, a considerable number of students go abroad to study, usually to the other Scandinavian countries, The Federal Republic of Germany or the United Nations. 204


States. Indeed, "Iceland encourages university students to spend a period abroad in foreign countries in order to broaden their cultural and educational horizons."\textsuperscript{204} This, of course, follows a long tradition going back to the time of the first Icelandic republic when Icelanders went abroad to study. The views of Armann Snaevarr, a former Rector of the University of Iceland, although directed to the contemporary situation, could well have been written a thousand years ago:

The benefits and influences from foreign countries continually reach Iceland because of the students who study abroad. It is a clear and plain advantage for our society that such a great number of our students have studied abroad.\textsuperscript{205}

A number of funds provide the means for Icelandic students to study abroad. One of the most important of them is the Thor Thors Memorial Fund (currently totaling $200,000) which also provides stipends for American students to study in Iceland. Since it was established in 1965 in memory of one of Iceland's ambassadors to the United States, nearly one hundred young American and Icelandic students have been recipients of support from the fund.\textsuperscript{206}

\textsuperscript{204} Ibid., 5:2108.

\textsuperscript{205} Snaevarr, "Hugleidingar um Haskola Islands a Fullveldisafmaeli," pp. 19-20.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND THE CULTURAL FUTURE

Throughout Iceland's long history education in one form or another has existed. The early settlers of Iceland brought with them a cultural heritage which they preserved and renewed in the republic they established in 930. After the adoption of the Christian religion in 1000, cathedral schools were established at the two episcopates--Skalholt and Holar which remained the main centers of learning until the close of the eighteenth century. Other schools were maintained in the monasteries and other places, as well as in the homes of Iceland. During the early centuries Icelanders traveled widely abroad and often studied at European centers of education. The learning they brought back was assimilated in the Icelandic context.

The ancient Icelandic literature--the sagas, heroic poems and ballads, as well as later the "Passion Hymns" of Hallgrímur Petursson (1614-1674) and the sermons of Bishop Jon Vidalin (1666-1720)--were all written in the vernacular, and became the possession of all people in the country. Along with the Icelandic language, which is still largely preserved in its original form, these works became the best
and often only source of education for the common people.

Because of this literary heritage shared by all Icelanders, literacy remained unusually high, despite centuries of foreign domination, isolation, pestilence, poverty, plagues and the relentless struggle against the powerful forces of nature when the very existence of the nation seemed in jeopardy.

After the devastating calamities of the eighteenth century (among them the largest volcanic eruption anywhere in recorded history), Iceland with a population of less than 50,000 began its struggle for independence under the leadership of Jon Sigurdsson (1811-1879). Awakened by the currents of romanticism and nationalism and inspired by their ancient cultural heritage, the Icelanders looked forward to the time that they might once again become a distinct nation. Indeed, their very claims for independence were based on the fact that they were not a part of the Danish nation because they had always maintained their own culture and language.

During the national awakening of the nineteenth century Jon Sigurdsson and others envisioned and laid plans for schools which even included a university. Despite the fact that throughout the nineteenth century Iceland was one of the poorest countries in Europe, schools were established which included a theological seminary (1847), a medical college (1876) and a law school (1908).
On the occasion of the thousandth anniversary (1874) of the settlement of Iceland, King Christian IX of Denmark traveled to Iceland and presented the country with a constitution. In 1904 home rule was achieved and a native Icelander was appointed prime minister. In 1918 Iceland was recognized as a sovereign state united with Denmark by a common king. Finally in 1944 the Republic of Iceland was established at Thingvellir where the first Icelandic republic had been established over a thousand years earlier in 930.

Changes in Icelandic society have been so rapid that people living today who witnessed the establishment of the Icelandic republic in 1944 have probably seen more profound and far reaching changes than all the generations since the time Iceland was settled. During the twentieth century an almost entirely rural society has become largely urban, with half the population living in Reykjavik and its environs. An almost entirely agricultural economy has been largely replaced by a modern fishing industry. Within very recent years there has been a gradual development of industry which is likely to continue at an ever increasing pace. During this short time one of the poorest nations in the world has experienced prosperity to the extent that it now ranks among the nations having the highest standards of living in the world.

Yet much of the old remains, perhaps more so in
Iceland than in most nations. The most important inheritance and one that is closely guarded is the language, little changed since the days Iceland was settled. In fact, it is much more closely guarded by law and scholarly research and publication than ever before. One of the most important projects, the compiling of a multi-volume dictionary of the Icelandic language since 1540, is taking place at the University of Iceland. Nearly sixty years ago the eminent Icelandic scholar and bibliographer, Halldor Hermannsson, envisioned this development:

He believed that many national institutions in Iceland (and presumably in the first instance the new university) would help preserve and augment the traditions of the country and instill Icelanders with a reverence for their culture and a love of their language, which he identified as their "most precious possession" —reason enough for the Icelanders to strive to preserve it.¹

Like the old Icelandic republic the modern republic is an aristo-democracy where the values of independence and self regard are still held in high esteem in a yet classless society. The poet, the creative artist, the scholar and the man of action are still held in high regard.

After long centuries of cultural isolation, during which time a strong literary culture was developed, Iceland has suddenly come to experience increasing contact with the world and outside cultural influences. As a result contem-

porary Icelandic culture is much more varied than before. Icelanders are alert to the changing world in which they live and they are not afraid to borrow ideas and obtain knowledge from abroad as they did a thousand years ago. One of the eminent historians of Scandinavia writes:

Cultural stability in the North is deeply rooted in time. Survival demands change, yet people cling to the past even as they reach out for the future. Even toward the end of the twentieth century Scandinavia retains institutions hallowed by time yet in other ways leads the van along the speedway to change. On their age-old foundation stones they have built new structures to meet the demands of the individual and society. . . . And everything is still in flux as they search and experiment.2

Although directed to the whole of Scandinavia, Dr. Scott's words apply especially to Iceland where much of the old is still preserved and much of the new has been introduced very recently. It is in Iceland that the old and new meet to a greater degree than perhaps anywhere else in the world.

The many changes which have taken place in Iceland include the area of education. During this century the educational system of Iceland has greatly expanded and at present nearly one-fourth of the nation's population is under some form of instruction. About 20 percent of the national budget is currently being allocated to education. In addition to the general primary (compulsory) and

secondary schools, there are specialized schools in agriculture, nautical training, engineering, commerce, trade, teacher education, trade education, technology, nursing, art and music, as well as the University of Iceland.

Under the leadership of Dr. Gudmundur Finnboðason (1873-1944) and the Icelandic Teachers Association (founded 1889), as well as others, public education was made compulsory from age ten to fourteen in 1907 and a year later the Teacher Training School was opened in Reykjavik. From this time on the school gradually replaced the home as the center of education. Legislation enacted in 1936, 1946 and 1974 has further extended the educational system and the period of compulsory education.

Operating within a highly centralized educational system, headed by the Ministry of Culture and Education, the schools of Iceland remained traditional and conservative. For many years streaming of students took place at a fairly early age. The only way to higher education--at the University of Iceland or abroad--was by way of the gymnasium. Conservative values also prevailed in the curricula of the various schools and the training of teachers. As changes took place in Icelandic society, especially after World War II, educators, both within the Ministry of Culture and Education and in the schools, felt the need to change the educational system and bring it up-to-date to meet the needs of a rapidly developing and changing society.
In 1974 major legislation was enacted which changed the entire educational system. Education was made compulsory to age sixteen. By this legislation the school system was divided into three stages: compulsory education (to age sixteen), secondary education and higher education. Streaming is being eliminated and educational opportunities are being made equally available to everyone. Further educational opportunities are being made available in many areas of study. Psychological and counseling services, as well as libraries, are being expanded. Much of what is proposed in the 1974 legislation will, however, take ten years to implement.

A bill currently before the Althing proposes major and far reaching changes at the secondary level of education. One of the major provisions of the bill is to coordinate all secondary education throughout the country into eight main areas of study--grammar school, agricultural, health, domestic science, art, technological and trade, teacher-training and commercial education. Each area would provide for further education, even at the university.

Much of what this bill proposes has, in fact, already been put into operation with the recent development of the comprehensive school. The first such school was established in 1975 in Reykjavik as an experimental school by special legislation enacted by the Althing. Already there are four such schools in operation in other parts of
the country, and many educators see this as one of the major educational developments of the decade.

Teacher training has very recently undergone considerable change. The institution for teacher training was raised to university status in 1972 with the intent that all teacher training and educational research, as well as in-service training for teachers, will take place there. Currently a bill before the Althing proposes further changes, among them programs at the University College for Teacher Training leading to advance degrees as programs at this level are developed.

Pre-school education, almost unknown in Iceland a short time ago, has become increasingly important and larger numbers of children each year are enrolled in such schools. At the other end, adult education is being developed and pending legislation intends to involve the educational system, as well as business and industry, in the program.

Although the folk school movement never gained much momentum in Iceland, a recent development has been the establishing of such a school at Skalholt, the ancient center of religion and learning, to promote the study of the Christian religion and the cultural heritage of Iceland. Originally operated and financed by the State Lutheran Church of Iceland, the school has come under the control of
the Ministry of Culture and Education only recently and is now financed by that Ministry.

The University of Iceland which was established in 1911 as a teaching and research institution was hampered by inadequate facilities during the first three decades of its existence. It has greatly expanded, especially since World War II, both in scope and size. New programs, such as a B.A. program in 1942, have been introduced and enrollment has increased considerably. Especially significant are new programs in the sciences and business.

With the establishment of the Manuscript Institute in 1969 and the return of the ancient Icelandic manuscripts from Denmark, the University of Iceland has become the world's main center for Icelandic studies.

Much of these recent developments in education, such as the comprehensive high school, the B.A. program at the university and the unit credit system, have been influenced from abroad. Almost ten years ago, Fraser and Josephson noted that Iceland

... requires more than ever before the cultural and scientific contacts of a greater worldwide community of educators and scholars. It is to this task of modernizing and to the task of emulating and surpassing the best of educational models from Europe and elsewhere that her educators are now turning [italics mine].

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This task of "surpassing the best of educational models" is not only a challenge to Icelandic educators, but it is an example of the deeply ingrained striving for excellence which is so much a part of the Icelandic make-up, and which Sigurdur Magnusson maintains is "... the supreme ideal of Icelandic culture. ..."4 Elaborating on this striving for excellence, Magnusson writes:

This extreme concern with excellence may partly be rooted in a feeling of inadequacy on the part of a small, materially poor and isolated nation, but it is also fostered and reinforced by pride in what the nation has accomplished against heavy odds.

The yearning for excellence is closely related to an uncommonly keen sense of history in the Icelanders. They live in the past more than most people and consequently feel a strong urge to make "history" themselves, to achieve something worth remembering and recording for future generations.5

Twenty-five years ago, Asgeir Asgeirsson, the President of Iceland and an eminent educator who had been an influential Commissioner of Education, noted:

The school, along with the home and the church, takes upon itself the task of passing on to the generation now growing up the cultural heritage of the nation.6

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5 Ibid.
6 Asgeir Asgeirsson, "Avarp Forset\xa Islanda a Aldar-afmaeli Barnaskolans a Eyrarbakka og Stokkseyri" [An Address by the President of Iceland on the Occasion of the Centenary of the Primary School at Eyrarbakki and Stokkseyri], Menntamal 25 (November-December 1952): 116.
Now almost a generation later, with the waning influence of the home and the church, the school almost alone has the task of passing on the cultural heritage of the nation while at the same time it also has the task of preparing its students for life and work in a modern democratic and ever increasing technological society. Fraser and Josephson have noted:

The task--a perennial one--still is with Icelanders as how they best can preserve their unique cultural heritage and yet fully integrate into both a Scandinavian-European community and into a worldwide community of scientific and educational progression. The changing school curriculum and the multicultural education of first her teachers and, in turn, her children will offer solutions to the ever-present problem of social and cultural isolation and ethnocentrism. The schools are striving to develop and integrate this awareness of both the micro-Icelandic world and the world which lies around the island community.7

As Iceland continues to develop industry based on the vast power resources which are still virtually untapped, there will be an increasing need for knowledge, especially in science and technology. This need will in turn demand increasing contact and closer cooperation with other nations and the development of Iceland's own educational system. Gylfi Th. Gislason, who held the office of Minister of Culture and Education longer than any other, and during a period of rapid change, has observed that in the area of social development:

7 Fraser and Josephson, p. 389.
The most important steps that have to be taken . . . are in the field of education and public health. Not only can this be done, but it must in fact be done on the basis of the existing national culture, though in many aspects doubtless needs to be adjusted to modern viewpoints.\textsuperscript{8}

In the future education will be of increasing importance in preparing the nation for technological and industrial development, in fostering the evolution of an ever-growing multi-culture and in preserving and renewing the ancient Icelandic culture.

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Miscellaneous


APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGY
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>874</td>
<td>Ingolfur Arnarson, the first permanent settler, arrived in Iceland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>874-930</td>
<td>The period of colonization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>930</td>
<td>The Althing founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>930-1030</td>
<td>The Saga period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>930-1264</td>
<td>The period of the Icelandic republic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Christianity accepted by the Althing as the religion of Iceland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1004</td>
<td>The first recorded eruption of Hekla.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1030-1120</td>
<td>The period of peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1056</td>
<td>Isleifur Gissurarson became Bishop of Skalholt and shortly after founded a school there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1076</td>
<td>A school founded at Oddi by Saemundur Sigfusson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1082</td>
<td>Gissur Isleifsson became Bishop of Skalholt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cl1096</td>
<td>A system of tithing adopted in Iceland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td>A school founded at Haukdalur by Teitur Isleifsson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1106</td>
<td>Jon Ogmundarson became Bishop of Holar and shortly after founded a school there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1120-1230</td>
<td>The writing age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1133</td>
<td>Thingeyrarklaustur, the first monastery, founded in Iceland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cl1155</td>
<td>A monastery, Thverarklaustur, was founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1172</td>
<td>A monastery was founded on the island of Flatey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The monastery at Flatey was moved and re-established at Helgafell and known as Helgafellklaustur.

The first nunnery, Kirkjubaejarklaustur, was founded.

The school at Oddi was discontinued.

The school at Holar was closed due to a lack of funds.

A monastery, Videyjarklaustur, was founded.

Sturlung period, named after the powerful family of Sturlung.

The school at Skalholt was closed due to a lack of funds.

The school at Holar was only partially operated.

Eruption of Oraefajokull.

Iceland came under the rule of the King of Norway under the agreement known as the Gamli Sattmal.

The school at Holar was reestablished.

An ordinance was issued requiring all children seven years and older to learn the Confession of Faith, Ave Maria and the Lord's Prayer.

A nunnery, Reynistadaklaustur, was founded.

A monastery, Modruvallaklaustur, was founded.

Eruption of Hekla.

Hundreds of people died as a result of epidemics.

The Cathedral Church at Skalholt was destroyed by fire.

Many farms were destroyed by volcanic eruptions.
Volcanic eruptions and earthquakes were reported.

Earthquakes in southern Iceland destroyed many farms and killed many people.

The school at Holar was closed due to a lack of funds.

Hekla erupted, destroying many horses, sheep and cattle.

Trolladyngja erupted and destroyed a whole district. This was followed by a severely cold winter and cattle disease.

Iceland along with Norway came under Danish rule.

Hekla erupted.

During this period very little was recorded concerning schools and education in Iceland.

The Union of Kalmar.

The Black Death in Iceland, causing the death of at least one-third of the population.

The school at Skalholt was reestablished by Bishop Stafan Jonsson.

The school at Holar was in full operation.

The school at Skalholt was discontinued.

The school at Holar was discontinued.

Ogmundur Palsson, the last Catholic Bishop of Skalholt.

Jon Arason, the last Catholic Bishop of Holar.

The first printing press was established at Holar by Bishop Jon Arason.

King Christian III of Denmark approved the Lutheran creed for Iceland, but it was not accepted by the Icelanders.
The New Testament was translated into Icelandic by Oddur Gottskalsson and printed in Denmark.

King Christian III of Denmark issued a decree that all children in Iceland should learn to read, that two grammar schools be established and that three schools for children be established at monasteries in the Skalholt diocese. This decree was not put into effect.

Bishop Jon Arason and two of his sons were beheaded at Skalholt. The Reformation was completed in Iceland.

The schools at Skalholt and Holar were reestablished by royal decree to train men for the Lutheran Ministry.

Gudbrandur Thorlaksson (1541-1627) Bishop of Holar.

King Frederick II ordered deacons in the Holar bishopric to teach children Luther's Shorter Cathechism.

The Bible in Icelandic printed at Holar.

Luther's Shorter Cathechism was printed in Iceland for the first time.

Luther's Larger Cathechism was printed in Iceland for the first time.

Hallgrimur Petursson, writer of the Passiusalmar (Hymns on the Passion).

Volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.

Reoccurrence of volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.

Algerian pirate raid the coast of Iceland and the Westmann Islands.

King Christian IV of Denmark issued an ordinance that ministers are obligated to visit homes and instruct children in reading, writing and arithmetic when preparing them for confirmation.
1636-1637 Eruption of Hekla.

1639-1674 Brynjolfur Sveinsson (1605-1675) Bishop of Skalholt.

1655 The first elementary reading book in Icelandic, *Eitt Litid Stafrofskver Fyrar Born og Unge­menne*, was published.

1662 King Frederick III of Denmark proclaimed absolute hereditary monarch.

1674-1675 About 2,500 people died of hunger and sickness in northeastern Iceland.

1693 Hekla erupted.

1696 Severely cold winter.

1697-1759 Jon Thorkelsson, educator.

1698-1720 Jon Vidalin (1666-1720) Bishop of Skalholt.

1707 Smallpox epidemic killed one-third of the population of Iceland.

1717 Bishop Steinn Jonsson and Bishop Jon Vidalin proposed in a letter to the Danish government that one school be established in each district to teach poor children to read.

1727 Oraefajokull eruption.

1728 The great fire of Copenhagen destroyed many early books in Icelandic.

1732 Earthquakes were reported in several places.

1736 Jon Thorkelsson went to Denmark to discuss educational problems in Iceland.

1736 Bishop Jon Arnason proposed that a primary school be established in each district in Iceland.

1736 King Christian VI of Denmark issued an ordinance concerning the confirmation of youth.

1738 King Christian VI of Denmark ordered that *Sannleikur Gudshaedslunnar* be used as a textbook for teaching Christian doctrine in Iceland.
1740 Halldor Brynjolfsson proposed that a school be established in the district of Snaefells­sysla.

1741-1745 A survey of educational conditions in Iceland was made by Ludvig Harboe and Jon Thorkelsson by order of King Christian VI of Denmark.

1742 The textbook, Sannleikur Gudshraedslunnar, was printed in Iceland for the first time.

1744 An ordinance was issued concerning Christianity and the confirmation of youth in Iceland.

1745 The first primary school in Iceland was founded on the Westmann Islands and remained in operation for fifteen years.

1746 An ordinance was issued requiring ministers to visit regularly all homes in Iceland.

1749 An ordinance concerning the teaching of reading was issued.

1755 Katla eruption which destroyed many farms.

1757 Approximately 9,000 died of hunger and disease.

1759 Jon Thorkelsson died, leaving all his estate for the establishment of an educational fund, known as the Thorkilliis sjodur.

1759 An ordinance concerning the confirmation of youth was issued.

1760 An ordinance concerning the teaching of reading was issued.

1761 Bishop Finnur Jonsson and Sheriff Magnus Gislason propose the establishing of a monotorial school.

1771 Rector Bjarni Jonsson of Skalholt suggested that the Icelandic language be replaced by the Danish language.

1773 The first Icelandic periodical, Klaustur­posturinn, was issued.

1779 A spelling book, Lijted Stafrofs Kver med Catechismo, was published at Holar.
1779 The Icelandic Learned Society (Hid Islenzka Laerdomsfelagid) was founded in Copenhagen by Icelanders under the leadership of Jon Eiriksson.

1782 A spelling book was published at Hrappsey.

1783 Skaptajokull eruption, the greatest in the world in recorded history, which resulted in the death of 9,000 due to hunger and disease.

1785 The school building at Skalholt was closed following an earthquake.

1785 King Christian VII of Denmark issued an ordinance that the school at Skalholt be moved to Reykjavik.

1786 A school, known as Holavallaskoli, was founded in Reykjavik.

1787 The Danish trade monopoly was partially lifted, allowing all Danish merchants to trade with Iceland.

1790 King Christian VII of Denmark issued an ordinance concerning the instruction of children.

1791 A primary boarding school, known as the Hausastadaskoli, was founded and financed from the Thorkilliis Fund.

1792 Sheriff Stefan Thorarensen founded a library and reading societies in the northern regions of Iceland.

1794 The Reverend Markus Magnusson founded a library and reading societies in the southern regions of Iceland.

1794 The Society for Enlightenment (Landsuppfraed- ingarfelagid) was founded by Bishop Hannes Finnsson and Justice Magnus Stephensen.

1795 King Christian VII of Denmark issued an ordinance that a second textbook could be used for the instruction of Christian religion. This book was generally known as "Balle."
1798 King Christian VII of Denmark issued an ordinance that made "Balle" the only textbook for teaching Christian religion in Iceland.

1798 The Althing was moved to Reykjavik from Thingvellir.

1799 A committee was appointed to investigate school and church affairs in Iceland.

1800 The Althing was abolished by royal decree and replaced by a Supreme Court.

1801 The schools of Holar and Skalholt were merged with the Holavallaskoli in Reykjavik.

1804 The Holavallaskoli was closed due to lack of funds and the poor condition of the school building.

1804-1805 The only school operating in Iceland at this time was the Hausastadaskoli with only twelve students.

1805 A Latin Grammar School was founded at Bessastadir which operated about forty years.

1811-1879 Jon Sigurdsson, the most important figure in Iceland's struggle for independence.

1811 A spelling book, Stafrofs-Tabla, was published.

1812 The Hausastadaskoli was closed, leaving Iceland without any primary school.

1816 The Icelandic Literary Society (Hid Islenzka Bokmenntafelag) was founded by Rasmus Christian Rask.

1817 A spelling book, Nytilegt Barna-Gull eda Stofunar og Lestur, was published in Iceland.

1818 The National Library (Landsbokasafnid) was founded in Reykjavik.

1825 The Royal Anthropological Society (Fornfraedafelagid) was founded in Denmark and Iceland.

1827 King Christian VII of Denmark issued an ordinance concerning the confirmation of youth.
1830 Baldwin Einarsson wrote a pamphlet in Danish on education in Iceland.


1830 A spelling book, Einfaldast Stofunar--Visir fyrir Almuga, was published in Iceland.

1833 A library and reading society was founded on the island of Flatey in Breidafjordur.

1835 A cultural periodical, Fjolnir, was founded by four Icelanders in Copenhagen.

1840 Petur Gudjonsson (1812-1877), the first teacher-trained Icelander, returned to Iceland after completing studies in Denmark.

1841 A political periodical, Ny Felagisrit, was founded by Jon Sigurdsson.

1842 Jon Sigurdsson made major proposals for the improvement of education in Iceland.

1843 The Althing was reestablished in Reykjavik, having only advisory power.

1845 The Althing met for the first time in Reykjavik.

1845 Jon Sigurdsson proposed that a university be established in Iceland.

1846 The Latin Grammar School was moved from Bessastadir to Reykjavik.

1847 A theological seminary was founded in Reykjavik.

1852 A primary school was established at Eyrarbakka.

1853 A bill was submitted to the Althing concerning the establishing of primary schools in Reykjavik and other parts of the country, uniform regulations for education throughout the country and the printing and distribution of textbooks.

1854 The Danish trade monopoly was abolished.

1855 Freedom of the press was granted by law.
1857 A spelling book for the blind was published at Akureyri.

1859 A bill to establish a primary school in Reykjavik was passed by the Althing.

1862 A public primary school was founded in Reykjavik.

1863 The National Museum (Thjodminjasafnid) was founded in Reykjavik.

1869 The Icelandic Patriots' Society (Hid Islenzka Thjodvinafelag), a cultural organization, was founded in Reykjavik.

1870 A primary school was founded at Akureyri.

1872 A primary school was founded at Gardahreppur.

1872 A primary school was founded at Brunnstadir.

1872 The Althing passed a bill concerning the education of deaf-mutes.

1873-1944 Gudmundur Finnbogason, early educational leader and advocate of compulsory education.

1873 A bill was submitted to the Althing to establish a navigational school in Reykjavik.

1873 Trade instruction began in Reykjavik.

1874 The millenium of the settlement of Iceland was celebrated at which time King Christian IX of Denmark visited Iceland and presented Iceland with a constitution.

1874 A primary school was established at Isafjordur.

1874 A school for young women (Kvennaskolinn) was founded in Reykjavik.

1875 Eruption of Askja.

1876 A medical college was founded in Reykjavik.

1877 The Flensborg School was founded in Hafnafjordur.
1878 A textbook in Christian doctrine for children and youth, Kristlegur Barnlaerdomur, was published.

1878 The first financial appropriations for primary education were made by the Althing.

1879 A bill concerning secondary education was passed by the Althing.

1879 The Icelandic Archaeological Society (Hid Iselnzka Fornleifafelagid) was founded.

1879 Bills on primary and secondary education were submitted to the Althing.

1880 A secondary school was established at Modruvollur.

1880 The Althing passed a primary education bill making instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic and religion mandatory for all primary schools.

1880 An agricultural school was established at Olafsdal in Dalasysla which operated until 1907.

1881 Benedikt Sveinsson submitted a bill to the Althing to establish a university in Iceland.

1881 The Althing passed legislation concerning secondary education.

1882 The Flensborg School began offering secondary education.

1882 An agricultural school was established at Holar.

1882 The National Archives (Thjodskjalasafnid) was established in Reykjavik.

1883 Benedikt Sveinsson re-submitted a bill to establish a university in Iceland.

1883 An agricultural school was established at Eidum which operated until 1919.

1889 An agricultural school was founded at Hvanneyri.
1889 The Althing passed a bill concerning the establishment of a navigational school.

1889 The Icelandic Teachers Association (Hid Islenzka Kennarafelag) was founded.

1889 The Icelandic Natural History Society (Hid Islenzka Natturufraedifelag) was founded.

1890-1891 Instruction in pedagogy was offered at the Flensborg School.

1890 Sixteen reading societies were founded in Iceland during this year.

1891 The Reykjavik Navigational School began operation.

1892-1896 Teacher training was offered at the Flensborg School.

1893 The Althing passed a trade education bill.

1895 The Althing appointed a committee to propose legislation for teacher education.

1896 The Flensborg School extended its teacher training program.

1896 Earthquakes destroyed 161 farms and damaged 155 others.

1897 A primary and secondary boarding school was established at Heydalsala.

1897 A Domestic Science School (Husstjornaskolinn) was established in Reykjavik.

1898 Breit Bjarnhedinsdottir, the first woman member of the Althing, published the first periodical for Icelandic children.

1898 A primary school, Midbaejarskolinn, was founded in Reykjavik.

1899 A school for deaf-mute children was founded at Stora-Hraun.

1899-1900 Publication of Kennarabladid, an educational periodical.
1901-1902 Gudmundur Finnbogason toured northern Europe to gather information on schools.

1903-1904 Gudmundur Finnbogason made a survey of education in Iceland.

1904 Iceland granted home rule and a native Icelander became the prime minister.

1904-1918 Period of home rule.

1904 New regulations were issued for the Reykjavik Latin Grammar School.

1904 A trade school, Idnaskolinn, was founded in Reykjavik.

1904 The school for deaf-mutes was moved to Reykjavik. Instruction was also provided for the mentally retarded.

1905 A bill concerning primary education was brought before the Althing.

1905 A folk school was established at Hvitarbakki in the Borgarfjordur area which later was replaced by a district school.

1905 A commercial school, Verzlunnarskolinn, was founded in Reykjavik.

1906 Jon Thorarinsson was appointed Director of Public Education.

1906 A folk school was established at Nupi in the Dyrafjordur area which later became a district school.

1907 The Althing passed a bill which made education compulsory between the ages of ten and fourteen.

1907-1922 Publication of the educational periodical, Skolabladid.

1908 The Law School was founded in Reykjavik.

1908 The Teacher Training School, Kennaraskolinn, was founded in Reykjavik.
1908 Jon Thorarinsson became the first Commissioner of Education (Fraedslumalastjori).

1908 The first children's library was founded on the Westmann Islands.

1909 The Althing passed a bill to establish a university.

1911 The University of Iceland was founded in Reykjavik.

1914 The Icelandic Steamship Company (Eimskipafelag) was founded.

1915 The Marine Engineering School was founded in Reykjavik.

1917 The agricultural school at Eidir was reorganized as a secondary school.

1917-1924 Instruction in applied psychology was provided at the University of Iceland.

1917 The University Laboratory for Bacteriology and Pathology was founded.

1917-1918 A teacher's magazine, Vordur, was published by Hallgrimur Jonsson.

1917 Eruption of Katla.

1918 The Commercial School of the Cooperative Association, Sammvinuskolinn, was founded in Reykjavik.

1918 The Danish-Icelandic Act of Union by which Iceland became an independent kingdom under the King of Denmark and Iceland.

1918-1944 Period of the united kingdoms.

1918 The Stipulation Fund, Sattmalasjodur, was established by the Danish government to aid scholarship and educational and cultural cooperation between Denmark and Iceland.

1918 The Icelandic Scientific Society (Visindafelag) was founded.
1919 The instructional program at the Reykjavik Latin Grammar School was reorganized, with two major divisions (languages and mathematics).

1919 The Althing passed a bill concerning the appointment and salaries of teachers.

1920 Gudmundur Finnbogason and Sigurdur P. Sivertsen were appointed by the Icelandic government to make recommendations concerning the improvement of education.

1920 The Student Council of the University of Iceland (Studentarad) was founded.

1920 A new constitution was adopted by Iceland.

1921 The Correspondence School of the Cooperative Society (Brefaskoli S. I. S.) was founded.

1921 The Association of Icelandic Primary School Teachers (Samband Islenzkra Barnakennara) was founded.

1921 The Student Information Office was founded by university students to aid students in selecting and gaining admission to foreign universities.

1924 The Student Council of the University of Iceland began the publication of a student newspaper.

1924 A district school, Laugaskoli, was founded.

1924 Jon Thorsteinsson founded a school for physical education in Reykjavik.

1924 An educational periodical, Menntamal, was established by Asgeir Asgeirsson.

1924 An association for child care, Barnavinafelagid Sumargjof, was founded.

1926 The Education Act of 1907 was revised.

1927 The Althing granted permission for school districts to provide free public education for youth between the age of fourteen and seventeen.
1928 A private secondary school, Gagnfraedaskoli, was founded in Reykjavik.

1928 The Althing passed a bill concerning the establishment of an advisory council (Skolarad) for primary education.

1928 The Cultural Fund (Menningarsjodur) and the Cultural Council (Menntamalarad) were established by an act of the Althing.

1928 The Early Icelandic Text Society (Fornritafelag) was founded.

1929 The Althing passed a bill creating district schools.

1929 The basic curriculum for all grades in the primary schools was issued by the Office of Education.

1929 The first nation-wide examinations in arithmetic and spelling were given in the primary schools.

1930 The millenium of the Althing was celebrated.

1930 The Reykjavik Conservatory of Music (Tonlistaskolinn) was founded.

1930 The largest primary school building in Iceland (Austurbaejarskolinn) was completed in Reykjavik.

1930 A home for mentally retarded children was founded at Solheimar i Grimsnesi.

1930 The Akureyri Grammar School was established, being the second such school in Iceland at this time.

1930 The Icelandic State Radio began operation.

1931 A district school at Reykholt began operation.

1931 A private primary school (Skoli Isaks Jonssonar) was founded in Reykjavik.

1931 The Musical Society (Tonlistafelag) was founded in Reykjavik.
1932 The Organization of Friends of the Blind (Blindravinafelag Islands) was founded.

1933 A committee was appointed by the Althing to examine the Education Act of 1926.

1933 A school for the blind was founded in Reykjavik.

1934 The University of Iceland established a national lottery.

1935 The University Research Institute was established.

1935 A bill concerning agricultural education was passed by the Althing.

1935 Laugarnesskoli, a primary school, was established in Reykjavik.

1936 The Education Acts of 1907 and 1926 were revised, making school attendance between age seven and fourteen compulsory.

1936 The Althing passed a bill establishing the State Textbook Publishing Office (Rikisutgafa Namsbok).

1936 The State Horticultural School (Gardyrkjuskoli Rikisins) was established by an act of the Althing and began operation in 1938.

1936 The University Act was revised.

1937 Two cultural organizations for the publication of literature (Mal og Menning and Menningar- og Fraedslusamband Althydu) were founded.

1937 New regulations for the Reykjavik Grammar School were issued.

1938 A Laboratory of Physiology and Anatomy was established at the University of Iceland.

1938 A Commercial School was founded in Reykjavik.

1939 The Office of Education issued a directive that all children had to complete a course in swimming by age fourteen.
1939 A pharmacy laboratory was established at the University of Iceland.
1939 A library was established at the University of Iceland.
1940 School inspectors were appointed for primary schools.
1940 The Althing passed a physical education bill.
1940 A department of pharmacy was established at the University of Iceland.
1940 A research laboratory in hygiene was established at the University of Iceland.
1940 The University of Iceland moved into a new building after meeting in the Parliament building since 1911.
1940 Instruction in engineering was offered at the University of Iceland.
1940 Iceland was occupied by British forces.
1941 The Althing passed a secondary education bill which revised the Act of 1930. The towns of Seydisfjordur and Akranes received permission to establish secondary schools.
1941 A Division of Business Administration and Economics was established within the Faculty of Law at the University of Iceland.
1941 The Althing passed a resolution that Iceland had the right to end the Act of Union with Denmark, to appoint a Regent and to establish a republic as soon as possible.
1941 Sveinn Bjornsson was chosen Regent of Iceland.
1941 British armed forces were replaced by United States armed forces.
1942 The Home Economics Teacher Training School (Husmaedrakennaraskoli) was established.
1942 The Commercial School of Iceland added two years of study to its program and received
permission to grant the matriculation certificate (studentsprof).

1942 A program leading to the B.A. degree was established at the University of Iceland.

1943 The course of study at the Teacher Training School was increased from three to four years.

1943 The Minister of Culture and Education appointed a committee to examine the educational system and make suggestions for its improvement.

1943 A second dormitory was added to the University of Iceland.

1944 The Republic of Iceland was proclaimed on June 17.

1944 Sveinn Bjornsson was elected the first president of Iceland.

1944 The Althing passed a bill establishing municipal reading clubs and an educational film library.

1945 The B.A. degree was first awarded at the University of Iceland.

1945 A Faculty of Engineering was established at the University of Iceland.

1945 A Division of Dentistry was established within the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Iceland.

1946 A major education bill was passed by the Althing.

1946 A grammar school bill was passed by the Althing.

1946 A bill concerning training in home economics was passed by the Althing.

1946 A school for the training of pre-school teachers (Fostruskolinn) was founded in Reykjavik.

1946 Iceland became a member of the United Nations.
1947 The Ministry of Culture and Education was separated from the Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.

1947 The School for Young Women (Kvennskolinn) became a regular secondary school in the Reykjavik school system.

1947 A Hotel and Catering School (Matreidslu- og Veitingathjona Skolinn) was established in Reykjavik.

1947 A School of Ballet and Dramatic Arts was established in connection with the National Theater.

1947 The Division of Pharmacy was organized in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Iceland.

1948 The Institute of Experimental Pathology was established at the University of Iceland.

1949 The Althing passed a trade education bill.

1949 The Council on Trade Education was founded.

1949 Iceland joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

1950 The new building of the National Theater was opened.

1950 The new building of the National Museum was opened.

1951 A practical secondary school (Gagnfraedaskoli Verknams) was established in Reykjavik.

1951 A vocational training school (Vinnuskoli) for youths between the ages of thirteen and fourteen was founded in Reykjavik.

1952 Asgeir Asgeirsson, a former Commissioner of Education, was elected the second president of Iceland (1952-1968).

1952 A grammar school was established at Laugarvatn.
1953 Speech therapy was provided for the first time in the Reykjavik schools.

1955 The Althing passed a technical education bill.

1955 A pre-grammar school (middle school) to prepare students for the grammar school was founded in Reykjavik.

1956 The National Council for the Protection of Nature was founded.

1957 The Scientific Research Fund (Visindarsjóður) was established by the Althing.

1957 A Physics Laboratory was established at the University of Iceland.

1958 The Division of Child Psychology was established at the Reykjavik Office of Education.

1961 The Althing passed a bill concerning the State Educational Film Library.

1962 Commerce and economics became special departments at the University of Iceland.

1962 The Economics Institute was founded in Reykjavik.

1962 The Faculty of Business Administration was established at the University of Iceland.

1963 A teacher training bill was passed by the Althing.

1963 The Technical School (Taekniskólinn) was founded by an act of the Althing.

1964 A Computer Center was established at the University of Iceland.

1965 The Scandinavian Cultural Fund was established.

1966 The Althing passed a trade education bill.

1966 The first Icelandic television station began operation in Reykjavik.

1966 The Ministry of Culture and Education established a unit for Educational Research and
Development which became a division in the Ministry in 1968

1966  
A Science Institute was established at the University of Iceland.

1967  
The Althing passed a bill on student loans and grants.

1967  
The Althing passed a bill on grants to artists.

1967  
Pre-primary education was conducted for six year olds at a Reykjavik suburban school.

1968  
Dr. Kristjan Eldjarn, former Director of the National Museum of Iceland, was elected the third President of Iceland.

1968  
The Althing passed a bill discontinuing the office of Commissioner of Education and establishing it as a division of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

1969  
The Minister of Culture and Education appointed a committee to examine the education law of 1946 and propose changes.

1969  
The Althing passed a bill which established the Manuscript Institute.

1969  
The Althing passed a bill concerning the National Library of Iceland.

1969  
The Althing passed a bill concerning the National Archives of Iceland.

1969  
The Althing passed a bill concerning the National Art Gallery of Iceland.

1969  
The Althing passed a bill establishing two year continuation divisions comprising grades 11 and 12 to bridge the gap between lower and upper secondary schools.

1969  
The Faculty of Engineering at the University of Iceland was reorganized as the Faculty of Engineering and Science.

1969  
The Althing passed a bill concerning the grammar school.
1970 The first International Arts Festival was held in Reykjavik (June 21-July 1).

1970 The Burfell hydro-electric plant and the aluminum plant at Straumsvik were opened.

1970 The Althing passed a bill concerning the University of Iceland.

1970 New B.A. programs were instituted in engineering, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geology and geography at the University of Iceland.

1970 Pre-primary classes were conducted for six year old children at fifteen Reykjavik schools.

1970 Regulations for school libraries were issued by the Reykjavik Office of Education.

1970 The Minister of Culture and Education appointed a committee to examine the law concerning the Teacher Training School and make proposals for new legislation.

1971 The first installment of ancient Icelandic manuscripts arrived in Reykjavik from Copenhagen.

1971 The Althing passed a bill which changed the Teacher Training School into the University College for Teacher Training, offering a three year program leading to the B.Ed. degree.

1971 Bills on the education system and compulsory education were submitted to the Althing.

1971 The Ministry of Culture and Education issued a schedule of assignments, organization and regulations.

1971 Publication of Nam og Kennsla (Education and Teaching) by Matthias Jonason, Gudmundur Arnlaugsson and Johann S. Hannesson.

1971 The Althing passed a bill concerning the Fishing Industry School.
1971 The Minister of Culture and Education appointed a committee to formulate proposals for adult education legislation.

1971 The Althing passed a bill concerning the Hotel and Restaurant School.

1971 The Althing passed a bill concerning the State Radio.

1972 The second International Arts Festival was held in Reykjavik (June 4-15).

1972 The Hamrahlid Grammar School, organized on a unit credit system, was opened in Reykjavik.

1972 The Althing passed a bill revising the Technology School Act of 1963.

1972 The Reykjavik Office of Education established a Pedagogical Center to assist schools in practical matters and innovations in teaching methods.

1972 The Division of Dentistry at the University of Iceland was re-established as the Faculty of Dentistry.

1972 A Folk School was established at Skalholt.

1973 Eruption of Helgafell on the Westmann Islands.

1973 A Division of Nursing was established in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Iceland.

1973 The Althing passed a bill granting permission to establish comprehensive high schools.

1973 The Faculty of Social Studies was established at the University of Iceland.

1973 A revised bill on the school system was submitted to the Althing.

1973 A revised bill on compulsory education was submitted to the Althing.

1974 The eleventh centenary of the settlement of Iceland was celebrated.
1974 The third bi-annual International Arts Festival was held in Reykjavik (June 5-21).

1974 The Althing passed a major bill on the school system.

1974 The Althing passed a bill on compulsory education.

1974 The Minister of Culture and Education appointed a committee to examine the secondary level of education and suggest proposals for new legislation.

1975 A comprehensive high school (Fjolbrautaskolinn) was opened in the Breidholt district of Reykjavik.

1976 A program for medical technologists was established in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Iceland.

1976 The fourth bi-annual International Art Festival was held in Reykjavik.

1976 The Ministry of Culture and Education began publishing revised curriculum guides for compulsory schools.

1977 A bill concerning secondary education was submitted to the Althing.

1977 A bill concerning the University College for Teacher Training was submitted to the Althing.

1977 The Ministry of Culture and Education published a comprehensive guide to secondary and higher education.

1977 The fourth comprehensive high school in Iceland was opened at Akranes (September 9).

1977 Major revisions of the state examination system were made.

1977 The Althing passed a bill concerning the Skalholt Folk School.
APPENDIX B

SELECTED GLOSSARY OF ICELANDIC EDUCATIONAL TERMS
Atvinnudeild Haskolans: The University Research Institute of the University of Iceland.
barnafraedsla: primary education.
barnaprof: examination and certificate given at the completion of primary education according to the 1946 law.
bekkur: a grade or class.
bunadarskoli: an agricultural school.
Byggingadeild: The Division of Building of the Ministry of Culture and Education.
dagheimili: a day nursery where children stay all day.
dagvistunarstofnan: a nursery or play school for children from the age of 3 months to 6 years; see also dagheimili and leikskoli.
Fiskvinnuskoli: The Fishing Industry School.
Fjarmala- og aaelanadeild: The Division of Finance and Planning of the Ministry of Culture and Education.
fjolbrautaskoli: a comprehensive high school.
forskoli: a pre-primary school.
Fosturskoli Islands: The Training School for Pre-primary Teachers.
framhaldsdeild: continuation division of one to two years of primary education.
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framhaldsskolastig: the secondary stage of education which includes a variety of schools between the first stage (grunnskoli) and higher education (haskolastig).

fraedsludaemi: educational region. For the purpose of administration at the compulsory level, the country is divided into eight such regions.

Fraedslumaaldeild: The Division of Educational Administration of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

Fraedslumalaskriftstofan: The Office of Education which was discontinued in 1971 and became the Division of Educational Administration of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

fraedslumalastjori: The Commissioner of Education. This position was discontinued when the Office of Education became a division of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

fraedslurad: board of 5 or 7 members at the regional level, representing the local councils.

fraedslustjori: regional director of education, appointed by the Ministry of Culture and Education and who is responsible for the administration of compulsory education.

fullordnafraedsla: adult education.

gagnfraedaprof: examination given at the completion of four years of secondary education and discontinued in 1977.

gagnfraedaskoli: a four year secondary school.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Icelandic Term</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greidslu- og Bokhaldsdeild:</td>
<td>The Division of Financial Transactions and Book-keeping of the Ministry of Culture and Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grunnskolaprof:</td>
<td>certificate and examination at the completion of compulsory education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>grunnskoli:</td>
<td>a school at the compulsory level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grunnskolastig:</td>
<td>compulsory education stage, covering eight years from age 7 to 15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handritastofn:</td>
<td>The Manuscript Institute of the University of Iceland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haskola-og Althjodardeild:</td>
<td>The Division of Higher Education and International Affairs of the Ministry of Culture and Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haskolarad:</td>
<td>The University Council of the University of Iceland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haskolarektor:</td>
<td>The Rector of the University of Iceland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haskolastig:</td>
<td>the third stage of education which includes institutions of higher education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haskoli Islands:</td>
<td>The University of Iceland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hjukrunarskoli:</td>
<td>a school of nursing connected with a hospital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel- og veitingaskoli Islands:</td>
<td>The Hotel and Catering School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>husstjornarskoli:</td>
<td>a domestic science school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idnnam:</td>
<td>vocational or trade education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idnskoli:</td>
<td>a vocational or trade school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icelandic Term</td>
<td>English Translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ithrottakennaraskoli Islands:</td>
<td>The Training School for Teachers of Physical Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennarahaskoli Islands:</td>
<td>The University College for Teacher Training. Formerly the Kennaraskoli Islands (The Teacher Training School).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kvennskolinn:</td>
<td>The School for Young Women.</td>
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<tr>
<td>landsprof:</td>
<td>a state examination at the end of the midschool; discontinued in 1977.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leikskoli:</td>
<td>a play school where children attend half a day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ljosmaedraskoli:</td>
<td>a school for midwives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menningsjodur:</td>
<td>The Cultural Fund.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Menntanalaradherra:</td>
<td>The Minister of Culture and Education.</td>
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<td>Menntamalaraduneytid:</td>
<td>The Ministry of Culture and Education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>menntaskoli:</td>
<td>a grammar school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>midskoli:</td>
<td>a three year middle school at the secondary level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myndlista-og Handidaskoli Islands:</td>
<td>The Arts and Crafts School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nam:</td>
<td>a course of study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>namskra:</td>
<td>curriculum guide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raduneytistjori i Menntamalaraduneytinu:</td>
<td>The Secretary General of the Ministry of Culture and Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rikisutgafa namsboka:</td>
<td>The State Textbook Publisher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safna-, Lista- og Aesku-lydsmaladeild:</td>
<td>The Division of Culture and Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Culture and Education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Icelandic Term</td>
<td>English Translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samband Islanzkra Barnakennara</td>
<td>The Association of Icelandic Primary School Teachers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samvinnuskolinn:</td>
<td>The Cooperative Commercial School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skalholtsskoli:</td>
<td>The Skalholt Folk School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skolahverfi:</td>
<td>a school district, a subdivision of the educational region (fraedsludaemi).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skolarannsoknadeild:</td>
<td>The Division of Educational Research and Development of the Ministry of Culture and Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skolastjori:</td>
<td>a school principal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skyldunamsstig:</td>
<td>the compulsory level of education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>studentsprof:</td>
<td>matriculation examination granting admission to the University of Iceland and the University College for Teacher Training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>styrimannaskoli:</td>
<td>a nautical school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>velskoli:</td>
<td>engineering school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verk- og Taeknimenntunnardeild:</td>
<td>The Division of Vocational and Technical Education of the Ministry of Culture and Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verzlunarskoli:</td>
<td>a commercial college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verzlunnarskoli Islands</td>
<td>The Commercial School of Iceland.</td>
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APPENDIX C

RECENT EDUCATIONAL LAWS OF ICELAND
APPENDIX C-I

A LAW CONCERNING THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM
(NO. 55, MAY 21, 1974)

Article 1.
All schools which are supported one-half or more by state funds shall form a unified school system and come under all educational laws.

Article 2.
The school system is divided into three stages: compulsory education, secondary education and higher education. At the compulsory stage is the compulsory school. At the secondary stage are comprehensive high schools, grammar schools and special schools. At the higher education stage are the university and comparable schools.

Article 3.
The compulsory school is conducted for children and youth between the ages of seven and sixteen. This school provides basic education and preparatory education for further study.

Article 4.
The secondary schools are two to four year schools whose curricula are determined according to contemporary needs in society. Graduation from a secondary school grants
admission to the university. Other laws and regulations relate to special and other secondary schools.

**Article 5.**

Graduation from a secondary school or its equivalent, as determined by the university, is necessary for entrance to the university. The Ministry of Culture and Education may stipulate other entrance requirements for various divisions of the university if the University Council determines this is necessary.

The University of Iceland is divided into faculties as determined by law and regulations relating to the university. Other schools at the higher education level operate according to specific laws and regulations.

**Article 6.**

Education is free in all public schools. In private schools which receive most of their funds from the public treasury tuition fees are subject to the approval of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

**Article 7.**

In all areas of the school men and women shall have equal rights. This applies to students and teachers.

**Article 8.**

The state and local authorities shall assure that students in all parts of the country have equal educational opportunities according to the law.
Article 9.

If a student is unable to attend school because of financial difficulties, the Ministry of Culture and Education shall, after receiving information concerning the student's financial situation from the regional director of education, provide the necessary funds for the student to continue his education.

If more than two students from the same family are at the same time attending a boarding school, and are of compulsory education age, the state shall pay the full cost for the students in excess of two.

Article 10.

More detailed regulations concerning the operation and financing of education at each level will be provided by laws and directives relating to each level.

Article 11.

This law is effective upon passage of the bill. Its provisions shall come into force as conditions permit, but no later than ten years from its enactment. This law supersedes the law of 1946 concerning the educational system, as well as any other laws which may conflict with this law.
Chapter 1. The goals of education and compulsory education.

Article 1.

The state and local authorities shall operate schools for children and youth between the ages of seven and sixteen. These schools are known as compulsory schools. All children and youth of the above mentioned age must attend school. Exemptions from attending school may be made according to the provisions of articles 5, 7 and 8.

Reference in this law to a student's age is to the calendar year in which the student has reached that age.

Article 2.

The task of the compulsory school is, working with the home, to prepare the student for life and work in a democratic society which is continually changing. The work of the school shall be based on forebearance, Christian virtues and democratic cooperation. The school shall cultivate in the student a broad outlook; the ability to make
mature choices; an understanding of Icelandic society,
history and national characteristics; and a knowledge of the
obligations of the individual to society.

The school shall attempt to provide instruction
conforming to the nature and needs of the students. It
shall contribute to the maturity, physical health and
intellectual development of all students.

The compulsory school shall provide opportunities
for its students to acquire knowledge and experience. It
shall seek to cultivate in its students study habits whereby
they may continue to pursue knowledge and develop maturity.
The work of the school shall also be to lay the groundwork
for independent thinking and cooperation with others.

**Article 3.**

The compulsory school is a nine year school. It may
operate in one or more establishments as determined by the
Ministry of Culture and Education from suggestions from the
regional board of education.

**Article 4.**

Students living in sparsely populated areas shall
be transported to school as distance, road conditions and
weather permit. The Ministry of Culture and Education may,
upon recommendation from the regional board of education,
grant permission for the establishment of branch schools for
children of ages seven to ten if transportation to the main
school is not possible.
Article 5.

Any exemptions regarding article one concerning compulsory education and article forty-one concerning the length of the school year may be granted by the Ministry of Culture and Education upon a petition and suggestions for correcting the situation from the local school board and the regional director of education. The Ministry of Culture and Education will take into consideration any such exemptions when planning school facilities.

The Ministry of Culture and Education shall require any local school district which neglects the provision of educational requirements as specified by articles one and four to make the necessary provisions at its own expense to remedy any such lack of educational requirements.

The state shall set aside five percent of its annual budget for the construction of compulsory schools. Local authorities which lack the finances to construct such schools may receive loans from the state for this purpose. The Ministry of Culture and Education and the Association of Icelandic Local Authorities shall assist in the dispersing of such funds as are approved by the Appropriations Board of the Althing. Additional regulations shall be issued concerning the granting, length and terms of loans.

Article 6.

The guardians of a child bear the responsibility that he registers for and attends school. If a child fails,
except for health or other valid reason, to attend school, and the principal is unable to remedy the situation, he shall bring the matter to the attention of the regional director of education. If the matter still remains unsolved, it shall be brought to the Committee for the Protection of Children.

**Article 7.**

Exempted from attending the compulsory school are children who attend an approved private school or who live in a school district which has received an exemption regarding compulsory education according to article five.

**Article 8.**

If the guardians of a child of compulsory school age wish an exemption from school attendance for a period of time, they shall present the reason to the principal and the school board. They shall discuss the matter with the guardians. The regional director of education may grant the exemption, but the school board and the principal shall assure that the child continues his studies while away from school.

**Chapter II. The administration of compulsory school education.**

**Article 9.**

The Ministry of Culture and Education has the supreme authority in all matters concerning this law. An advisory council composed of two representatives from the Ministry of
Culture and Education and two representatives from the Association of Icelandic Local Authorities shall assist in carrying out this law. This council shall have a voice in matters relating to the state and local budgets, as well as other financial matters, before they are approved and disbursed. Members of the council are chosen for four years. Alternate members are also chosen for the same term.

Article 10.

The country is divided into the following educational regions:

1. The city of Reykjavik
2. The Reykjanes region
3. The Western region
4. The West fjords region
5. The Northwest region
6. The Northeast region
7. The Eastern region
8. The South region.

Article 11.

A board of education composed of five or seven members elected from the educational region shall be established. An equal number of alternate members shall also be elected. The election and work of the members shall be determined by laws and directives of the local authorities and otherwise by the law concerning local administration (No. 58, 1961)
The Reykjavik city administration shall participate in the administration of education within its area according to the provisions of this law.

Additional directives shall determine the calling of meetings by principals, teacher representatives and the participation of the regional director of education, as well as other matters (as, for example, the local educational boards). Teacher representatives may attend meetings of the board of education. They also have the right to call a meeting concerning educational matters. All parties shall take part in discussions and make suggestions and proposals.

The regional board of education shall conduct a meeting at least once a year attended by all principals and chairmen of local education boards.

The chairmen of the regional board of education may, however, call a meeting of the board as often as is necessary. He must call a meeting if two members of the board or the regional director of education request a meeting. A meeting is officially called if all board members, or in their absence, the alternate members, have been notified of the meeting at least two days in advance. The board can make no decisions unless a majority of the members is present. All decisions shall be included in the minutes. A member does not have the right to vote on matters pertaining to himself, and when such a matter is being discussed,
his seat shall be taken by an alternate member. In the case of a tie, the vote of the chairman decides.

Article 12.

The regional board of education has the following duties:

1. The administration of education within its region as specified by the Ministry of Culture and Education and the local school boards.

2. The execution of directives pertaining to education in the region and the annual budget, as well as long range and other plans as specified in specific directives.

3. The supervision of the local school boards in the region.

4. The submission of proposals for the solution of educational problems by the regional director of education to the Ministry of Culture and Education and the supervision of the regional office of education.

5. The holding of conferences for new teachers, the supervision of such teachers and the guidance of such as requested by principals.

6. The creation of educational positions as needs arise.

7. Other matters relating to its work as specified by this law and additional directives.

Article 13.

The Ministry of Culture and Education appoints the
regional director of education based on proposals from the regional board of education.

The Ministry of Culture and Education advertises such a position for a period of a year, after which it may be filled.

In selecting the regional director of education attention must be given to the applicant's educational background, administrative experience within the district and knowledge of educational matters. Applicants should have the credentials for the position of principal or have been a principal or teacher at a compulsory school for at least three years.

Article 14.

The regional director of education represents the Ministry of Culture and Education and the local school boards within the region. He shall reside at or near the regional office of education. He serves also as the chairman of the regional board of education.

The duties of the regional director of education are as follows:

1. He has the responsibility to see that current educational directives concerning teaching and administration are carried out in the schools at the compulsory level and other schools which are supported by the state and the region.

2. He has supervision over the preparation of the
annual budget for the schools at the compulsory level in his region. After reviewing the budget, he forwards it to the Ministry of Culture and Education.

3. He has, as representative of the Ministry of Culture and Education, supervision and management of all educational facilities in the region.

4. He has supervision over instruction in the schools at the compulsory level in the region and keeps abreast of the accomplishments of the students as directed by the Division of Educational Research and Development of the Ministry of Culture and Education. He also keeps abreast of conditions within the schools as pertain to the level of teaching and learning and the condition of educational facilities for students.

5. He arbitrates differences which arise between principals, teachers and teacher councils.

6. He consults with teachers and principals in matters involving a breach of contract.

7. He has supervision of counseling and psychological services in the schools at the compulsory level.

8. Working with principals, school physicians and psychologists, he is aware of those students who are not making normal progress because of physical or mental difficulties; he makes provisions for their instruction according to their abilities.

9. He assumes other duties as prescribed by this
law, or assumes duties which the Ministry of Culture and Education or the board of education assigns to him.

Article 15.

The local authorities select the location of the regional office of education which is subject to the approval of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

The regional director of education is the supervisor of the regional office of education. Other staff are appointed by the regional board of education upon his recommendation.

The regional director of education may enter into agreements with the local authority (or authorities) and local school districts concerning education. This is subject, however, to the approval of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

Article 16.

A local school district contains a compulsory school composed of all or several grades. A local authority which maintains two or more compulsory schools is considered one school district. Likewise several local authorities or a part of a local authority may operate a local school district.

A local school district is (a) where one local authority alone operates a compulsory school or part of a compulsory school or (b) where two or more local authorities operate a compulsory school or part of a compulsory school.
A local authority also may operate more than one local school district if (a) there is a distinct geographical division of the school districts and (b) if the children of compulsory school age within the local authority attend two or more schools.

A branch school (according to articles four and seventy-six) is part of the local school district in which the main school is located. This, however, does not apply to special schools (article fifty-two).

The Ministry of Culture and Education submits proposals for the division of the country into local school districts to the regional board of education which in turn dispurses relevant information regarding the formation of local school districts to the local authorities, local school boards and local school administrators. The Ministry of Culture and Education may call meetings to which representatives of the local authorities are invited to discuss this matter. In the event of any disagreements, the decision of the Ministry of Culture and Education prevails.

Article 17.

A local school board shall be established in each local school district to supervise the operation of the compulsory school(s). Members of the board shall be elected to a four year term.

Where there are two or more compulsory schools within a local authority the school board shall consider
such matters as the distribution of students among the schools and the coordination of the administration of the schools.

One (or several) school boards has the authority, with the approval of the local authorities, to employ a school administrative officer and to determine his duties. His work, however, falls under the same rules as apply to the regional director of education. His salary is paid from local funds.

The Ministry of Culture and Education may issue additional directives as to the work of the local school administrative officer.

Article 18.

Local school boards shall be established as follows. In towns having a population of over nine hundred, membership on the board shall be five. Where the population within the local authority is less, the membership shall be three. Where two or more local authorities are represented by one school board, each local authority shall be represented by one member if school attendance within each local authority is equal. Where compulsory school attendance is higher in one local authority, two representatives from that local authority shall serve on the board.

An equal number of alternate members shall be elected to the school board. Election of school board
members shall take place at the same time local elections are conducted.

Assigned teachers within the local school district shall elect from among themselves representatives to serve on the local school board and who shall take part in discussions and make suggestions and proposals. In compulsory schools where the number of teachers is between one and fifteen, one representative shall be elected; in schools where the number of teachers is sixteen or more, two representatives shall be elected. An equal number of alternative members shall be elected.

In Reykjavik the work of the local school board is assumed by the Reykjavik regional board of education. Teacher representation on this board shall be three. The board shall meet at least three times a year with the principals of the Reykjavik compulsory schools.

Principals may attend school board meetings with the right to take part in the discussion and make suggestions and proposals.

Guidelines for the calling of a meeting of the local school board are the same as those for regional boards of education. A principal has the right to call a meeting of the local school board.

**Article 19.**

The local school board has the responsibility to see that all children of compulsory school age receive an educa-
tion as specified by law. It is also responsible for the maintenance of adequate school facilities in its area of jurisdiction.

If the local authority feels a need for new school facilities, the enlarging of present facilities or other additions, it shall discuss the matter with the regional director of education and then present its proposals to the Ministry of Culture and Education. If a long delay in construction is anticipated, the cost of temporary repairs or provisions shall be borne by the local authority.

If a decision as to the size of a school and/or its location cannot be reached, the Ministry of Culture and Education shall decide.

The local school board also has the responsibility to see that schools have adequate land, playgrounds, equipment and furnishings. In working with the principals, it shall assure that such provisions are maintained according to the law. It also bears the responsibility that their maintenance is adequate and that necessary additions be made.

**Article 20.**

The principal, in consultation with the teachers, is the administrator of the compulsory school under the overall supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Education, the regional board of education, the local school board and the regional director of education, according to this law and directives relating to it. All assigned teachers must
attend a teachers' meeting during the first month of the school year if it is conducted during normal working hours.

In schools having the right to employ eight or more assigned teachers, in addition to the principal, three members from the teaching staff shall be elected to serve on a teacher advisory council, which shall serve as an advisory body to the principal. In schools having less than eight teachers, all teachers shall carry on the work of such a council.

If a principal and the teacher advisory council disagree concerning a matter, it shall be brought before the local school board. If an agreement is not reached, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the regional director of education whose decision prevails. The decision of the principal prevails unless the regional director of education decides otherwise or an agreement is reached in some other manner.

The Ministry of Culture and Education shall issue additional directives after suggestions from the regional directors of education.

A principal may call a meeting of teachers as often as is thought necessary. If one-third or more of the teachers so desire, a meeting may be called.

Article 21.

If the principal, teachers or parents of children attending school wish to form a parents' association in the
school to support the work of the school and to strengthen the association between parents and the school, the principal shall call a meeting to form such an association.

If an association is formed, it agrees to take upon itself the above mentioned work. A representative from the parents' association has the right to attend teachers meetings and to take part in the discussion and to make suggestions and proposals.

**Article 22.**

Students in grades seven, eight and nine have the right to form a student council to assist and advise the principal and the teacher advisory council in student matters. One representative from each class shall be elected annually to the council. The council shall elect a chairman, vice chairman and secretary and it shall keep minutes of its meetings. A teacher shall serve as advisor to the council.

The chairman of the student council has the right to attend meetings of the teacher advisory council and the principal and to take part in the discussion and to make suggestions and proposals.

**Chapter 3. School facilities.**

**Article 23.**

The construction of school facilities is under the supervision of the local authorities in conjunction with the local school board and the regional board of education, but
before any plans are executed, they must be approved by the Ministry of Culture and Education.

Each local school district shall have adequate school facilities to meet the needs of the compulsory schools. In planning a school facility or making additions to an existing facility, attention shall be given to whether students walk to, are transported to or board at a school. The Ministry of Culture and Education shall decide after receiving the pertinent information from the regional director of education, the local school board and the local authorities as to the location and type of school facility to be built.

The Ministry of Culture and Education shall make plans for the construction of school facilities in the whole country as follows: (a) long range plans up to ten years and which may be reviewed as often as is necessary and (b) yearly plans according to budget appropriations, with priority being given to localities which have the greatest need for school facilities.

The naming of schools is subject to the approval of the Ministry of Culture and Education upon suggestions received from the name committee.

Article 24.

If two or more local authorities work together in the construction of a school facility, the share of building costs shall be determined on the basis of population, taxes
paid during the previous year, the number of students attending school and the number of teaching hours in the subjects in the curriculum guide in each locality. The Ministry of Culture and Education shall assist in negotiations concerning such building costs and shall decide the share to be paid by the parties concerned.

If the local authorities plan to use the school building or its grounds for community purposes other than education, the matter shall be brought before the local school board for consideration and to the Ministry of Culture and Education for approval. The local authorities shall pay the initial costs, unless laws and directives specify otherwise.

Article 25.

A school facility shall provide, in addition to classrooms, space for student lounges, toilet facilities, offices, work areas for the principal and teachers, library facilities, health service facilities, physical education facilities and meeting rooms for students and others according to the provisions of this law. Space for sport facilities and vocational education may be provided in another building.

In constructing a new school facility or in making additions to existing facilities, consideration should be given to providing space for extra-curricular activities and dining and food services.
In constructing boarding schools, consideration should be given to providing as homelike an atmosphere as possible and that all students be near the person in charge.  

Article 26.

The local authorities in cooperation with the local school board shall select building specialists to assist in the design and planning of a school facility.

The Ministry of Culture and Education shall at the appropriate time arrange for a public decision as to the type of school facility to be constructed, taking into consideration the size of the facility and local conditions.  

Article 27.

The local authorities may decide as to the decoration of the school facility with the approval of the Ministry of Culture and Education. The decorating costs will be part of the building costs (up to two percent) as stipulated by the Building division of the Ministry of Culture and Education.  

Article 28.

Maintenance costs of the school building, the furnishings and the initial purchase and replacing of teaching materials, at the suggestion of the regional director of education and the principal, shall be paid by the local authorities.  

Article 29.

The daily supervision of school operations which are
maintained jointly by the state and local authorities shall be in the hands of the local school board and the principal as outlined in directives from the local authorities and the Ministry of Culture and Education.

The local authorities have the right to permit the school building to be used for youth work, sports events and public gatherings in the interest of members of the community. This use, however, must not interfere with the normal operation of the school as specified by law.

A school facility upon approval from the local authorities and the Ministry of Culture and Education may be used as a hotel or restaurant when the school is not in session.

Chapter 4. Principals, teachers and other staff of the compulsory school.

Article 30.

A principal shall be assigned to every school which operates under the provisions of this law.

Anyone who has received a teaching certificate from the University College for Teacher Training or the University of Iceland may serve as a principal of a compulsory school. Additional directives, however, may require that the applicant have taken additional courses in school administration (see article 39) which should be offered at least every three years. This does not apply to principals assigned prior to the time this law takes effect.
The Ministry of Culture and Education assigns principals upon the recommendation of the local school board and the regional director of education.

**Article 31.**

Head teachers shall be assigned by the Ministry of Culture and Education to schools having the right to employ ten or more teachers. The position of head teacher shall be advertised in the same manner as that for principals and teachers. The local school board, principal and teacher advisory council shall provide the Ministry of Culture and Education with information concerning applicants for the position of head teacher who will interview the applicants.

The head teacher assists the principal and is involved under his direction with the administration of the school.

The Ministry of Culture and Education determines the minimum number of hours a head teacher must teach based on the size of the school.

In schools having less than ten teachers, the principal appoints the head teacher to take his place during his absence. If the principal, however, anticipates being away more than two months, the local school board shall bring the matter to the Ministry of Culture and Education for a decision.

**Article 32.**

The Ministry of Culture and Education, upon recom-
mendation of the principal and local school board, appoints teachers who are employed under the provisions of this law.

The minimum qualifications for appointment to a compulsory school include a teacher's degree from the University College for Teacher Training or the University of Iceland. This does not, however, apply to teachers already employed at the time this law takes effect.

Article 33.

When a teacher or principal vacancy occurs, the local school board must immediately inform the regional director of education who forwards this information to the Ministry of Culture and Education to advertise the vacancy.

The local school board interviews the applicants for the position of teacher or principal and sends its recommendation to the regional director of education. The local school board must consider the opinions of the principal in selecting a teacher and the opinions of the regional director of education in selecting a principal. If a disagreement arises between the applicant and the principal and the local school board, each side may present its case to the regional director of education.

The regional director of education shall forward to the Ministry of Culture and Education all information relating to the applicants, as well as his own evaluation.

If a principal or teacher plans to resign, he shall inform in writing the local school board and his immediate
supervisor (regional director of education or principal) of his decision before February 1st. Principal and teacher vacancies should be filled before July 1st.

If a vacancy must be filled with little notice, the Ministry of Culture and Education may make a temporary assignment without the advertisement as mentioned above. However, the position should be advertised as soon as possible.

**Article 34.**

The Ministry of Culture and Education appoints the manager of dining facilities in boarding schools according to the recommendations of the principal and the local school board. The local school board has the right to determine educational and training qualifications for this position.

The principal, with the approval of the local school board, appoints part time teachers for compulsory schools with less than fifty students.

The local authorities, upon recommendation of the local school board and principal, appoints a building manager if one is considered necessary. Other employees, with the exception of the kitchen help which are selected by the principal, are selected by the local authorities.

**Article 35.**

Principals and teachers must adhere to this law and directives from the Ministry of Culture and Education.

The placement of principals and teachers shall be
according to the law and with rights and obligations relating to civil servants. Principals and teachers in boarding schools shall be appointed only after two years of experience in such schools.

The selection and hours of work of other staff in the compulsory school shall be according to the law concerning wage agreements of civil servants and professionals.

Article 36.

When a teacher has reached the age of fifty-five, his teaching load may be reduced by one-sixth and when he reaches the age of sixty, his teaching load shall be reduced once again by one-sixth. To receive this reduction, however, a teacher must have taught for at least twenty years.

Article 37.

Compulsory school teachers shall teach at the school to which they are assigned. Part time teachers shall teach where they are needed.

The Ministry of Culture and Education may assign a teacher to teach at more than one school if the need for a particular subject at one school is not equivalent to a full teaching load.

Teachers rights in the compulsory school shall be determined by laws relating to the education and rights of teachers.

Principals of boarding schools also serve as directors of the school. However, the Ministry of Culture and
Education, if the principal wishes, may appoint a special director, provided he has the necessary qualifications.

In boarding schools the daily supervision and care of the students are in the hands of the teachers, nurses and other staff with educational qualifications recognized by the Ministry of culture and Education, which may specify additional regulations relating to the work and accommodations of boarding schools.

Nurses and other staff with the necessary educational qualifications may apply for permanent assignments at boarding schools after two years of experience.

**Article 38.**

The principal shall select supervisor-teachers for each grade or subject division in the compulsory school. Such teachers follow closely the progress of each student, provide guidance and maintain contact with the parents.

**Article 39.**

Annual appropriations from the budget shall be made for in-service education for teachers, as well as for professional leaves of absence.

**Article 40.**

If a teacher wishes a leave of absence from his work in order to increase his knowledge or teaching ability, he shall send a request for such a leave to the Ministry of Culture and Education, stating what he plans to do during his leave. The reasons should be (a) study in an approved
educational institution or (b) a minimum of two months of educational travel conducted by an organization which the Ministry of Culture and Education recognizes.

If the Ministry of Culture and Education considers the applicant's plans satisfactory, he may be granted a leave of absence up to one year with full pay.

The Ministry of Culture and Education may also grant to a teacher who is on leave of absence financial aid for part of the travel costs and living accommodations if he is taking courses with a recognized educational institution or pursuing educational travels and provided he doesn't receive similar aid from other sources.

The Ministry of Culture and Education may also advertise a definite course of study for which a leave of absence or a special grant will be offered. The Ministry of Culture and Education or other organizations approved by the Ministry may sponsor an educational tour of three weeks during the period schools are not in session and for which a subsidy in the amount of two-thirds of the expenses of travel and accommodations may be given to those who participate.

Teachers with at least ten years of service as assigned teachers may receive a leave of absence for one year. Shorter leaves of absence of up to four months may be granted to teachers with five years of teaching experience. A teacher may not, however, receive leaves of absences
longer than the equivalent of two year's of his salary.

The Ministry of Culture and Education may issue additional directives relating to leaves of absence. Teachers who are granted leaves of absence must take their leaves at times which would not cause any hardship to the instructional program of the school. After returning to work, the teacher must furnish the Ministry of Culture and Education with an account of his work or study during the leave. The Ministry of Culture and Education has the right to publish such reports. In addition, a teacher who has received a leave of absence or financial aid is obliged to work at least three years in education or teaching in Iceland after the completion of his leave.

The provisions of this article also apply to school principals.

Chapter 5. Work schedule, curriculum and teaching assignments in the compulsory school.

Article 41.

The length of the compulsory school year shall be from seven to nine months. When school is conducted for the maximum length of time, it operates from September 1 to May 31.

The local school board may, with the recommendation of the regional director of education and the Ministry of Culture and Education, permit instruction to begin between September 15 and October 1, with the school year conducted
as follows: grades one to three meet seven months and grades four to nine meet seven and one-half months.

In determining the length of the school year, consideration should be given to employment and other conditions in the school district.

The Ministry of Culture and Education and the local school board will determine at the beginning of the school year whether school shall be open five or six days.

If the school is conducted for the minimum length of time, consideration must be given to covering all material as outlined in the curriculum guide.

If a sufficient number of students in grades one through six, as determined by the local school board, will attend summer school, the regional board of education, as instructed by the regional director of education, may allow one-fourth of the instruction to take place during this time.

Additional directives shall be issued regarding the school year.

Article 42.

In connection with the goal of the compulsory school, attention should be given in all grades to practical studies and to the development of the students' maturity without the school. In grades seven to nine elective courses may constitute a maximum of one-half of the program and a minimum of one-fifth of the program.

The Ministry of Culture and Education shall publish
main curriculum guides for the compulsory school in which additional information regarding the work of the school and teaching methods will be given. The areas of study to be covered at this level are: (a) the Icelandic language, its use in speech and writing, as well as its historical development, (b) general mathematics, (c) music, art and handicraft to provide a knowledge of aesthetics and art appreciation, (d) the social sciences as they relate to the world and immediate surroundings, past and present, including Icelandic and world history, sociology and geography, (e) Christianity, ethics and major religions of the world, (f) physical science, biology, local geology, physics and chemistry, (g) foreign language, with consideration given to those that relate to the origin of Iceland, Nordic culture and communication with other countries, (h) domestic sciences, (i) physical education, hygiene and first aid, (j) practical studies and (k) electives, practical and theoretical, in the upper grades.

If a student is employed for a specific period during the school year, the school may equate such work with practical studies (see (j) above). The regional board of education in consultation with the principal and industry shall make plans for the participation of students in part time employment and such employment shall also be equated with practical studies (see (j) above).

The Ministry of Culture and Education, in addition
to what is stated above, determines the curriculum of the compulsory school, the distribution of subjects and the school year (see article 44). The curriculum guides should be so planned and the curriculum so maintained that students of varying personalities, maturity, aptitudes and interests be given equal opportunity for education.

The main curriculum guide shall give special consideration to the situations where because of paucity of population students are few, several age groups meet in one class or where the school operates for less than the normal school year. Curriculum guides shall also be published for students in special schools.

The Ministry of Culture and Education shall constantly review as necessary the curriculum for the compulsory school. Main curriculum guides shall be published at least once every five years.

Article 43.

Students in all schools at the compulsory level shall be given opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities of the school as conditions permit. The school should encourage students to participate in the social life and activities of the community.

Principals may permit one or more teachers to assist in such activities as part of the teaching load.

Principals shall give the regional director of education an account of the extra-curricular and social
activities of the school at the completion of each school year.

The Ministry of Culture and Education shall develop a course of study and publish guides to assist teachers who work in this area.

Article 44.

The total daily and weekly schedule of the school (instruction, recess and independent study) shall relate to the age and maturity of the students. Weekly instruction in the compulsory school shall be as follows: (a) grade one, 880 minutes, (b) grade two, 960 minutes, (c) grade three, 1,080 minutes, (d) grade four, 1,280 minutes, (e) grade five, 1,360 minutes, (f) grade six, 1,400 minutes, (g) grade seven, 1,440-1,480 minutes, (h) grade eight, 1,440-1,480 minutes and (i) grade nine, 1,440-1,480 minutes.

In grades one to six the principal with the approval of the regional director of education has the authority to lengthen or shorten the weekly schedule of classes by forty minutes from that mentioned above.

The length of the class period is determined by the principal. A class period, however, may not be longer than eighty minutes or shorter than twenty minutes. The average class period at the compulsory level is forty minutes.

A fifteen minute recess shall be given for every one hundred minutes of classroom instruction.
Article 45.

Christmas recess shall be from December 21 to January 3 and Easter recess shall be from Palm Sunday to the Tuesday after Easter. Other recess periods will be determined and set forth in directives.

Article 46.

The average class size in the compulsory school should not exceed 28 and the total number of students in a class should not be above 30 (average includes students who enrolled in special classes, as well as regular classes).

The Ministry of Culture and Education may specify limited class sizes in certain subjects, as indicated in the curriculum guides.

Varying class sizes, however, are permitted in group teaching arrangements. Such class sizes and arrangements must not hinder the covering of material in the curriculum guides.

Article 47.

In schools where enrollments are small and children of different ages are in one class in the first six grades, no more than three grades should be taught in one class. It is permitted, however, if it is necessary, to teach grades one through four in one class. Under such teaching arrangements, it is desirable that class sizes be reduced as follows: (a) twelve students in a class if four grades are being taught, (b) seventeen students in a class if three
grades are being taught and (c) twenty-two students if two grades are being taught.

The regional director of education may, under extreme circumstances, permit class sizes in such arrangements to be increased by four, provided that the level of instruction is sufficiently maintained and that additional time is devoted to instruction. Such arrangements, however, may not increase the level of instruction beyond that specified by law, unless the Ministry of Culture and Education grants permission.

Article 48.

There shall be no combining of classes in grades seven through nine.

In order to conduct classes for grades eight and nine there must be an average of at least twelve students per grade in the school district, unless the Ministry of Culture and Education grants permission to do otherwise.

Chapter 6. Rights and obligations of students and teachers.

Article 49.

Children and youth have both the right and obligation to attend the compulsory school unless they receive similar instruction elsewhere (see articles 7, 51, 52 and 75 of this law).

A child begins school during the calendar year in which he reaches his seventh birthday. School attendance
may begin earlier if the school district conducts a pre-school. Children who are six years of age may attend such schools if the parent or guardians desire, and the school psychologist recommends.

If a student completes the compulsory school curriculum with good standing after eight years of study, he shall be considered to have completed his compulsory education. A student may complete his compulsory school education in a shorter period and continue on to secondary education if the principal, school psychologist and the student's advisory teacher feel he has achieved sufficient maturity. This is subject also to the approval of the student's parents.

The regional director of education may, after consulting with the parents of guardians and the principal, permit a student at the end of the eighth grade to leave school for a period of up to one year in order to work. The student shall after this period return to school to complete his studies. Permission may be granted to give credit toward approved practical subjects in grade nine for this work experience.

Article 50.

Children who deviate from normal maturity to the extent that they are not able to profit from instruction in one or more subjects have the right to receive special instruction according to their needs. Such instruction may
take place individually, in groups or in special classes or divisions of the compulsory school unless such instruction is available in special schools (see article 52). Such instruction is provided according to what is considered most suitable in view of the student's abnormality and the resources of the school and the educational region. Where available special teachers shall assist in such instruction. The school has the permission, if the parents or guardians are informed, to increase school attendance by two classes per week for such students.

**Article 51.**

Special instruction shall be provided according to article 50 for (a) children who in the judgment of the school psychologist and other specialists lack the mental fitness to participate in the normal educational program of the compulsory school, (b) children who according to the school physician lack sufficient health or have other physical problems so as to be unable to participate in the normal educational program of the compulsory school, (c) children who are in the judgment of the school psychologist and other specialists are lacking especially in reading or speech ability to the extent that it is dubious that they can benefit from normal classroom instruction, (d) children who in the judgment of the school psychologist and other specialists have adjustment problems to the extent that they are not able to get along with other students and (e) stu-
dents with other problems (including slow learners) who in the judgment of the school psychologist and other specialists need special assistance.

Article 52.

Children in categories (a) and (b) shall receive instruction in special schools as specified in this article. If in the opinion of the school psychologist the child would not benefit from compulsory school instruction, he shall receive instruction according to his ability.

The Ministry of Culture and Education shall assume the leadership to assure that such special schools are built. It shall have under its supervision all plans for such special schools which should be completed within ten years after the passage of this legislation.

The state shall assume the complete cost of such schools, unless funds are provided by other sources.

Provision for the instruction of students in categories (c), (d) and (e) shall be made within the general compulsory school. However, any student who deviates from the normal may receive instruction in special schools if the school psychologist feels this is necessary.

The Ministry of Culture and Education shall determine the extent of instruction, accommodations and staff in special schools. Each educational region shall have access to such schools.

The Ministry of Culture and Education is permitted
to select students for instruction according to this article and to determine the length of education which may be one or two years beyond the period of compulsory education. **Article 53.**

A student may not be employed outside the school during school hours if in the opinion of the principal and school physician this would hinder the progress of his studies or his rest. In such circumstances the principal shall inform the parents or guardians of the student of any such problem. If the matter is not resolved, it shall be brought to the attention of the Committee for the Protection of Children. **Article 54.**

Students are obliged to obey instructions from teachers and other school staff in matters relating to the school, comply with school regulations and conduct themselves in a proper manner.

If a student causes a deliberate disturbance in a class and will not heed the admonition of the teacher, he may be removed by the teacher from the class.

If the student shows a persistent defect in behavior, the teacher should attempt to determine the cause. In the light of his findings and in speaking with the parents or guardians, the teacher should endeavor to bring about an improvement.

If there is no improvement and the problem persists,
the teacher shall bring the matter to the attention of the principal (who should be aware of both sides of the story) for a solution. If the principal's intervention does not lead to a satisfactory resolution of the problem, he shall bring the matter to the attention of specialists at the regional office of education.

During the time the matter remains unsolved, the principal may suspend the student from school for a period of time. The parents or guardians and the regional director of education should be immediately informed of such a decision.

The regional director of education shall then take the matter to the local school board and psychologist for discussion.

Additional directives relating to the execution of this article shall be given.

Article 55.

If a principal feels that a teacher or a teacher feels that a principal has broken this law or any directives relating to it, he may bring the matter to the local school board which shall in turn bring the matter as quickly as possible to the attention of the regional director of education. If the regional director of education feels that a solution to the problem can not be delayed, he may not attempt a solution, but shall rather bring the
matter immediately to the Ministry of Culture and Education which will decide.

If the parents or guardians of a student feel that a principal or teacher has broken this law or any directives relating to it, they may take the same course of action.

The treatment of such matters may also proceed according to law number 38 of 1954 on the right and obligations of public employees.

Chapter 7. Examinations.

Article 56.

Examinations in the compulsory school shall attempt to determine as reliably and as comprehensively as possible the results of the work of the school. Each teacher and each school should carefully follow the progress of the students toward the goals established by the school (see article 42). Examinations do not take place only at the end of a period of study, but are an integral part of the work of the school, inseparable from study and teaching. The main purpose of examinations is to encourage and help students in their studies.

Article 57.

Examinations in the compulsory school shall be uniformly administered by the teachers of the school (see article 58). The teachers shall provide accounts of the students' progress at the end of the school year or period
of study. This record shall be kept by the school and given in report cards.

Records relating to students are only given to the student or his parents or guardians or to other schools in the case of transfer. Such records may be made available to others for scholarly research, but strict confidentiality must be kept.

Article 58.

The Ministry of Culture and Education shall recommend a uniform standardized examination at least in the Icelandic language and mathematics as soon as possible. The purpose of this examination shall be to render a clear account of the progress of the work of the schools in these areas which are an integral part of the curriculum.

Article 59.

After the completion of compulsory school studies, the student shall receive a diploma stating that he has completed his studies according to the law. This diploma shall indicate the student's course of study and his electives in grades eight and nine, as well as the results of his final comprehensive examination. Final examination grades are absolute, with no teacher having any influence on them.

Article 60.

An examination period for administering the examinations mentioned above may be held as follows: grades one
and two, three days; grade three, five days; grades four, five and six, six days and grades seven, eight and nine, twelve days.

Such examinations, however, must not hinder the amount of instruction as required by law.

Article 61.

The Ministry of Culture and Education shall assist in the administering of these examinations by providing staff, which include test censors.

If the principal and local school board of schools offering instruction to grade seven or below desire to have special supervisors for examinations to be given in the last grade, the Ministry of Culture and Education may appoint such supervisors and the cost shall be shared equally by the state and the local authorities. The Ministry of Culture and Education may also make such an appointment at the request of the regional director of education.

Additional directives relating to examinations shall be issued by the Ministry of Culture and Education. Provisions shall also be made for the examination of students of compulsory school age who do not attend public schools.

Chapter 8. Educational research.

Article 62.

The Ministry of Culture and Education has the
responsibility for plans for the improving the work of the schools, research and experimental programs in the schools, assessment of the goals of education and curriculum, the developing of standardized tests, the revision of curriculum guides, the arranging of textbooks (along with the State Textbook Publishing Office) of new subjects under review, guidance and proposals regarding teacher in-service education and innovations in teacher training (along with institutions providing such training).

Article 63.

School inspectors shall be appointed to provide guidance for compulsory school instruction and to promote improvements in teaching methods. These inspectors are employed by the Ministry of Culture and Education and are appointed for a period of four years. In selecting school inspectors consideration should be given to their background in education and teaching experience.

Article 64.

Yearly appropriations from the state budget shall be made for research related to education and schools. The Ministry of Culture and Education shall determine the division of this appropriation.

Article 65.

The Ministry of Culture and Education may permit educational regions, local school districts and public institutions to operate experimental schools or conduct ex-
experimental programs within the schools which shall be exempt from laws and directives. Such experimental education may involve the areas of curriculum, length of the school year, etc., teaching methods, the amount of instruction and the placement of students. Such experimental education, however, must not hinder the carrying out of the provisions of article two of this law or in any way restrict the work assigned to the school.

If the cost of operating an experimental school is in excess of the usual budget, the additional amount shall be paid by the state and the other parties involved with the operation, provided the Ministry of Culture and Education has granted approval before the school or program commenced operation.

Chapter 9. Counseling and psychological services.

Article 66.

The regional boards of education shall as soon as conditions permit establish counseling and psychological services in the compulsory schools.

Two or more school boards may combine counseling and psychological services among two or more schools if the Ministry of Culture and Education approves.

If the Ministry of Culture and Education feels there are problems present delaying the establishing of counseling services, the regional director of education shall immediately take steps to correct these problems.
The Ministry of Culture and Education together with the regional directors of education shall make provisions for counseling and psychological services as required by this law. These plans shall be made in accordance with budget appropriations. Upon recommendation of the regional directors of education, psychologists, social workers and special teachers shall be selected. The regional board of education may also secure the services of a consulting physician for this work.

Psychologists, social workers and special teachers shall be appointed for a two year probationary period after which they shall receive permanent assignment upon the recommendation of the regional director of education.

The cost of counseling and psychological services shall be shared jointly by the state and the local authorities.

Article 67.

The work of counseling and psychological services is as follows: (a) to make use of counseling and psychological knowledge in the work of the school, (b) to assist in the improvement of the work of the school with respect to basic psychological difficulties of the students, (c) to assist in examining students who deviate from the normal and those who are not making adequate progress in their studies, (d) to advise principals, teachers and parents as to the type of instruction, upbringing and treatment best
suited for students under examination, (e) to make provisions for the treatment of students who have serious psychological difficulties and to provide guidance for their parents, (f) to assist in aptitude testing and counseling involving course selection and vocations and (g) to assist in research and study relating to counseling services.

Article 69.

The Ministry of Culture and Education has overall supervision of counseling and psychological services. It may assign to other institutions agreeable to the school the work of providing scholarly professional guidance and supervision of the psychological services of the school.

Article 70.

The Ministry of Culture and Education shall gather information on educational programs, employment and related subjects. It shall also assist in the publication of handbooks and other aids for teachers and counselors.

Article 71.

Counselors and school psychologists shall have completed a program of study approved by the Ministry of Culture and Education. The Ministry shall issue additional directives relating to the work and scope of counseling and psychological services and the educational requirements for school psychologists, counselors and special teachers. Supervisors of psychological services shall have at least a candidate's degree or similar degree in psychology.
The Ministry of Culture and Education upon recommendation of the regional board of education shall issue additional directives relating to the work of counselors and school psychologists.

Chapter 10. Libraries.

Article 72.

Every compulsory school shall maintain a library containing books and other educational materials. Study rooms shall also be provided for students and teachers. A school and public library may be combined if each party agrees and the Ministry of Culture and Education approves.

The library should contain books and other materials and have such facilities that it shall serve as one of the main educational resources of the school. It shall also contain all types of audio visual materials and the necessary equipment for the use and reproduction of such materials.

Additional directives relating to school libraries shall be issued by the Ministry of Culture and Education.

Chapter 11. Health services.

Article 73.

Health services in the school shall be provided according to law no. 61 of 1957 concerning health services in the school and directive no. 214 of 1958 and subsequent changes. The person concerned with health services in the schools shall with the principals make plans for providing
health services in the schools of the district, such as the provision of nurses, school doctors and dentists who will provide their services at specified times during the school year.

If a public health office is located in the vicinity of a school, it may provide health services for the school according to law no. 56 of 1973 concerning public health services.

The principal bears responsibility that health services are provided in his school according to the provisions of this law.

Chapter 12. Pre-schools

Article 74.

The local authorities may establish pre-schools for children of the ages five and six in connection with the compulsory school and under its administration if the Ministry of Culture and Education approves its plans. The financing of the pre-schools shall be the same as that for compulsory schools.

Pre-primary teachers should have completed teacher training or have a teaching certificate. They shall be paid the same as teachers of grades one to six of the compulsory school. Those who have completed a course of study in pre-primary education shall have priority in assignment to pre-primary classes.
The pre-school may be located in the compulsory school facilities.

Private schools for children below the compulsory education age may be operated only with the permission of the regional director of education.

Chapter 13. Private schools

Article 75.

The Ministry of Culture and Education may certify private schools providing compulsory education in all grades, or several grades, as well as pre-schools, which are maintained by private individuals or organizations if they are operated according to regulations relating to similar public institutions. Teachers in private schools shall have the same credentials as those in public schools. Children attending private schools are exempted from attending public schools (see article 7), but their parents or guardians bear the responsibility of informing the local school board at the beginning of each school year the course of study the student is pursuing, as well as any changes that might occur relating to his education.

Private schools do not have a claim to public funds.

Chapter 14. Finances

Article 76.

The state pays or reimburses the local authorities for all salaries for instruction in the compulsory schools.
[This is based on a formula involving hours of instruction and student attendance.]

Article 77.

The state also pays for or reimburses the local authorities for administrative costs, library and teaching aids, and social activities for the students. [This is also based on a formula involving hours of instruction and student attendance.]

Article 78.

The state shall pay or reimburse the local authorities for the salaries of test censors (see article 61), for the management and operation of dining facilities and for the transporting of students.

Article 79.

Maintenance of educational facilities and the replacement of equipment shall be paid for from local funds. Building rentals shall be paid for by the state.

Initial equipping of libraries shall be paid half by the state and half by the local authorities. The maintenance of and additions to the collection shall be paid for from local funds.

The state shall pay from 50 to 80 percent of the cost of transportation of students.

Health services shall be paid half by the state and half by the local authorities.
The state shall pay for housing and travel for teachers who are appointed to serve in more than one school.

Article 80.

In schools financed jointly by the state and the local authorities, the salary of the building manager, heating, lighting, cleaning and all operating costs not assigned to the state shall be paid for from local funds.

Revenues from properties owned by the school go to the local treasury.

Article 81.

Schools operated for students who do not attend public compulsory or special public schools (see article 52) shall receive funds from the state for the cost of instruction and teaching aids as determined in directives from the Ministry of Culture and Education.

Article 82.

Each year the principal shall plan for the teaching organization, the number of hours of instruction and the operating costs for the school to be paid for from state and local funds. This plan shall be based on the fiscal year which is from July 1 to June 30 and shall be brought to the local school board which shall forward it by April 15 or another date determined by the Ministry of Culture and Education to the regional director of education after it has been approved by the local authorities concerning all matters relating to finance. If necessary this plan
may be reviewed at the beginning of the school year.

All such plans for the educational region shall be forwarded to the Ministry of Culture and Education by the regional director of education at a date established by the Ministry.

Article 83.

The salaries of teachers, principals and other staff appointed by the Ministry of Culture and Education shall be paid by the state.

Article 84.

The Ministry of Culture and Education has supervision over the finances of schools which are operated by the state and local authorities according to this law. Their annual financial accounts shall be given to the Ministry of Culture and Education for review and evaluation. The Ministry of Culture and Education has the authority to permit the regional director of education to assist in this work in his area.

The financial accounts of the school shall be reviewed in the same manner as those of the local authorities. Where two localities together operate a compulsory school, the local administrative officers together shall designate two representatives (and two assistants) to four year terms to examine the financial accounts of the school, The Ministry of Culture and Education and each local authority shall
have access to all such accounts and information relating to the operational costs of the school.

**Article 85.**

Salaries and operating costs of the regional office of education shall be paid by the state as follows: (a) salary of the regional director of education, (b) an annual allotment based on the number of hours of instruction and student enrollment in the district, (c) half the cost of counseling and psychological services as approved by the Ministry of Culture and Education, (d) half the rental of facilities for the regional office of education and (e) half the travel expenses of the regional director of education.

**Article 86.**

The state shall pay the initial costs for the construction of the regional office of education. For the purchase of a building a specific amount shall be paid by the state. All operating costs thereafter shall be shared equally by the state and the local authorities.

**Chapter 15. Enforcement of this law.**

**Article 87.**

The Ministry of Culture and Education has the authority to issue further directives and regulations regarding the execution of this law.

This law comes into effect immediately after passage and shall be executed in each school district as soon
as possible and as conditions (as determined by the Ministry of Culture and Education) permit, but no later than ten years after its passage. The part of this law extending compulsory education by one year to age sixteen should come into force in all parts of the country no later than six years after its passage.

The following laws are no longer in force:

- Law no. 19, May 17, 1928 on the Committee on Education.
- Law no. 34, April 29, 1946 on primary education.
- Law no. 5, April 10, 1968, article 5, on the council to investigate the lowering of state financing of primary and secondary education.
- Law no. 48, May 7, 1946 on secondary education.
- Law no. 123, December 22, 1947 on changes in law no. 48 of 1946.
- Law no. 21, April 15, 1970 on changes in law no. 48 of 1946.
- Law no. 49, April 29, 1967, articles 16-23, 25-26 and 28 on school costs and other matters.

Other laws which may be in conflict with this law.

Interim report.

Five years after the passage of this law the Ministry of Culture and Education shall present to the Althing a report on the execution of this law, especially relating to preparations that have been made to extend compulsory education to the ninth year.
The dissertation submitted by George Hanson has been read and approved by the following committee:

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

December 13, 1978
Date

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Director's signature