

# **SOCIAL CAPITAL AND EDUCATION**

**Comparative research between Poland and Iceland  
FINAL REPORT**

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## POLAND

Officially the **Republic of Poland**.

**Location:** a country in Central Europe. Bordered by Germany to the west; the Czech Republic and Slovakia to the south; Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania to the east; and the Baltic Sea and Kaliningrad Oblast, a Russian exclave, to the North

**Area:** 312,679 square kilometres (120,726 sq mi), the 69th largest country in the world

**Population:** over 38 million people, which makes it the 34th most populous country in the world and the sixth most populous member of the European Union

**Ethnic groups:** 96.7% Polish, 3.3% others. The largest minority nationalities and ethnic groups in Poland are Silesians (about 200,000), Germans (152,897 according to the census, 92% in Opole Voivodeship and Silesian Voivodeship), Belarusians (c. 49,000), Ukrainians (c. 30,000), Lithuanians, Russians, Roma, Lemkos

**Official language:** Polish

**Capital:** Warsaw

**Political regime:** democracy, with a president as a head of state, whose current constitution dates from 1997

**GDP (PPP) 2009 estimate** - Total \$688.8 billion - Per capita \$18,072

In respect of GDP Poland is the sixth economy in the UE, and twenty first world economy.

**Currency:** Złoty (PLN).

**Religion:** Roman Catholic (89%).

**Education:** Public education is free in Poland. Only weekend courses are paid. In academic year 2008/2009 there were 458 public and non-public universities, in which 1,9 mln people took education. Public expenses on higher education from public and private sources in 2005 made 1,6% GDP.

In a ranking of 500 best universities of the world ARWA 2009, two universities from Poland qualified: Jagiellonian University and University of Warsaw, both in fourth hundred.



## ICELAND

**Location:** a European island country in the North Atlantic Ocean on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge

**Area:** 103,000 km<sup>2</sup> (39,769 sq mi). The 107th country in the world

**Population:** c. 320,000 (175th in the world)

**Ethnic groups:** 93% Icelandic, 7.0% other- Poland 8,488 2.71% Lithuania 1,332 0.43% Germany 984 0.31% Denmark 966 0.31% Portugal 890 0.28% Philippines 743 0.24% Ex-Yugoslavia 651 0.21%

**Official language:** Icelandic

**Capital:** Reykjavík

**Government:** a representative democracy and a parliamentary republic

**GDP (PPP) 2009**

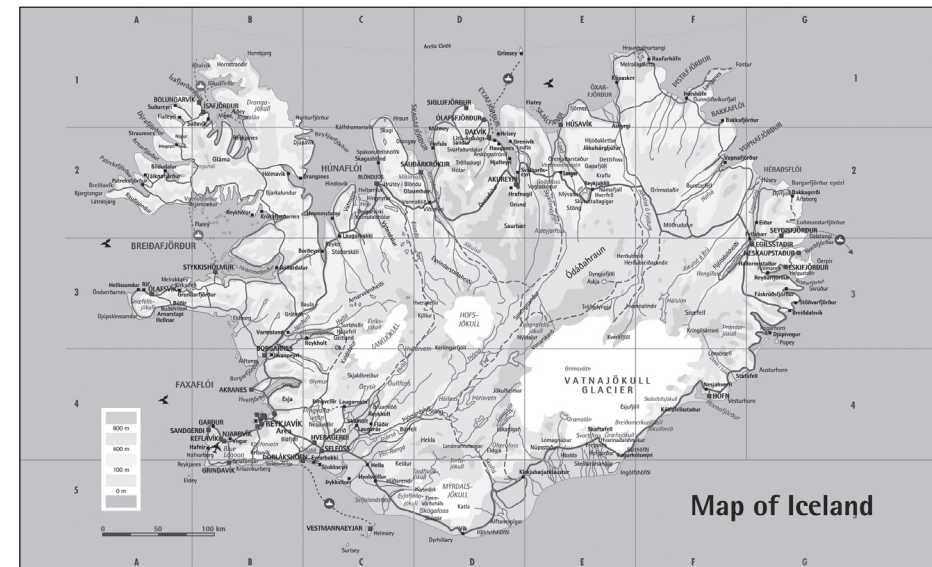
Total \$12.148 billion

Per capita \$38,022

**Currency:** the Icelandic króna (ISK)

**Religion:** National Church of Iceland (Lutheran) 80,7%

**Education** is mandatory for children aged 6–16. Most institutions are funded by the state; there are very few private schools in the country.



## Foreword

In the light of contemporary scientific and journalistic literature the term social capital may easily be considered one of the key resources of modern societies. Becoming substantially popular in the middle 90ties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in scientific publications, the discourse on social capital has appeared in economy, global economic policy and the social policy of almost all states of contemporary world, associated with the so called “Civilization of the West”. Social capital has recently become one of the most debated issues among the representatives of science, politicians and social practitioners. It is commonly considered to be one of the key factors responsible for the development of contemporary societies – from the sphere of civic participation to the tough economic outcome. The result has been reflected in an attempt to outline the Strategy of Development of Social Capital in Poland till the year 2020. It is one of the nine strategic documents adopted by the polish government in order to plan the actions aimed at fostering the modernisation of the country and improving the quality of life of its citizens.

It is not well known by all that the initial field of analyses, with the category of social capital in the background, was the field of education. The research conducted by two major theoreticians elaborating on social capital – James Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu, derived from the research questions related to the differentiation in school efficiency and revealed relations between functioning of schools with their social environment. The project “Social capital and education. A comparative study between Poland and Iceland” reflects on these relations and attempts to define the nature of relations between education (in a broad context, not only as formal education) and community. We ask about mutual conditioning of education and social capital in Poland, contrasting our findings with the results found in Iceland. Our research reveals the nature of social capital in both countries and constitutes a stimulus for further elaborations on educational effects of the defined dimensions of social capital functioning.

Poland and Iceland (more broadly Nordic countries) compose two edges of a continuum of the level of social capital – in Nordic countries it is one of the world’s highest, in Poland very low. Looking at the issues of our interest in two such distinct social environments we aim at understanding the conditions of creation of social capital and attempt to find positive applicable elaborations which could be implemented in order to create social capital in Poland, taking into consideration the major function of education – not least formal but also informal and non-formal.

The following elaboration presents the results of desk research undertaken in the framework sponsored by the resources of Scholarship and Training Fund, Development of Educational System Fund. The structure of work reflects the means of analysis and major interests of scientists working at the University of Lower Silesia and University of Iceland, cooperating for the purpose of this assignment. Starting with theoretical analysis of multidimensional nature of social capital we attempt to present educational development in both countries as well as the significance of social capital for this process. Consequently we will try to estimate the possible influence of education and beyond school education on local communities as well as on the creation of social capital in the above mentioned communities. Finally, we will make an attempt to indicate the outline of social policy framework as means of creating social capital using education.

The research analysing existing data – raw, existing elaborations of other authors, official documents – does not allow for a full comparison to be carried out. We have not made our own empirical research using the same tools. We based our work mostly on available data which is distinct for the two examined countries (also because of different fields of interest among local sociologists and educationalists). This has resulted in the elaboration which brings to light the nature of educational functioning in both countries as well as the relation between education and social capital – at the same time we may notice certain insufficiency, new questions emerge, which require further study and which open the perspective for further international cooperation.

Despite these restrictions we do trust, that the following report shall be of key interest for its readers. These may not only be social scientists, but also practitioners and politicians. That is the reason why this elaboration constitutes an attempt to balance the theoretical elaborations with the descriptions of certain solutions and practical guidelines.

The elaboration is opened by a theoretic introduction: *The Concept of Social Capital and its possible use in the comparative research aimed at supporting educational reforms* – elaborated by Gestur Gudmundsson and Piotr Mikiewicz. The text establishes theoretic framework for further analyses presented in the following sequence:

Part I: *The development of education in Poland and Iceland – description of both systems from a historical perspective* – elaborated by Jon Torfi Johansson and Kristjana Stella Blondal for Iceland and Piotr Mikiewicz for Poland.

Part II: *Social capital and education – interpretation attempt* – elaborated by Gestur Gudmundsson, Piotr Mikiewicz and Dagmara Margiela

Part III: *Practical applications – social capital concept utility in educational and social policy* – elaborated by the research group (Jon Torfi Jonasson, Gestur Gudmundsson, Piotr Mikiewicz).

The structure and means of presentation adopted in the report reflect the distribution of work between certain members of the research team. The report has a form of cooperative elaboration – individual chapters have been elaborated by different authors and constitute their own creation. The texts have been composed in a way to tell a concise story about the nature of social capital and its educational relation.



## INTRODUCTION

### – The concept of social capital and its possible usage in a comparative study that aims at informing educational reforms

Gestur Gudmundsson  
Piotr Mikiewicz

#### Introduction

The concept of ‘social capital’ became one of the most prominent in nowadays social sciences. Although first usage of the term ‘social capital’ took place at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, it took some time before it became an element of wider sociological discourse. As some sources claim (Putnam 2000, Woolcock 1998), the first author using the term in a way close to the one we know nowadays was Lyda Judson Hanifan, who dealt with the role of rural community schools.

“He was keen to stress that his use of ‘capital’ was metaphorical and that by ‘social capital’ he meant the progressive way in which a community – its spirit and its joint activities – is built. Hanifan was particularly interested in practical means and initiatives through which such a task could be accomplished, mentioning the important role of community gatherings, first for general entertainment, and later for some constructive purposes. But he already showed some theoretical insight by identifying social capital with the building up of social connections and sociability’ as he put it with ‘good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse’” (Castiglione, van Deth, Wolleb 2008: 2).

As Castiglione, van Deth and Wolleb claim, Hanifan’s intuition remained both underdeveloped and unexplored for the next sixty years as it did not offer any dramatic new insight beyond traditional convictions about the importance of civic education, or the Tocquevillian analysis of the socialising role that public associations play in civil life. However the term itself, or equivalent renderings appeared in economics and social sciences between 1950s and 1970s in several works of authors dealing with human capital and urban studies on one hand (Steely, Jacobs, Loury) and social networks on the other (Granovetter). And this is (as it we might suppose) the original context of the social capital origin as a theory and research strategy – the relation between education and human capital and neighbourhood and social networks. It is, as supposed, very important starting point of further analyses in this study. Education, more closely, educational performance, is the starting point of

the further development of the idea, elaborated in two parallel theoretical fields by James Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu.

It is also remarkable, that despite this original deployment (which will be examined later) the nowadays ‘success’ of the term is not associated with educational studies, but in the first place with the civic society and political studies. It is so thanks to the contribution of Robert D. Putnam and his works on Italian society (1993) and later transfer into USA context (2000). Basing on theoretical approach of James Coleman, Putnam proposed original theory of social capital, which started a wide discussion within social sciences and far beyond, about the importance of social ties and relations. In spite of a little group of critics (see i.e. Fine 2001, 2010) the term of social capital has become an element of ‘pocket dictionary’ of each social scientist, met the interest of economists, became an element of global policy. Social capital has become one of the basic explanatory variables for social inequalities, underdevelopment of some countries, level of delinquency and quality of life (in economical and psychological meaning). For policy makers SC is an interesting tool for social policy, for economists an important factor of economical development. As Dario Gaggio (2004) suggests, the concept of social capital seems to promise a reunion of split and incoherent social sciences. Alejandro Portes argues that it is perceived as a cure for all social problems (1998). This of course makes the term often misleading, overused and often in sociological readings one might find misunderstanding what social capital actually is and how it works. In this study we would like to examine the meaning of the term in main theoretical contexts and try to apply it in a comparative research on educational performance between Poland and Iceland.

#### 1. Social Capital – what does it mean?

During the last decade the concept of Social Capital has probably been the most widely used concept in international sociology and on the intersection of sociology and educational studies. It is an empirically oriented concept and therefore it is suitable to start with Nan Lin’s operational definition of social capital as “the resources embedded in social networks accessed and used by actors for action.” (Lin, 2001: p. 25). This definition emphasises that social capital does not have its home base within individuals but in social networks, while on the other hand it is used by individuals. All the main theoretical contributions, of Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam and Lin, agree that social capital is embedded in social relationships, but they differ as to their perspectives on the use of social capital. Coleman focuses on the individual use, Bourdieu on the use of social capital by certain social groups, and Putnam focuses on the function of social capital for communities. Furthermore Coleman focuses on the

use of social capital for educational purposes, while Bourdieu and Lin rather emphasise the use of social capital in business or in search for jobs and social status. Finally, Bourdieu stresses the interconnection of social capital with economic and cultural capital in the reproduction of class inequalities and hierarchies, while Coleman finds that social capital is much more democratically distributed than the other capital forms and thus a powerful engine of social mobility.

Understanding social capital as the resources in social relations and relationships implies that the concept has deep roots in sociology that can be traced back to Marx, Weber and Durkheim. However, conceptualising these resources as capital did not start until the 1980s, when sociologists started to view resources of social relations in connection with the concepts of human capital (where James Coleman elaborated on the ideas of Gary Becker) and cultural/symbolic capital (Bourdieu) that had been developed since the 1960s.

We start with Coleman who played a central role taking the concept of social capital into the mainstream of sociological research from the late 1980s, then deal with Putnam who has for more than a decade been the dean of social capital research and then take up Bourdieu whose critical perspective of social capital is important to include. From these theoretical positions we will deal with some empirical research on SC and education, and finally we will set up some landmarks for our own comparative investigation of educational history in Poland and Iceland.

### James S. Coleman

Already during the 1960s James S. Coleman (1926-95) earned a strong reputation through his thorough empirical research and innovative analysis on youth (high-school) culture and on racial inequalities in education in the US. He carried on through his lifetime with huge empirical projects on high school trajectories and later he developed into a central figure in the making of "Rational Choice Theory" which combined sociology and economics. One of his major contributions was his short but seminal article "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital" that was published in *American Journal of Sociology* in 1988. Here Coleman drew on his empirical findings and focussed on family relations and community relations that could explain when pupils and students would perform better at school than should be expected from their socioeconomic background. With this article Coleman established the concept of Social Capital as a key explanatory concept of social mobility. In a relatively simple and clear form he hereby laid the foundation for the use of this concept.

To understand fully his approach, we must see the use of social capital as a part of the general rational choice theory built by Coleman. From this perspective individuals are free agents, purposely and rationally acting to maximise utility. Individuals are affected by the structural features within which they act, as a source of information and general circumstances of action.

„If we begin with a theory of rational action, in which each actor has control over certain resources and interests in certain resources and events, then social capital constitutes a particular kind of resource available to an actor. Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, makes possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible (...). Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors. It is not lodged in the actors themselves or in physical implements of productions“ (Coleman 1988: 98).

For Coleman Social Capital is on one hand an aspect of social structure and a means to facilitate individuals to improve their situation and attain other social goals. Thus social capital is both an asset of a community and of individuals, but in his research Coleman paid primarily attention to individual mobilization of resources that are embedded in social relations. It was primarily through such mobilization that Coleman identified social capital, defining it by its function, not by intention.

The general construction of social capital lies in:

1. Obligations, expectations and trustworthiness in structures
2. Information channels
3. Norms and effective sanctions

(see: Coleman 1988: 102-105)

Drawing from his huge samples he could establish a connection between educational performance and family and community relations. Coleman's conceptualisation owes a great deal to Durkheim's emphasis on social cohesion. According to this view, young people who become socially mobile tend to come from families with strong internal relations, where parents help and support their children through school. These families are likely to be highly integrated into a community that may be centred around a church and/or other organisations, where common norms and beliefs are reinforced in everyday interaction. Members of such communities have



a high level of trust in central institutions, they are likely to offer help to their neighbours and take to some extent common responsibility for upbringing. Like Durkheim (in *Suicide*, 1897) had found that Catholics in general are stronger in social cohesion and solidarity than Protestants, Coleman (in Coleman and Haffer, 1987) found high success rate in Catholic high schools and ascribed it to tight communities surrounding the schools.

Coleman not only built on empirical material but also developed theoretical argumentation. Here the 'closure' of social relations in groups and networks are of primary importance. Coleman argued that such closed networks would have greater potential than more loose networks to socialise and regulate behaviour according to norms that are generally accepted in the network. When families with close relations are embedded in communities of closure, the effect of peer relationships would furthermore be minimized, and Coleman was generally sceptical about peer influence, as expressed in his *Adolescence Society* (1961). As Alejandro Portes argues (1998), social capital is in the first place a means (or aspect) of social control. Effective sanctions, within structure of strong ties and structural closure make a 'positive social space' for socialisation and upbringing of young people – in the end in school performance.

Other researchers and theoreticians have elaborated on Coleman's concept and its operationalization in empirical research. For instance Fukuyama (1995) has elaborated on the importance of trust for economic development, but the best known elaboration is found in the works of Robert Putnam.

### Robert D. Putnam

In the same year as Coleman died and Fukuyama published his elaboration on Coleman's work, Robert Putnam coined the phrase that made Social Capital the in-concept of American sociology "Bowling Alone. America's Declining Social Capital" (Putnam, 1995). Putnam largely took over Coleman's approach, both theoretically and the method of gathering huge empirical material from varied areas in US. But he changed the focus from social mobility and the individual mobilisation of the social capital in their social relations to social capital as features of social life that enable collective action and constitute a part of social structure.

"Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue." The difference is that "social capital" calls attention to the fact that civic vir-

tue is most powerful when embedded in a sense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital" (Putnam 2000: 19):

"by 'social capital' I mean features of social life – networks, norms, and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (Putnam, 1996: 56, here cited from Schuller et al., 2000)

Such definition leads to research focus on density of social networks, depth of involvement in formal and informal social organizations, voluntary civic activity. Social capital can be analysed as a volume or level of social activity and diagnosed in terms of low or high level of devotion to community life.

Putnam saw alarming developments taking place in America, summing up with the demise of the prototypical social activity of American common man who now was found bowling alone. In his bestselling book (2000), Putnam gathers extensive material on political, civic and religious participation, as well as indicators of informal social connections, voluntary engagement and sense of trust and reciprocity. The graphs are depressing in Putnam's optics. With few exceptions the indicators on participation and trust have been falling for the last decades.

However, Putnam finds that there are new networks and groups that run counter to the general tendency of declining social activities and at the same time new and widely used channels for communication have established highly globalised networks and communication channels. Here the development is so rapid that Putnam's account from 2001 must be seen as mostly out-dated and the research into new social ties on the Internet and Mobile phones is still too rudimentary to draw secure conclusions. However, Putnam insists that Internet relation will never produce a Social Capital that will replace the capital based on face-to-face interaction.

While Coleman (and Bourdieu) emphasised the close social ties in families and communities that are based on shared norms, beliefs etc., Putnam has adopted a different view. Based on Mark Granovetter's study (1973) more distant ties are often more useful to find jobs or business opportunities, and this "strength of weak ties" has later been transformed into the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. The former type is the type of the close community, with its strong and continuous social regulation, while the second type rather consists of acquaintances to members of other communities. Putnam cites Xavier de Souza Briggs (1997) for characterising the qualities of these two types as bonding social capital is good to "getting by" while bridging social capital is crucial for "getting ahead".

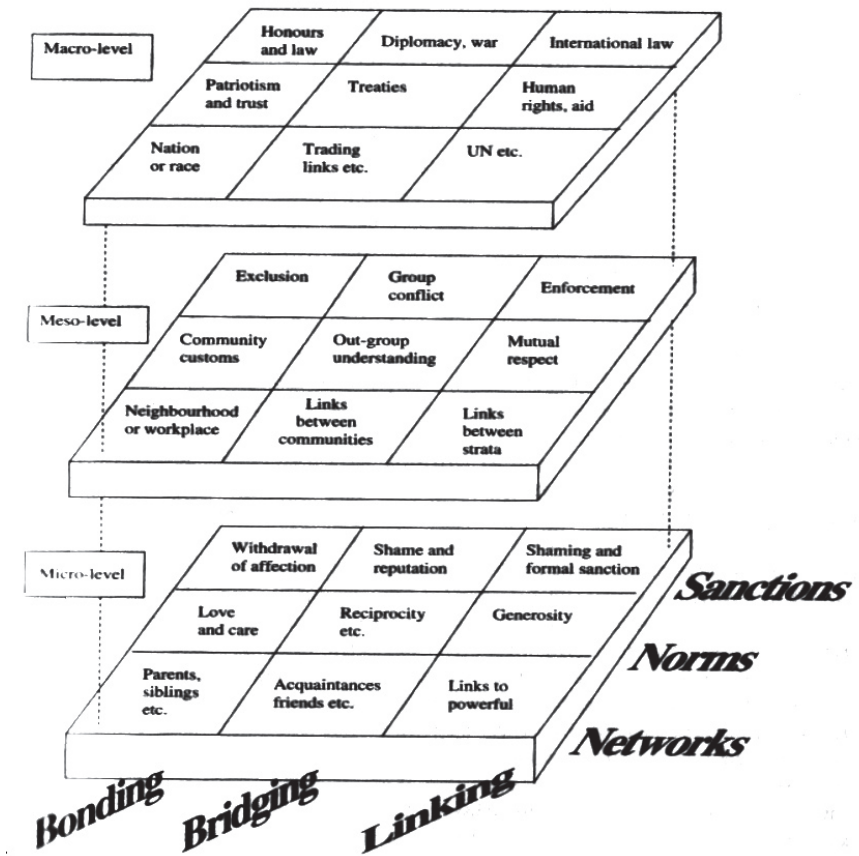
“Bonding capital is good for under-girding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity... Bridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion.... Moreover, bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves.... Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40” (Putnam, 2000, s. 22-23)

Michael Woolcock, a social scientist with the World Bank has argued that many of the key contributions prior to *Bowling Alone* failed to make a proper distinction between different types of social capital. He distinguished between:

- *Bonding social capital* which denotes ties between people in similar situations, such as immediate family, close friends and neighbours.
- *Bridging social capital*, which encompasses more distant ties, such as loose friendships and workmates.
- *Linking social capital*, which reaches out to unlike people in dissimilar situations, such as those who are entirely outside of the community, thus enabling members to leverage a far wider range of resources than are available in the community. (see: Woolcock 2001: 13-4)

The concept is being put further by David Halpern, who produces multilevel model of social capital functioning, which makes social capital theory, a theory of society per se. Halpern indicates three dimensions of social capital: *networks*, *norms* and *sanctions* on three levels of social organisation: *micro*, *mezzo* and *macro*. They interplay and affect elements from each level. Thus the volume of social capital on each level contributes to the assets of social capital in the entire society.

Graph 1:



Source: Halpern 2005

In this perspective social capital seems to be indeed a cure for all social problems and ultimately positive factor. As Putnam claims:

“First, social capital allows citizens to resolve collective problems more easily... People often might be better off if they cooperate, with each doing one’s share. (...)

Second, social capital greases the wheels that allow communities to advance smoothly. Where people are trusting and trustworthy, and where they are subject to repeated interactions with fellow citizens, everyday business and social transactions are less costly....

A third way in which social capital improves our lot is by widening our awareness of the many ways in which our fates are linked (...) When people lack connection to others, they are unable to test the veracity of their own views, whether in the give or

take of casual conversation or in more formal deliberation. Without such an opportunity, people are more likely to be swayed by their worse impulses (...).

The networks that constitute social capital also serve as conduits for the flow of helpful information that facilitates achieving our goals.... Social capital also operates through psychological and biological processes to improve individual's lives. (...) Community connectedness is not just about warm fuzzy tales of civic triumph. In measurable and well-documented ways, social capital makes an enormous difference to our lives"

(See: Putnam (2000: 288-290).

With Coleman, Putnam started out emphasising the need of general trust within communities, but later (Putnam 2000) he favoured the term "reciprocity" as he pointed out that trust can be passive, while reciprocity stresses the active actions. Reciprocity is for Putnam not only bilateral, it is generalised reciprocity that forms the basis of social capital.

While Coleman could be criticised for faith in "old school" cohesive communities, Putnam pointed out in his analysis of political culture in Italy (Putnam, 1993) that, 'traditional' villages and towns in Southern Italy were hierarchical and authoritarian and fostered mutually distrustful citizens, while the more modern towns in the North rather fostered voluntary civic participation. Thus, his ideal for communities with rich social capital belongs clearly to the Durkheimian category of 'organic solidarity' rather than 'mechanical solidarity'.

### **Pierre Bourdieu**

Most citations on Bourdieu's concept of social capital are from his 1983 essay "The Forms of Capital" that has later been reprinted in numerous textbooks. This essay is 8 pages long, and many scholars who cite it seem largely unaware of other writings of Bourdieu and of the fact that he developed his concepts throughout his whole life and insisted that the important quality of sociological concepts is how they can be used to analyse empirical material.

It is important to see Bourdieu's concept of social capital as a part of a larger theory and in relation to other key concepts, such as habitus, field, symbolic violence, misrecognition and, of course economic, cultural and symbolic capital. This theory evolved gradually through various empirical research and a meticulous scrutiny of data and findings, helped by Bourdieu's philosophical training and his steadily growing application of the sociological heritage, from Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Mauss to Norbert Elias, Raymond Aron, Erving Goffman, Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck

and others. During this journey Bourdieu's definitions and usage of the key concepts evolved. In "The Forms of Capital" Bourdieu distinguishes between three forms of capital – economic, cultural, and social, seemingly at the same level. However, in his empirical analyses social capital never had that position, he rarely used the concept, compared with the concepts of economic, symbolic and cultural capital.

Donald Broady (1991) has convincingly argued that Bourdieu gradually developed a primary distinction between economic and symbolic capital and identified social and cultural capital as specific forms of the symbolic. In the social spaces that Bourdieu analysed he found cultural capital most important and social capital as only secondary, although he pointed to some events and development where social capital was a central explanatory concept, and his approach would not rule out that in some cases social capital can be the central most important form of capital.

We must remember though, that general term 'capital' has for Bourdieu relational character. It is always connected to the logic of the field, governed by habitus, depends on field recognitions. Every form of 'capital' is a capital only within particular context – in other field it is not only meaningless, it does not exist. From this perspective, it shouldn't be stated, that some forms of capital are more important, but we should investigate the whole set and interplay of capitals within the field occupied by agents equipped with habitus.

It is also important to stress a kind of paradoxical switch in perspective between Bourdieu and Coleman. While the latter derives his concept from individualistic rational choice theory focused on structural features of the social system to understand individual action, the first one taking off from structural perspective of social constructivism ends with analyses focused on individual action. However, one must remember that Bourdieu's explanations of social action are always structural in kind. The concept of habitus hooks up individual action in structural circumstances of creation of his/her consciousness. In other words, in contrary to Coleman's view, social actor of Bourdieu is never free and rational. He/she is rational within socially structured frame of habitus, which is ultimately shaped by class origin. Individuals are 'reasonable' rather than 'rational' and it is a significant difference of language between Bourdieu and Coleman or neoclassical economy (see: Bourdieu 2005).

Social capital is always an element of the whole explanatory model used by Bourdieu. Having this in mind, it seems safe to ascribe the following definition of social capital a lasting value in Bourdieu's writing. For him social capital is:

„made up of social obligations or connections [...] the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to

membership of a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (Bourdieu 1983/1986, 248).

This means i.e. that Bourdieu defines social capital as collective assets that can be used by individuals or subgroups within the network:

“the volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilise and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom is connected” (p. 21).

Thus the wider network we are connected to and ‘richer’ members of the network, the higher volume of the social capital we possess. Here it must be borne in mind that Bourdieu did not define as capital any heap of resources that individuals can use, as some of the writers on social capital seem to do. Bourdieu declared (Bourdieu 1991, pp. 229-252) that his approach presupposed a series of breaks from Marxism, but in fact those were rather breaks with French traditions of Marxism, especially their class theory, than with Marx. Bourdieu’s theory of capital is rather an expansion of Marx’ capital theory than a break. Most important here is that Bourdieu’s capital concept just as Marx’ implies that heaps of resources can only be called capital when they also contain social relationships, power relations and social mechanisms. Like other forms of symbolic capital it usually requires hard labour to acquire social capital, it is constantly threatened by devaluation and it has to be accumulated. It consists in accumulated resources from the past that give its owner power over production of such resources in the present and future.

Social capital does not take much space in the empirical work of Bourdieu, and when applied the concept is always linked with other key concepts, as shown in the following examples.

In *Distinction* (1979/1984) Bourdieu presents the capital concepts as a trinity, with social capital ranking lowest:

“The overall volume of capital, understood as the set of actually useable resources and powers – economic capital, cultural capital and also social capital.” (p. 114)

Originally published the same year as ‘The Forms of Capital’, the essay ‘The Field of Cultural Production’ (English translation, 1993) contained two usages of the Social Capital concept:

“The crisis of the 1880s affected the Naturalist novelists severely, especially those of the second generation, as well as a proportion of the writers who, having started

out as poets, converted into the novel genre, with the psychological novel, a cultural and especially a social capital much greater than that of their Naturalist rivals.” (p. 54)

„It is also because economic capital provides the guarantees (assurances) which can be the basis of self-assurance, audacity and indifference to profit – dispositions of which, together with the flair associated with possession of a large social capital and the corresponding familiarity with the field, [...] point towards the outposts, the most exposed positions of the avant-garde, and towards the riskiest investments, which are also, however, very often the most profitable symbolically, and in the long run, at least for the earliest investors.” (p. 68)

In *The Rules of Art* (1992/1996), Bourdieu’s historical analysis of the genesis and structure of the literary field in France, social capital is mentioned twice (in 400 pages). In both cases he is pointing out that social capital adds to the assets of cultural and/or economic capital and is highly dependent on habitus, as a certain writer is described as being “totally devoid of social capital and, as is often the case, of the dispositions that allow its acquisition” (p. 361, n 65.) and furthermore:

„The sense of placement/investment seems to be one of the dispositions most closely linked to social and geographical origin, and consequently, through the social capital which is its correlative, one of the mediations through which the effects of a contrast in social origins, and especially between Parisian and provincial roots, manifest themselves in the logic of the field.” (Ibid, p.262)

These usages show that Bourdieu primarily used the concept of social capital as a correlative and mediation of economic and cultural capital, but at the same time he assumed that social capital could have more primary importance when looking into other social spaces and other research questions. For Bourdieu social capital, is intrinsically linked to social inequality, it is one of the assets which are passed on from one generation to another and it is closely linked to other assets, mainly cultural capital and habitus, so we can sum up with Horvat:

„Social capital can be conceived of as the set of valuable connections of an individual. Unlike Coleman, Bourdieu recognizes the unequal value of various network ties. In the school setting, the ties that are valuable are by-and-large middle-class. (Horvat 347)



### Two meanings of social capital

The Above presented review shows that there are at least two different meanings of social capital. It is strongly connected with theoretical background of origin of the term. For Coleman, and furthermore for Putnam, social capital is:

1. Feature of the community – although analyses are put at the usage of the capital by individuals
2. Stress is on the ties, relations, trust – structure which enables individuals to act more effectively
3. The stronger ties the better – more closed community, with dense relationships and more civic activity, the higher volume of social capital. There is an assumption that in such circumstances people will cooperate more often for common good.
4. Social capital is an unexpected effect of purposive action – people do not act to build social capital, they act to achieve their particular goals. If they cooperate they create social structures which help them to achieve their needs.

On the other hand, tradition derived from Bourdieu's, shows social capital as

1. Feature of individual agent, who possess different forms of capital useful within particular field
2. Stress on the individual investment and usage of the membership in the social network
3. The volume of social capital depends on size of the network and on assets possessed by members of the network
4. Social capital is an effect of investments of individual

Such recognition leads to two different strategies of sociological investigation on social capital and education. First, derived from Coleman's and Putnam's tradition, will focus on communities and their features – often applied questions about civic activity, participation in grassroots movements, local gatherings, general characteristic of human capital of the community – measured by level of formal education. As an example we can point *Social Diagnosis* (2009) in Poland, where social capital is operationalized by: generalised social trust, membership in nongovernmental organisations, participation in voluntary public gatherings, voluntary participation and initiation of social actions for public good in local community, voting in parliamentary elections, general attitude towards democracy.

Second possible strategy, derived from Bourdieu's tradition, leads to more process oriented analyses of individual actions, strategies of parents and pupils, how they act within the social sphere to achieve their goals. At the same time it should be accompanied with investigation on recognition of the field, occupy other resources, habitus etc. It means that such strategy requires rather different research methods and tools – rather qualitative than quantitative, rather case studies then gathering collective data, rather insights then generalisations.

### Social capital and education - empirical research

Especially since the late 1990s there has been a vast explosion in empirical research into social capital. Although much research (see Granovetter, 1973; Lin 2001) has indicated that social capital may have greater impact in the realm of economy and after education is completed, a considerable proportion of research has been centred around the connection between social ties and educational attainment, which is also the research interest of this paper.

Several overviews over theoretical contributions and empirical research into social capital have stressed that there is no uniform definition of the term Social Capital, except in the broad sense of "resources that flow through relational ties." (Crosnoe, 2004: 268) Overviews generally report that empirical measurements of social capital vary greatly; there are different indicators, and even similar indicators can be expected to have different meanings in different types of communities.

However, an important general trend can be observed. While Coleman put the emphasis on communities with close ties – Catholic communities or other communities where church and school formed a twin core, supported by multiple networks of agents, as parents, business people, members of organizations etc. – research in social capital and education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century seldom looks at such nexus of networks – such approaches are rather found in studies of social capital and economy (Szreter, 2000). Research in the field of education has followed the gloomier picture of Putnam and does not expect to find such an nexus, but looks instead for central ties that can do the trick of social capital in an individualised society. Most commonly parent-child relations are investigated, and/or the school culture more generally, and often an indicator of broader community ties is found in parent-school relations and/or in the ethnic background of children and parents.

A good example is found in Crosnoe (2001) who has developed a scale for measuring parent-adolescent relationships along "three well-established dimensions of parenting: affective ties, shared activities, and security" (p. 270). According to the author this measures not social capital itself but its channels, as do other measures

applied in the study, student-teacher bonding in school and how parent-adolescent relations are reflected in school. Social capital is more directly measured through parent educational attainment, and finally the effects on school achievement is measured in two ways.

The result of this study is that both family-based and school-based social capital correlate with academic achievement and, furthermore, that they are not independent of each other. Thus the general finding is that school- and family-based social capital are clustered together. However, examining different groups in the sample, variations were found that support other research finding “that the academic performance of African Americans is less reactive to family dynamics and that Asian Americans demonstrate a greater adult orientation than other groups.” (p.276)

Here Crosnoe joins the interest in differences between ethnic groups which has for a long time been a strong feature in studies on social capital. One can say, with Janet Holland et al (2007) and Jon Lauglo (2010), that social capital has become a metaphor or umbrella concept for finding background factors other than traditional SES measures, that can explain variations in school performance. Here ethnic groups, especially rather newly immigrated ethnic groups, are handy as distinguishable groups of different cultural patterns that have not yet been melted or moulded by SES structures in new surroundings.

For the last twenty years several research contributions have concluded that children of immigrants in the Western countries have achieved relatively better academically than the native populations, when controlled for social class and cultural capital. Gibson and Ogbu (1991) reasoned that members of immigrant minorities were “trying harder”. Steinberg (1997) supported the conclusion, and Zhou and Bankston (1994), Portes and MacLeod (1996) and Lauglo (2000) not only came to similar results but explained them by the concept of social capital. The immigrant children, who achieved more than their social class and cultural capital would suggest, came largely from cohesive families of closed communities that supported and regulated their children.

Jon Lauglo (2000) analysed data from a questionnaire survey which covered 94% of all 15-17 years old in Oslo in 1996. He found that non-western immigrants scored significantly higher as regards family cohesion, effective monitoring and backup by parents and involvement with the school, and – more importantly – that this difference was the most likely to explain why the immigrant youth achieved more in school than could be expected from their social and cultural background.

In this discussion of the so-called immigrant ethos certain ethnic groups are frequently pointed out as high achievers, not least groups from the East Asian culture

of Confucianism, while other groups like West-Indian immigrants in UK are pointed out as low achievers. However, one should be cautious to link such results with “ethnic culture”, as, firstly, this culture has been shaped by mechanisms of voluntary and involuntary migration, social structure in previous host areas etc. Secondly, the life conditions of migrant groups are differentiated by more factors than social class and cultural capital. For instance a recent study reports that immigrant businesses often contribute to social cohesion and educational motivation among immigrants who arrived in a new country with little value of cultural capital and entered into the lowest social positions on the labour market (Gudmundsson, 2010 forthcoming).

At least two caveats should be taken into account: Firstly, that the quantitative studies that suggest a democratic distribution of social capital are often time-limited, - the relation between cohesive regulation and school achievement is not documented in longitudinal studies. Could it not be the case that immigrant pupils under strict regulation of parents achieve relatively (controlled for social class and capital) higher than their native peers at the age of 15-17, while the native youth are to quite an extent using these years to test boundaries and develop peer relations and will often become late bloomers at the tertiary level? Entering the labour market they could be expected to use their wider social ties, while the hard-working immigrant youth will meet barriers of discrimination?

Secondly, studies that suggest a democratic distribution of social capital are often limited and based on crude measures. Thus, Lauglo’s measure of cultural capital consists in counting books in the shelves at home, while other studies rely on children’s reports on parents’ education. Horvat (2003) argues, through a literature review and through her own intensive ethnographic research into social capital, that “parental networks vary across class categories”. With empirical and theoretical reference to Bourdieu & Passeron (1970), Bernstein (1974), McLaren (1998), Mehan et. al (1996) and Stanton-Salazar, 1997) she argues that schools are essentially middle class institutions that reward middle-class behaviours. She describes the essential mechanism as follows:

“... the behaviours that most easily map onto the expectations of teachers and others at school are those that are most likely to be rewarded. In the realm of social capital, the connections or parental networks that are the most valued in school settings are those that provide leverage in this middle-class environment. Parent’s connections to middle-class professionals thus provide them with valuable capital in the school setting.” (Horvat, 2003:347n2)



In her own ethnographic research she finds clear class patterns. Middle class parents form contact with each other through frequent meetings, e.g. when they deliver kids to school and through leisure activities. They are more likely, than working class parents, to take joint action in relation to school and they have a lot more contacts with professionals, contacts which they use for the benefit of their children. Working class and poor parents have also several social ties, but primarily to their relatives and neighbours and they do not use these ties in relation to their children, and are far more passive in relation to school than middle class parents. Thus, social ties are turned into social capital by middle class parents, but not by working class parents.

The same can be derived from works of other British scholars, as Stephen Ball (2003), and others, who show how social relations are recognised and deployed as a capital within the field of education mainly by middle class. Social capital is in this perspective a tool to 'make a distinction'

As this review has shown, like most often in serious scientific work, the concept of social capital does not offer a hocus-pocus concept to open up the solid cliffs of social inequality and reproduce barriers for educational reform. However it offers theoretical and methodological perspectives to examine important features in the social context of education – not one perspective but a few and some contradicting in crucial ways. How can these perspectives be made fruitful in our endeavour?

### **Perspectives for further desk research in Poland and Iceland**

The review does not end with a judgement – we are not answering who is right, Coleman, Bourdieu, Putnam, Lin or ... The intention has rather been to open the field and make some demarcations. There is no need to try to settle the dispute, whether or when social capital is distributed in a fairly democratic way or whether and when it is mainly a part of reproductive mechanisms that also include economic and cultural capital, gender and ethnicity. A partial conclusion should be that social capital is a double-edged sword and only by action we can see which edge is the sharpest.

By action we of course mean empirical research. This review should help us to clarify the research questions and research design of our project. As it is our intention to facilitate educational reform we can formulate our general research question or the goals of the project (here in a preliminary draft form)

From the above review we can derive two optics of school analyses:

1. Education as a field of symbolic interplay and struggle for resources in the process of social allocation and reproduction - Bourdieu's perspective

2. School as an element of local community affected both by social circumstances and affecting social realm within which it is settled – Coleman's and Putnam's perspective

Poland and Iceland are very different social settings - in terms of economy, social history, size of population etc. The general aim of the undertaken project *Social capital and education. Comparative research between Poland and Iceland* is to examine the differences and similarities of functioning of the educational system. The general question is thus:

1. What do we know about educational settings and processes in each country?
2. How education in each country is affected by mechanisms of social capital – from both above mentioned perspectives?
3. What kind of "good practices" can we find in each country worth implementing in the other as a mean of educational and social policy?

We should primarily be looking for examples where social capital functions to enhance social mobility and dynamics of social ties. It can be assumed that historical studies can suit this purpose well, as changes and dynamics can simply be better identified over time and by some distance. However, such examples need not be old history. Educational reforms in the near future can learn more from recent history than from earlier epochs, but at the same time the distance can often help us to identify mechanisms that may be at work in our close vicinity but are hidden from us by our everyday 'misrecognition' (Bourdieu).

Furthermore we should explore available recent datasets on young people and their educational achievements looking for elements that can be used as indicators for social capital – family relations, relations between family and school etc. There are examples of qualitative studies that have explored elements of social capital, sometimes using the concept, sometimes not.

These studies should be done with different conceptualisations of social capital in mind. When we follow Coleman's lead and look for individual benefits from social capital, Bourdieu must be there too, to remind us to ask not only *cui bono* but also *cui male*. Are we talking about win-only situations or are the winners benefitting at the cost of others? Do the mechanisms, that produce social mobility for the few, also contribute to the reproduction for many? When we follow Putnam's lead and look for the creation of social capital in certain networks or communities, Bourdieu must also remind us to ask if such networking is creating benefits at the cost of some

others. Let's find out which edge – or both – of the social capital sword is hitting the population in our cases.

In the following parts of this elaboration we are going to present diagnoses and analyses based on existing research material – raw data, existing publications and scientific articles – prepared by individuals from the research group. The concluding steps of present report are presented in the following order:

Part I: **The development of education in Poland and Iceland – description of processes and historical perspective of the system** – elaborated by Jon Torfi Johansson and Kristjana Stella Blondal for Iceland and Piotr Mikiewicz for Poland

Part II: **Social capital and education – interpretation attempt** – elaborated by Gestur Gudmundsson, Piotr Mikiewicz and Dagmara Margiela.

Part III: **Practical application – social capital utility in educational and social policy** – elaborated by the research group.

## PART I

### **The development of education in Poland and Iceland – description of both systems from a historical perspective**

## Introduction

by Piotr Mikiewicz

While the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be described as the age of industrial expansion, the 20<sup>th</sup> century can undoubtedly be called the era of growing significance of education and, as a result, increasing importance of educational institutions. Mikołaj Kozakiewicz distinguished three periods in the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century education:

- I. Years 1900-1940 – struggle for promoting elementary education;
- II. Years 1945-1965 – raising the obligatory education period to 8, 9 and 10 years, making secondary school education obligatory;
- III. Years following 1965 – beginning of university education expansion (Kozakiewicz 1973: 15)

Members of western societies spend longer and longer period of time in schools where they are influenced by ever more specialized educational agencies. At the same time, for these people school education is an obvious path to entering the society. Research done by Finnish sociologists Ari Antikainen, Jarmo Houtsonen, Juha Kauppila and Hannu Huotelin showed significance of education in shaping of an individual's identity (1996). Based on interviews with people of various age, the above authors showed that for those born before 1936 education was not an element of daily life, particularly for people from lower social classes. For them it was an ideal, dream, hard-to-access promotion path whereas for people born after 1955 school education appears as something obvious and natural. It is as integral to human biography as living in the family they were born in. School experience becomes more and more important for building human identity and personality.

*Society of Knowledge* is a term used more and more frequently to characterize the period at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In his book *The Third Revolution*, Harold Perkin speaks about great revolutions in the world's history: neolithic, industrial and the revolution of the society of knowledge happening right in front of our eyes. The author shows that the modern world is the world of professional experts. "Just as pre-industrial society was dominated by landlords and industrial society by capitalists, so post-industrial society is dominated by professionals. Their power, prestige, influence and incomes stem from their possession of specialized knowledge, based on education, competitive merit, and experience on the job – in a word, on their human capital." (Perkin 1996: 1). According to the author, just as

pre-industrial society was based on power of factory owners, so now society of professionals, society of knowledge is based on power of people "who control expertise in its manifold forms" (Perkin 1996: 1). Alvin Toffler comes to similar conclusions in his writing about the Third Wave society. He defined its beginning to take place in 1973 when the number of white collars in the USA exceeded for the first time the number of blue collars (Toffler 1986). Changes in production methods are inevitably related to transformations in the education system which prepares employees for economy.

Perkin shows some elements typical of society of professionals. According to him, these characteristics include, among others, high living standards for all people, development of service sector, professional hierarchy instead of class structure. Meritocracy is the principle based on which people are recruited for individual job positions. Women's significance in the economic and public life is growing. The role of public sector in economy is also increasing and welfare state is being established. A growing number of people with university education can also be observed. In 1991, the percentage of society with university education was 36% in the USA, 16% in Great Britain, 15% in France and 22% in the Federal Republic of Germany. Society of experts also means expansions of huge corporations and shaping of global economy. Now, as never before, the world economy is based on knowledge-processing (Perkin 1996: 22).

Similarly, Bary Nyhan indicates a process of transition from *old economy* to a *new knowledge-based model*. According to the author, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we could distinguish three periods. The first of them was the aforesaid old economy model, the so-called skill-based economy where the main impact was put on preparation of a competent, specialized employee. The 80s saw the beginning of transition to the new model where, in addition to specialist skills, also involvement and personal competence were of great importance – the so-called competence-based economy model. As Nyhan says, in years 1990-2000 a new knowledge-based economy model was established where knowledge was understood in a broader way, not as mere possession of some information but as ability to obtain and process this information, ability to learn and to be flexible – a knowledge-based economy model (Nyhan 2002).

These processes are undoubtedly related to the development of education sector. In 1977 gross enrolment ratios in university education stood at 44% in Germany, 52% in Great Britain, 50% in Sweden, 51% in France (International Statistics Year 2000). In 2000, in the European Union countries on average 63.5% of people aged 25-64 had at least secondary school education. In some Member States this ratio

was significantly higher – 81.3% in Germany, 80.7% in Great Britain and 77.2% in Sweden ( Eurostat Yearbook 2002). At the same time, in the EU countries, the number of recorded students went up more than twice compared to 1975 (Key Data on Education in Europe 2001). In Finland the level of gross school enrolment ratio increased from 7.8% in 1960 to 83% in 1998, which illustrates the dynamics of changes in European education.

Education is perceived as a basic factor conditioning development – both of entire societies and individual biographies. Through education, the British social policy at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries wants to introduce an inclusive society doctrine or, in other words to build “the middle class society”. As Anthony Giddens indicates, “Education and training have become the new mantra for social democratic politicians. Tony Blair, in his already famous saying defined three main priorities for his government as ‘education, education and education’” (Giddens 1999: 97). The report prepared by the International Commission on *Education under Jacques Delors for UNESCO (2001)* is on a similar note. It explicitly emphasizes the connection between economic development and the level of societies’ education. The same track is followed also by other analyses indicating interconnection between Gross Domestic Product and the number of students per 100 residents (see Auleytner 2001).

In the dimension of an individual, it is stressed that people with university education have more chances to find a job. Meanwhile, the processes of expansion of secondary and university education lead to inflation in diplomas and lowering of their value on the market. The mere fact of graduation from a university school assures neither high income nor even a job itself. The results of this situation could be noticed in Western Europe as early as in the 80s. Ulrich Beck wrote back then about formation of society of risk where there are no beaten tracks of professional career. Besides other numerous life risks experienced in the contemporary world such as nuclear destruction, Beck pointed to degeneration of social guarantees which used to be provided by education. He defined education as a **ticket to nowhere**. As much as the lack of a certain level of education excludes people from participating in job competition, just holding a university diploma does not guarantee success. According to the author, it is no longer one’s ascribed status or education which determine their social fate but the human resources staff. Now, it is the labour market to be a new selector determining who will succeed and who will be pushed to the margin of society (2002).

We cannot agree with this kind of diagnosis when following the perspective of Raymond Boudon’s analyses. While indicating the diploma inflation processes taking place in the 70s in France, Boudon showed at the same time that it did not cause

revolution in the social distance structure. Wide-spreading of secondary and university education does not mean by any means reduction in distances. It only brings forth university diploma inflation and devaluation, and shifts the entire population one level up in terms of the education structure (Boudon 1982). Similar conclusions are made by Randall Collins who, when describing mechanisms of status competition between individual social groups, pointed to the fact that growing aspirations of people coming from lower classes naturally cause defensive mechanisms in members of upper classes. They use the so-called *escape forward*, meaning getting even higher qualifications to maintain their relative advantage. If there is no escape forward, then we can observe differentiation in the diploma value. A prestigious school diploma is worth more than a less prestigious school diploma (Collins 1979). Oxford or Harvard graduates are very well aware of this fact. Thus the education path taken is significant for the shape of human biography.

We are touching a very important question of functioning of the mass education system in a modern society. It is embroiled in two socio-political discourses which condition its functioning and evaluation. First of all, it is meritocracy discourse related to the open society concept where the value of individual is validated by their achieved status. Education is to be that qualifier picking out the best and placing them on the paths leading to prestigious social positions. On the other hand however, education is entangled in the discourse of levelling social differences. It is to eliminate the influence of the ascribed status, which is also related to the open society concept. Meanwhile, as sociological forecasts show, the education system does not decrease the level of social inequality. Certain elite school paths are taken by young people from upper classes while other, worse ones are reserved for lower classes. This makes education even more significant element in the functioning of the modern society. It maps out social paths for individuals forming a bridge between childhood and the moment of entering the labour market. While in early capitalism changing one’s social position compared to the position of their family was possible only through individual economic activity, now members of western societies believe that only through educational achievements they can ensure to themselves a good social status. Education is the field where competition for status between individuals and social groups takes place (Collins 1979, Boudon 1982, Hurn 1978). Social belief in education being the only (or at least the most important) means of social mobility is the basis for harmonious social reproduction, similarly to belief in free market rules being the basis for capitalist economy.

In the following chapters we present the mechanisms of educational expansion in Poland and Iceland, in search for certain similarities and with emphasis on historical conditioning of discrepancies.

## Changes in contemporary educational system in Poland

Piotr Mikiewicz

In Poland one can observe the same processes of educational expansion as in all industrialized countries, however they started with much delay comparing to the West. Like industrialization, educational expansion starts for good in Poland after World War II. After the time of struggle with illiterateness the number of years of schooling rises consequently and the proportion of young people in secondary and tertiary education expands. In the school year 1960/61 65% of young people aged 15-18 studied in secondary schools. In the school year 1970/71 it is 74%, in school year 1979/80 reaches 81% and in school year 1986/87 gets the proportion of 84%. The participation in tertiary education was much worse. In school year 1980/81 the gross scholarization rate at the tertiary level was 11,5% and ten years later not much more - 12,9% (Statistical Yearbook of Poland 1970, 1980,1991).

Till the collapse of the soviet system Polish educational system was consequently pointed at the training of low qualified workforce. Basic vocational education was the major element of the secondary education till 1989. In this year we had in Poland 1177 general upper secondary schools (lyceum) gathering 21% of graduates from primary schools, and 3404 basic vocational schools to which 50% of the 15 year olds attended (Statistical Yearbook of Poland 1991). It was of course associated with the model of economy based on hard industry and the political circumstances of the former socialist regime, which emphasized the labour force as "the leading class of the nation".

Year 1989 is without a doubt a ground-breaking time in social history of Poland. The term "social transformation", used to describe the processes which took place in Poland after 1989 is still adequate to explain the dynamics of changes observed in our country. Next to the sphere of politics and economy, the field of education is one of the most visible changes in the social structure and culture. As all other spheres of social life, education is involved in fluctuations of the time of the transformation. Educational system relieved from the political restrictions and put in the logic of the market, in the time of 20 years totally changed its appearance.

The change from the 'central planning' into the 'free market system' forces the (r)evolution of the structure of the economy. From the beginning of 90-ties one might observe slow, but consequent shift from the mass production in industry to the more service-oriented market (typical for highly developed countries of Western Europe). The change of the logic of the economy, and the implementation of new technologies, caused the emergence of the unknown before phenomenon of mass unemployment. This unemployment was structural in character – affected individuals with inappropriate competences in the new market situation. The first wave of unemployment affected simple-skilled workers, with basic vocational education obtained. High-qualified people, with high education achievements, easily found jobs in the new vocational structure. It was a clear signal for society, that education matters. Young Poles, who entered the school system in 90-ties reached the message without a miss. Through their "push on education" they produced a change in the structure and functions of the school system. As Zbigniew Kwieciński pointed out "people in new governmental and economic circumstances through their decisions produced the structural changes in secondary education" (Kwieciński 2002: 10).

As an effect of that "push" we can observe dynamic changes in the structure of secondary education (however without formal change of the system). In the school year 1994/95 basic vocational schools were entered only by 36% of the graduates from primary school, to general education schools 31%, which is 10% more than five years earlier. In school year 1999/2000 we had 2156 GES (Lyceums) and the number of BVS decreased to 2408. At that time 38% of 15 year olds started their education in lyceums with 26% in BVS (*Education in the school year 2001/2002 [Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2001/2002]; Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2000*).

In 1999 educational reform act emphasizes that the general academic education and the vocational training is marginalized even more. Two years later in the school year 2001/2002 the number of BVS decreases to 2372 and covers only 22% of the primary education graduates. After several years of implementation of the reform, nowadays BVS serves only 16% of graduates.

The structure of young people in secondary education differs slightly from region to region. Table 1 presents the changes in that matter in Toruń Region, northern part of Poland. It shows how deep was the change that took place in the system throughout 30 years.



Table 1. The Dynamics of post-compulsory education in Torun region (in %)

School type	Year of inquiry			
	1972	1986	1998	2003
General education schools (lyceum)	15	18	42,9	57,1
Technical schools and specialized secondary schools	21,5	30,5	23,1	32,4
Basic Vocational schools	63,5	51,5	34,0	10,5
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: Z. Kwiecieński, *Wykluczanie [Exclusion]* 2002; J. Domalewski, P. Mikiewicz *Młodzież w zreformowanym systemie szkolnym [Young people in the reformed educational system]* 2004;

The dynamic of the changes on tertiary education level is equally deep. At the time of the soviet system in Poland, the expansion of this sector of schooling was restricted. In 1960 the number of 50 higher education institutions was established. In school year 1989/90 it was 98. After 1990 the possibility of private education occurred, which caused the avalanche growth of the new higher education institutions. In 1991 we had 112 HEI in Poland, in school year 1995/96 it was 179, and in 2000 rises to 283. After year 2000 the growth is even bigger – each year we have almost 30 new such institutions. In school year 2000/2001 it was the number of 310, next year 344, and nowadays it is a number of 455 institutions (public and private) serving the rapidly growing number of students. In the 90-ties the number of students in the tertiary level raised almost 4 times. In 1989 it was a number of 374,2 thousand, and in 1999 rises to 1425,8 thousand. Nowadays in Poland higher education institutions offer their services to over 1900,0 thousand students (Winclawski 2003, Wasielewski 2003, Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2008, 2010). It is also visible in the scholarization rates. In school year 1990/91 the gross scholarization rate of the tertiary education was 12,9%, in year 1995/96 rises to 20,3%, in year 1999/2000 rises 36,9%, in school year 2005/2006 indicates 48,9% and 53,7% in 2010.

Gross scholarization rate in tertiary education after 1990

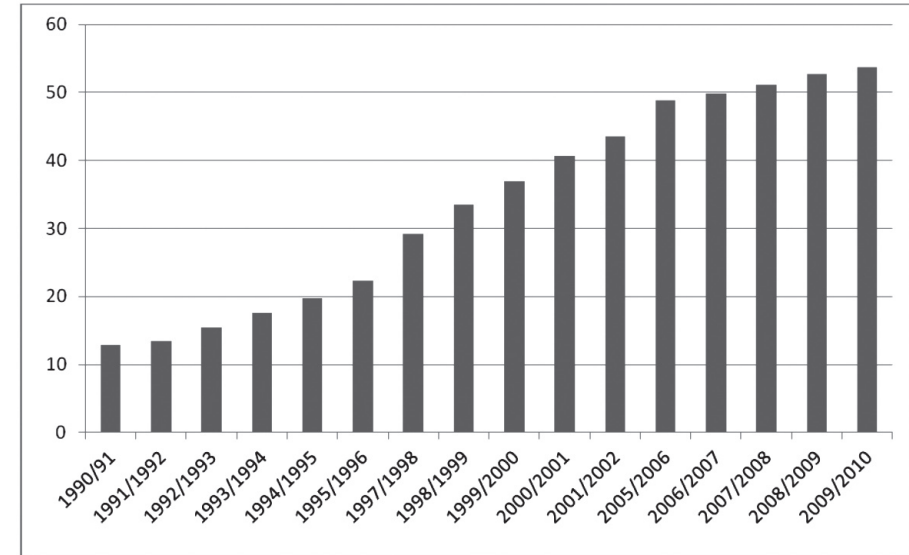
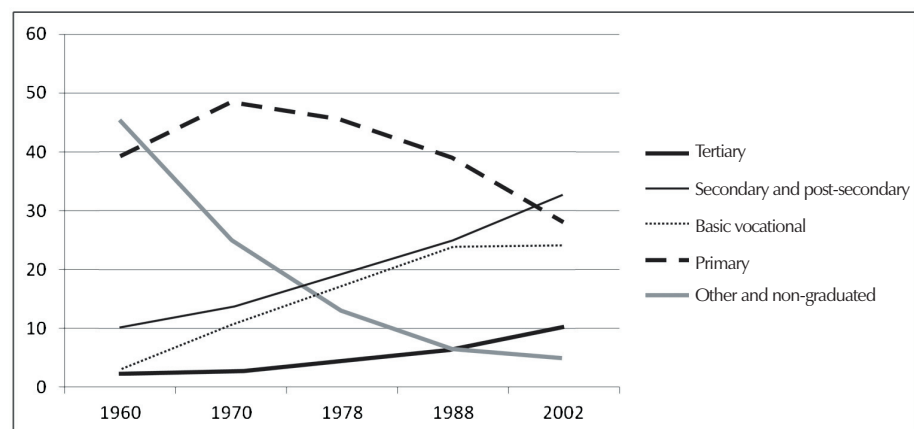


Table 2. Numbers of students in tertiary education in Poland after World War II

School year	Number of students (in thou.)
1945/46	55,998
1950/51	125,096
1955/56	157,465
1960/61	165,687
1965/66	251,864
1970/71	330,8
1975/76	468,1
1980/81	453,652
1985/86	340,709
1989/90	378,387
1990/91	403,8
1999/00	1 431,9
2000/01	1584,8
2005/06	1953,8
2009/10	1900,0

As an effect of long-term changes in education and its role in life course we can indicate the radical change in the population - educational structure (based on the national census)





In the period of 40 years the education of Poles has been significantly changed. From the society characterised by basic and lower education, we have become a nation with the dominant group of secondary education. Over the course of years we can clearly notice the decrease in participation of individuals with low competences and the steady increase of the group completing secondary schools and entering universities. Furthermore, a stop in the increase of people with vocational education has to be emphasized – for 30 years the consequently rising percentage (from 3,1% to 23,6% of population) has remained on the same level between the census of 1988 and 2002. The previously described mechanisms of the increase of popularity for secondary and tertiary education may undoubtedly explain the fact. We may expect, that the data obtained from the latest census, planned for April 2011, will show how much has the structure of education changed in favour of secondary and tertiary education.

The proceeding expansion has not remained without any influence on social discrepancies (at least in some aspects). Although the general structure of social gaps does not change (as will be proved in further analyses), basing on the data referring to the education of Poles, we may notice another change in the scope of discrepancies between men and women. There is no distinctive pattern for this issue, though, we may see that women who traditionally had worse education than men, now seem to take a better advantage of educational system. This can be best seen in the structure of people with higher education – for the first time women comprise a greater group than men in the census from 2002. We may notice the advantage of women in groups with the lowest education. Still, there is a question concerning the effects of transformation of educational market after 2002, which may be noticed when we have access to data from 2011 census.

### Contemporary educational system in Poland (since 1999)

In 1999 the reform of the education system was implemented. It has been the deep structural and curricular change, devoted to bond more closely the changes in market and in general social life with education. New school should teach how to think and flexibly adapt to the changing world. The best tool for this, is (as it is presented) the general and academic education. Vocational education is marginalised. Let's have a short closer look at the new educational structure.

Young individual can enter the educational system at the age of 3, by the attendance to nursery schools. They serve children aged 3-5 or 3-6. Six year old children should attend compulsory preschool preparatory class – so called “Class 0”. Education in nursery schools is usually charged. Nowadays only 50% of children aged 3-5 is enrolled at this stage of education.

The regular education starts at the age of 7, when children are enrolled into the segment of primary schools. Primary schooling lasts for 6 years and is divided into two phases. First – grade 1-3 (age 7-9) – contains so-called early-school education. After this preparatory time, equipped with basic competences, children start education in regular class-lesson system - grades 4-6 (age 10-12). Education in primary school ends with the external examination of pupils' competences. Children write the examination consisting of two parts: humanistic and mathematical. This examination has no selective nature and is designed to measure the level of competences and to give teachers at the next stage of education the knowledge about lacks and disadvantages, which should be diminished and compensated for through education in gymnasium.

After primary education, children are enrolled into the lower secondary segment – still compulsory - gymnasium. Education here lasts for 3 years - grades 1-3 (age 12-15). The aim of gymnasium is to prepare to the education at the upper secondary level. Gymnasium concludes with another external exam checking the competences (again in two spheres: humanistic and mathematics). The external exam after gymnasium is relevant because the score obtained is the basis for the enrolment to one of the tracks and certain school at the upper secondary stage of education. Secondary schools establish cut-off scores, on the basis of which selection of pupils to a given type of a secondary school takes place. Following the reform from 1999, education at the post-lower secondary level is offered in the following educational pathways:

General upper secondary schools (LO Liceum Ogólnokształcące) - three-year schools providing general education for those preparing to take up university studies: education there concludes with an externally assessed examination - Matura (A-level examination).

Specialised upper secondary schools (LP Liceum Profilowane) - three-year schools providing narrow-ranged education, preparing students to take up university studies, but also allowing students to obtain professional qualifications; education there is concluded with an externally assessed examination - Matura (A-level examination). Students in specialised upper secondary schools can choose from 15 specialisations: chemical tests of environment, business and administration, electronics, electro technology, fashion design, shaping the environment, forestry and wood technology, mechanical techniques of production, mechatronics, agricultural and food processing, art and usable metal craft, social science, transport and dispatching, services and economy, information management. Over half the students in specialised upper secondary schools choose two specialisations: business and administration and information management.

However, a gender breakdown shows women choosing business and administration most frequently and men choosing information management.

Technical upper secondary schools (TZ Technikum) - four-year secondary schools providing the possibility of sitting the Matura and going to university, but also allowing students to obtain a professional technician diploma in a narrow range of technical professions; education there concludes with externally assessed examinations: the Matura (A-level examination) and the examination of vocational competencies. Students in technical upper secondary schools and complementary technical secondary schools can choose, amongst others, from professions which belong to the following groups: technicians, mid-level personnel in the fields of biological sciences and health safety, salaried personnel in the remaining specialisations, money management, customer servicing; and others (amongst them: personal services and security).

- A different tendency is observed amongst women - 63,5% women choose professions which belong to the group of "employees in the remaining specialisations", where there are such occupations as technician economist, technician of administration or archive technician.

**Basic vocational schools (ZSZ - Zasadnicza Szkoła Zawodowa)** - two or three-year vocational schools, narrow-ranged, aimed at delivering concrete vocational competencies, they provide a possibility of further education in **complementary general or technical upper secondary schools**, which then enable students to continue learning at universities;

- Basic vocational schools provide education for occupations which belong to the following groups: farmers, miners, builders; **workers of metal processing and**

**mechanics of machines and devices (the most popular among men and women)**, performers of precision jobs, ceramists; makers of haberdashery, printing workers and related; the remaining industrial workers and craftsmen; operators and fitters of mining and processing machines: drivers and vehicle operators; the remaining ones (including, amongst others: workers of personal services and security as well as models, shop assistants and demonstrators).

The biggest segment of post-lower secondary schooling in Poland is, at present, general upper secondary school with over 43% of people at the age of 15-19. Then there is a technical upper secondary school, basic vocational school and specialised upper secondary school. Specialised upper secondary schools are not very popular, despite the fact that their idea was to provide a middle way, between technical secondary school and traditional secondary school (perhaps that is why no-one knows what they are exactly and which type of education they offer). It is clear that young people prefer the educational pathway leading to Matura examination and opening the door to universities.

Table 3. Percentage of students aged 15 to 19 in the structure of post-lower secondary education in school year 2007/2008

Type of education	Number in thou.	%
basic vocational	235,6	14,5
general upper secondary	713,3	44,0
specialized secondary	110,5	6,8
technical secondary	542	33,4
total	1601,4	100,0

Source: Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2008

Table 4. Percentage of youth in the structure of post-lower secondary education in terms of sex in school year 2007/2008

Type of school	Sex	
	females	males
Basic vocational school	29,0	71,0
General upper secondary school	61,0	39,0
Specialised upper secondary school	59,9	40,1
Technical upper secondary school	38,9	61,1

Source: Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2008;

Girls more often than boys choose general upper secondary schools, but more rarely technical upper secondary schools and basic vocational schools. The state-

ment may be made that girls are more geared for a longer duration of education and making a career in high school, while boys prefer such types of education that gives them vocational competencies. However, one can notice an increase in the number of boys in upper secondary schools (1995/1996 -19,1%; and in 2005/2006 to 39%). Therefore, while in school year 1995/1996 there were 213 females for every 100 males in general upper secondary school, in school year 2005/2006 - there were as many as 151 females for every 100 males.

### Social disparities in education

The changes I tried to put out above caused the situation in which 85% of graduates of the compulsory education enters the educational pathways leading to 'Matura' and is able to start education at the tertiary level. The academically oriented secondary education is really common and we are facing the change of the structure of education within the whole society. In the older cohorts still the vocational education is the majority, but the younger cohorts are more and more educated. What is relevant – changes in the structure of educational enrolment in secondary education were forced by the aspirations of young people, and the free-market-education responds to this need. Secondary education seems to be 'natural' and obvious level of education as the primary education was in the past.

General, academically oriented education is much more emphasized in Poland than vocational schooling. The change in the perception took place – as at the beginning of the 90-ties general education and university entrance were perceived as something better and asset, though the vocational education wasn't treated as something worse and worthless. It was simply enough to obtain basic vocational education to receive good job. We could observe the positive selection into the best educational pathways – the track: primary school, lyceum, university, used to be called the 'royal path of education' leading to the best occupational and social positions (Kozakiewicz 1973). Till the beginning of the 1990s the main mechanism of selection was **inclusion** of the best skilled pupils into GES. Many researches showed that this educational path involved mainly children from families placed in higher social positions. This mechanism has been changed in the middle of 1990s when the inclusion mechanism of the best turned into **exclusion** of the worse skilled into basic vocational schools. Nowadays they are really excluded from the main education current which is the beginning of social exclusion process. This is a very homogenous group, both in respect of their school competence and social background.

But on the other hand, does the fact that 45% of all pupils attend GES and almost 90% attend schools leading to Matura exam mean that the level of their competence

is so high? Does the expansion of education equalised the educational and occupational opportunities for all, despite the social origin? Has the relationship between the status of the family of origin, on the one hand, and the allocation of individuals in the post-compulsory (upper secondary) education structure, on the other, become less pronounced?

Such expectations are off course naive. New educational structure brings new divisions and creates new forms of channelling young people as education is the great mechanism of allocation in the social structure and is inevitably involved in the processes of social reproduction. Later on I would like to put attention to these new divisions by presentation of the main findings collected in the research project entitled Young people in the Reformed School System. The project was implemented in all upper-secondary schools of Toruń and Toruń region in October and November 2003. It covered the whole population of these schools' first-graders – a total of 4,069 pupils. The applied research tool was a questionnaire survey conducted at school. It included questions about parental education and occupation, place of residence, educational plans and career-related aspirations of the students. We also collected information about their results and marks scored at the lower-secondary school (gymnasium) exam and their secondary school graduation certificates. The applied research procedure is to some extent a continuation of longitudinal research implemented since the early 1970s, which consisted in tracing the school and life careers of selected age groups. This research, initiated by Zbigniew Kwieciński and then continued by Ryszard Borowicz and Krystyna Szafranec, has been implemented until the present day<sup>1</sup>.

In our analyses, we focused on four problems of key importance:

- pupils' achievement at school (results of junior high school tests and school marks),
- actual social and school-related selections after leaving lower secondary school (gymnasium),
- young people's aspirations.

These are the most important problems in the analysis of the selection threshold following lower secondary education.

What is the mechanism of the structural change in upper secondary education mentioned above? It turns out that the popularisation of education at the level qualifying for university entry has been accompanied by differentiation within school types. Our research results indicate not only essential differences in the level of

<sup>1</sup> see: R. Borowicz, *Plany kształceniowe i zawodowe młodzieży i ich realizacja*, Warszawa 1980; Z. Kwieciński, *Dynamika funkcjonowania szkoły*, Toruń 1995; Z. Kwieciński, *Wykluczenie*, Toruń 2002

school achievement among high school students, technical school students and vocational high school students but also differences within individual school types, in which it is possible to distinguish categories of schools whose pupils represent quite different levels of educational competence (see table 4).

Table 4. School achievements (school marks and lower secondary school external exam score) in different types of secondary schools

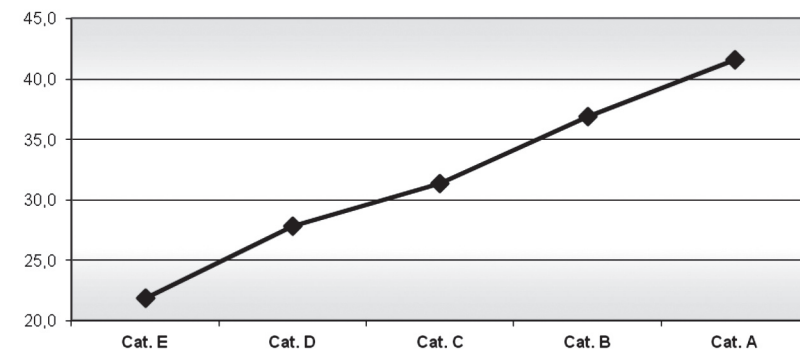
School achievement	The secondary school types				Total
	General education School	Specialised upper secondary	Technical school	Basic vocational school	
Very low	1,4	8,6	7,0	44,5	7,4
Low	5,8	22,7	19,5	30,1	12,7
Lower-average	10,6	22,2	27,5	14,9	16,2
Average	23,5	25,4	30,6	7,2	24,0
Higher-average	21,6	15,1	10,3	2,4	16,4
High	20,9	4,9	3,9	0,5	13,5
Very high	16,1	1,1	1,1	0,3	9,8
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: J. Domalewski, P. Mikiewicz *Młodzież w zreformowanym systemie szkolnym [Young people in the reformed educational system] 2004;*

Specialised upper secondary and technical schools are attended by young people of average and below-average educational competence. Basic vocational schools gather students with lowest school achievements. High schools are more differentiated, but it is clearly seen, that they gather the best part of lower secondary school graduates. As it is the largest part of secondary education level it is not surprising that high schools vary greatly from one another. Some of them are attended by young people with outstanding educational achievements, other by pupils with above-average achievements and there are also schools which group together pupils with average and below-average competence. So in fact these schools do not differ in this respect from vocational high schools and technical schools. Therefore, a rise in the number of GES pupils resulted in lowering the threshold for access to this type of education. Practically everybody who has achieved average school results has a chance to start education at a high school. But this does not mean that the competence of pupils attending different schools is equalised downwards. We can observe division into five categories of secondary schools:

- Schools of category A** – grouping together young people with outstanding achievements (high schools)
- Schools of category B** – grouping together young people with above-average achievements (high schools)
- Schools of category C** – grouping together young people with average achievements (schools, vocational high schools and also high schools)
- Schools of category D** – grouping together young people with below-average achievements (schools, vocational high schools and also high schools)
- Schools of category E** – grouping together young people with lowest achievements (basic vocational schools)

External exam score and school category



As recently as the mid-1990s pupils with average and below-average school achievements, who now attend general secondary schools, would not have a chance for this type of education owing to their insufficient educational competence. The educational potential of these youngsters is much lower compared to the potential of their peers who attend GES which group together pupils representing above-average and outstanding school achievements. This means that it is impossible to implement curricula at a similar level in all schools of this type, despite the fact that the schools are formally obliged to follow the same programme of education. The equalisation of opportunities through placing a pupil in a school which formally provides the same education as traditional GES, coupled with the low level of competence represented by all youngsters attending this type of school, is a fiction and a sort of deception. You cannot change a vocational school (until recently these buildings were occupied



by technical schools, basic vocational schools and primary schools) into a high school by merely changing the sign board. In any case, such a high school will not be of the same sort as schools which once constituted the “royal educational path.”

Secondary schools differ not only in regard to the school competence of their pupils but also in regard to their social background. This, of course, is rooted in the correlation between school attainments and the status of the family of origin. Therefore, different school environments which are formed as a result of different levels of their pupils’ competence also constitute separate social environments. Consequently, school selections continue to be social in character – channel young people with different backgrounds into separate educational paths. Despite the fact that young people from families with lower social status now have easier access to schools qualifying for university entry, most of them attend technical schools, specialised upper secondary and those GES which group together pupils representing average and below-average school competence (schools category D and C).

Table 5. Social composition of schools of each category

Family of origin social status	School category					Total
	cat. A	cat. B	Cat. C	cat. D	cat. E	
Low	1,4	6,5	14,7	22,4	38,2	15,8
Lower middle	7,2	13,3	22,1	26,5	30,9	20,5
Middle	33,7	49,0	51,2	44,0	28,3	44,3
Higher middle	23,1	16,4	7,2	5,1	2,2	9,9
High	34,6	14,7	4,7	1,9	0,5	9,4
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: J. Domalewski, P. Mikiewicz *Młodzież w zreformowanym systemie szkolnym [Young people in the reformed educational system] 2004;*

We have found, that the education structure is divided into three social worlds:

- the world of basic vocational schools, dominated by young people from families of low social positions,
- the world of schools qualifying graduates for university entry (high schools, vocational high schools, technical schools), which are more varied socially and are dominated by pupils from families of medium social status, with a considerably strong presence of young people from low-status families,
- the world of schools forming socially elitist environments, dominated by pupils from high-status families.

Nowadays 85% of the young are on educational paths which enable them to continue education at college and university level. In this sense, we have to do with

equality of opportunities. However, there are two aspects to which attention should be paid: firstly, different levels of young people’s aspirations, and secondly, the impact of their staying in homogenous educational and social environments in the course of secondary education.

### Students’ educational aspirations

One of the first indicators of the social aspirations of nowadays students are their educational plans and aspirations. Although it is quite soon (according to the time of schooling) educational aspirations of 16 year olds can be treated as some predictor of the future decisions.

Table 6. Educational aspirations of young people in the first grade of the upper secondary school (in %)

Educational aspirations	School type				Total
	GES	SSS	TS	BVS	
Basic vocational	-	-	0,1	7,2	0,8
Upper secondary	6,6	34,5	40,9	75,8	24,5
Bachelor degree	9,6	16,0	20,9	8,0	12,8
Master degree	58,5	28,4	28,7	4,1	43,2
Master degree plus (doctoral degree and others)	25,4	21,1	9,4	4,8	18,7
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: J. Domalewski, P. Mikiewicz *Młodzież w zreformowanym systemie szkolnym [Young people in the reformed educational system] 2004;*

We can observe great differentiation of the aspirations between GES and other types of secondary schools – especially between GES and BVS. What is important – most of first graders in BVS plan higher level of education than that they actually obtain – most of them want to continue education in complementary GES or TS. Still they have much lower aspirations than their peers from the GES, who want to obtain at least a master degree. We can clearly observe, that different types of schooling gathers pupils with different level of aspirations. GES are places for ambitious pupils, basic vocational are for those with a lower level of hope, technical school and SSS are places in the structure where young people aspire to the mid-educational positions.

But the situation is much more complicated. As I have put it above, we can observe not only division into different types of schooling, but also into different categories of schools within the same type. Educational aspirations seem to be associated with the position in the school category as well as with the social origin – the social position of family.

In lyceums of category D (gathering pupils with relatively low level of school competences) over 20% of students planned to obtain only the secondary level of

education, and ‘only’ 50% planned to get the master degree in the future. At the same time students in schools of category A were much more ambitious – however 56% planned to get the master degree, but almost the same proportion was ready to fight for something more (doctoral degree, MBA, and so on). And we must remember that we are talking about aspirations of students aged 16! If we treat the education as a road to the adulthood and the social position in the future, we can see, that quite early young people are aware to what aims they are predestined (see table 7).

Table 7. Educational aspirations in different types and categories of schools (in %)

Educational aspirations	Type and category of school								Total
	GES Cat. D	SSS Cat. D	TS Cat. D	GES Cat. C	SSS Cat. C	TS Cat. C	GES Cat. B	GES Cat. A	
Upper secondary	20,7	39,7	53,3	10,4	31,4	23,7	1,8	0,5	18,6
Bachelor degree	14,9	19,2	19,6	14,3	14,0	22,8	7,8	2,7	13,4
Master degree	50,8	24,7	19,4	59,4	30,6	41,8	62,0	56,2	47,8
Master degree plus (doctoral degree and others)	13,6	16,4	7,7	15,9	24,0	11,7	28,4	40,6	20,3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: J. Domalewski, P. Mikiewicz *Młodzież w zreformowanym systemie szkolnym* [Young people in the reformed educational system] 2004;

Despite the rise of the educational aspirations in the whole society, we observe ‘traditional’ divisions within each cohort of young people. These divisions start at home, in the family, when young people are equipped with the basic competences (Habitus – see Bourdieu), and later on are envisaged in the school world and lead to different achievements at school. The mechanism of the creation of the inequality is complex and pretty well described (Bourdieu, Bersnstein, et others). Rapid and deep changes in the post-soviet country, as contemporary Poland is, could suggest, that the vicious circle of social reproduction through education has been broken down. A closer look shows, that it is an illusion.

We can observe the creation of separate tracks of schooling within the structure of the secondary education – the wide range of different paths created by 4 factors: type of education, educational competences of pupils, social composition of school, educational aspirations of pupils gathered in a given school. Secondary education is a platform of the “**splitting of the social worlds**”. Different tracks of students’ educational competences consist different social worlds – gather together people with

quite homogeneous social background. It is a very important factor – on that basis special attitude towards school is created and the differences between schools visible at the start of education are much more pronounced later on. In the elitist GES (school of category A) the culture of conformity is created and the mode of cooperation between teachers and pupils can be established. At the opposite end of the school structure, in the basic vocational schools, the culture of resistance makes the cooperation impossible and the struggle mode of school work leads to further educational and social marginalization of pupils channelled into that track (see Mikiewicz 2005).

## Conclusions

Described school segments constitute paths which group together young people of a similar school competence level, status of the family of origin and a similar level of aspirations – related both to education and professional career. Joining a group of this kind marks a beginning of the process in which the person’s aspirations are consolidated through relationship with people sharing the same outlook on life. Individual educational paths not only equip people with different levels of competence but also consolidate different aspirations.

In this way, the school selection process at the first selection threshold marks the beginning of channelling pupils’ biographies. The result of this channelling will probably appear as early as the moment of selecting the type of university and college education. As mass secondary education is becoming increasingly varied internally, higher (tertiary) education is also subject to differentiation.

Looking at young people’s educational and career-related aspirations, one can venture to propose certain hypotheses related to possible scenarios of social structure development. Are we really facing an imminent structural revolution and formation of a knowledge-based society?

Looking at the differences in educational and social aspirations of young people depending on the status of the family of origin, one can see that despite relatively high hopes for the future in all social groups, these ambitions have different ceilings for different social categories. The young from families in which parents have university-level education are relatively more ambitious than the young from low-status families. The popularisation of education at the secondary and higher level does not mean at all, that distances are reduced. It only results in the devaluation of university degrees and moving the whole population one stage upwards in the educational structure. Consequently, we have to do with a situation when a university degree is not a guarantee of employment nor prestige, but when you do not have such a degree you are excluded from the mainstream of social life. One can say that to have a good education is not a big deal but not to have one is a disaster.



## The development in Icelandic education: situation in 2011 in the perspective of a century

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The first section of the paper is on the current educational system in Iceland, as defined by its legal framework. Then we describe its course of development for a century, suggesting a theoretical framework which might be useful in chartering the progress being made. In the last chapter will discuss educational participation and non-participation and drop-out as a characteristics of Icelandic education.

### The Icelandic education system into the second decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Icelandic education system was poorly developed, with no compulsory education and no legal framework for primary education. During the next hundred years, however, the system became mature, flexible and fairly advanced, largely being on par with systems in the other Nordic countries (Guttormsson, 2008). While the total Icelandic population had not reached 300.000 until the 21<sup>st</sup> century, numerous studies have shown Icelandic education to develop in similar ways to much larger systems, both in qualitative and quantitative terms, and apparently to deal with many of the same problems (see e.g. Jóhannsdóttir, 2006a; Jónasson, 1999, 2003, 2006a; Jónasson & Tuijnman, 2001). Such studies draw attention to important similarities between different systems and warn against over-emphasizing their differences, though they exist of course.

Icelandic society generally emphasizes education, with an eye to ensuring that every child and young person has an equal right to education, free of charge, in both compulsory school and upper secondary school. The equal right to education is outlined in the Constitution of the Icelandic Republic as well as in the various laws pertaining to different educational levels.

Currently the Icelandic central government has been carrying out a reform of the entire school system. New acts for all four school levels were passed in 2008. These were acts on preschool (The Preschool act, No. 90/2008), compulsory education (The Compulsory School Act, No. 91/2008), upper secondary schools (The Upper Secondary School Act, No. 92/2008), and on public universities (Lög um opinbera háskóla, Nr. 85/2008). In addition, in 2010 the first act on continuing education was passed (The Adult Education Act, Nr. 27/2010), which is, however, aimed exclusively at those who have not already obtained upper secondary education, and extends to

all age groups above the normal upper secondary schooling age. In this chapter we will describe the current Icelandic educational system taking the current reform into consideration. Also to be considered is the serious effect of global financial crises in 2008 on Icelandic economy. This has resulted in education budget cut in general also delaying the full realization of the new reform.

Figure 1 shows the structure of the Icelandic educational system. Pre-schools, provide education for children until the age of six. Since 1994, pre-schools have been by law the first educational level of the system. The last years, over 90% of 3 to 5 years old and almost half of 0-2 year old children attend pre-school (Eurydice, 2008; Jónasson, 2006b).

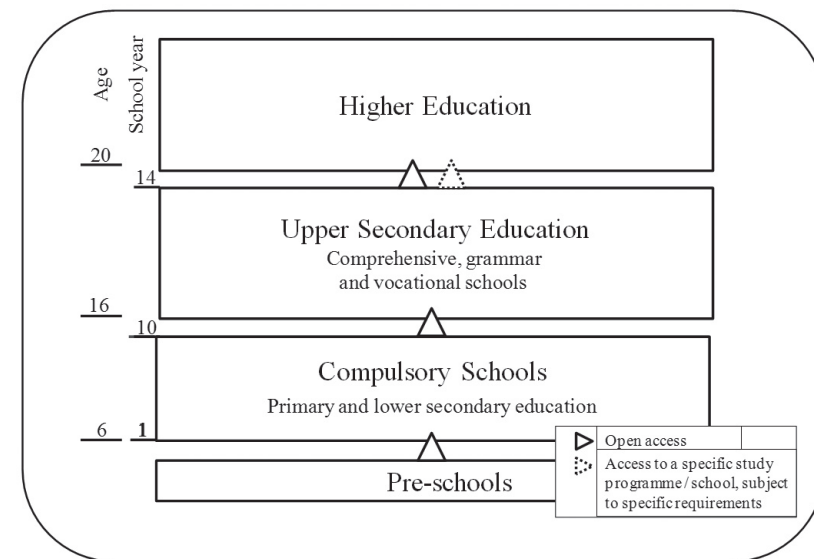


Figure 1. The structure of the Icelandic educational system (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2002; 2008).

Icelandic children normally start school at the age of 6 and progress automatically from one year to the next throughout 10 years of compulsory education, as shown in Figure 1. Implicit in the main principle of an equal right to education is the compulsory schools' responsibility to attend to the educational needs of each student. Inclusion is the guiding policy. In 2010, of 172 compulsory schools operating in Iceland, only four were special education schools, with less than 0.5% of the primary school student population. Moreover, even though the number of pupils in private schools has been increasing during the last decade less than 2% attend the 10 private schools operating (Statistic Iceland, 2011a).

Special educational support can take place in special education classroom and in the general classroom, or both which is most often the case. Around one quarter of pupils in compulsory schools receives special educational support, along with attending mainstream classes. Pupils with special needs have the right to study support based on evaluation of their needs (The Compulsory School Act, No. 91/ 2008). During the school year 2009–2010, approximately 24% of pupils received special education, 30% of boys and 19% of girls. Since 1997, there has been an extensive increase of pupils with a foreign mother tongue, from 377 to 2,318 in the autumn of 2010, which is 5.4% of pupils. Polish speakers are the most numerous (Statistics Iceland, 2011a). In the Compulsory School Act and the Upper Secondary School Act (No. 92/2008) there is a special article on reception plans for pupils whose mother tongue is not Icelandic.

The compulsory system, comprising primary and lower secondary schools, is financed and operated by local authorities (the municipalities). The upper secondary system, in contrast, is operated and financed by the central government, except for the municipalities providing up to 40% of construction costs.

After completing compulsory education at the age of 16, most students proceed directly to upper secondary school, despite the fact it is non-compulsory (see Figure 1). Since the year 2000, over 90% of 16-year-olds enrol in upper secondary level each year, and the in the year 2009 the enrolment rate was 95% of the cohort (Statistics Iceland, 2011b). Generally there is no tuition charge at upper secondary level, though vocational students pay part of their materials costs. In addition, students in adult and distance education pay partial tuition (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2002; 2008). Upper secondary school administration is based on legislation regulations and the curriculum guide issued by the central government. The structure of the system and the curriculum framework is dictated by the central government, whereas the schools have a rather limited but increasing scope for independent action. Thus, the administrative structure is essentially two-layered, where one layer represents the central government and the other the individual schools (The Upper Secondary School Act, No. 92/2008).

Upper secondary studies are typically four-year programmes (with some notable exceptions, mainly involving expressly shorter programmes) and are supposed to cover the age group of 16 to 19 (graduating at the age of 20). Around 100 branches of study are offered, of which over 80 are vocational. Every branch offers pathways to further education. The main pathways are as follows: 1) academic programmes, 2) an arts programme, 3) a multitude of vocational programmes such as the industrial arts, which have been the mainstay of vocational schooling, 4) a general programme,

and 5) a variety of (normally short) work-related programmes (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2008).

There are about 30 upper secondary schools in the country, and they fall into three main categories. Firstly, traditional grammar schools offering only matriculation examination programmes. For a long time, such schools formed the homogeneous backbone of the secondary system. Secondly, various vocational schools developed from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century on; these were specialised, with those offering programmes for the industrial arts emerging as the most prominent vocational schools. Thirdly, since the late 1970s, comprehensive schools have been established, according to the governing policy of opening schools that offer both vocational programmes and academic programmes for the university entrance examination (UEE). Comprehensive schools combine the two former types of schools, following not only the rationale of economy in rural areas, but also and fundamentally the goal of eradicating as much as possible any question of status difference between different types of programmes, and of facilitating transfers between programmes and schools whenever students desire. An explicit rationale for building up the comprehensive system was that students could easily change tracks. But the implicit was that they could indeed move from the academic or gymnasium track to the vocational tracks if they could not cope with the former (Jónasson, 1997). In fact, this did not happen frequently; rather, what transpired fairly soon was that academically able vocational students, especially in the comprehensive schools, switched to academic programmes (Jónasson, 1994). In the years 2007 and 2008, more than half of 16- to 19-year-old students attended comprehensive schools, roughly one-third attended grammar schools, and about 7% vocational schools.

Recently, vocational schools have been permitted to offer matriculation programmes, typically in combination with their vocational programmes. This merging of academic and vocational programmes has been a leading development since the 1970s (Jónasson, 1997, 2008). It is also a major principle behind the most recent law on upper secondary education, where the explicit rhetoric is to claim that the status of vocational and academic education should be equivalent within a holistic system, such that university entrance examination might be completed both from the vocational and academic tracks (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, n.d.).

Some upper secondary schools offer evening adult education classes and distance education. Whereas the latter is organized independent of age, evening classes are organized specifically for adults. Distance education was on the rise from 2003 to 2009, while special adult education classes diminished. In 2010, due to budget cut

in distance education the number of students in distance programmes decreased as well (Statistics Iceland, 2008, 2011c).

This educational reform is of particular relevance here because the dropout issue was given absolute priority in the most recent legislation (the Upper Secondary School Act, No. 92/2008). The intention explicit is that education shall be organized so as to meet the requirements and expectations of students, increase substantially curriculum flexibility, add to the number of educational pathways offered, facilitate the completion of upper secondary programmes in three rather than the normative four years and create conditions for more students to complete defined study programmes, with a view to decreasing school dropout (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, n.d.). The possibility to complete traditional four year studies in a shorter period of time has existed since the early seventies when the unit credit system was implemented parallel to the sequential class first by the relatively new gymnasium, Menntaskólinn við Hamrahlíð in 1972. Most students, however, have completed their studies in four years or more rather than less than four years (Jónasson & Blondal, 2002a). The special emphasis to facilitate completion of upper secondary school in shorter time than four years might change this but the laws are not clear in the sense that they do not state how many credit-units students need to complete for their graduation. Probably this will be stated in the new national curriculum that is under development and if not, each school will have to define it in its curriculum and submit for Ministerial approval. Currently a few upper secondary schools have started to adjust and change their school according to the new act. However, the full realization of the act has been delayed for some years because of the financial crisis in Iceland.

The 2008 act provides a new degree called the upper secondary school leaving certificate taking one-and-a-half or two years, but does not entail any specific courses. Other degrees provided, are vocational certificates lending professional rights, the matriculation examination and other final examinations which are defined by upper secondary schools that prepare students for certain jobs but give no legally protected qualifications. Finally, upper secondary schools may now begin to offer post-secondary education (the Upper Secondary School Act, No. 92/2008).

The new upper secondary school leaving certificate is aimed at students who do not plan to complete further degrees and, as one of its main purposes, at decreasing school dropout at the secondary level. Whether this will make much difference to students is not clear, since the certificate conveys no rights except to further study at the same school level, which they have anyway (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, n.d.). Thus it is unclear if it will work as a very clear objective as the stakes seem to be insignificant. However, this certificate may induce students to complete

at least one and a half years instead of one year which many have typically completed before dropping out but this remains to be seen.

Finally, we would like to emphasize two important principles inherent in the reform. The first is to make vocational education equivalent to academic education. For example, the academic and vocational matriculation examinations are rendered equivalent. This is the official statement but it is not made explicit in the law how this is to be carried out, because new rule system also assumes that universities may restrict their admission rules, so the exact ramifications remain unclear. The second principle, and in fact one of the major aims of the new law, is decentralizing the upper secondary school system, even though the upper secondary schools have to obey guidelines set by the ministry (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, n.d.). As the government has deferred the full implementation of the new law on upper secondary schools it is unclear how the ministry will balance its control with that of the schools. There is no doubt that the government continues its effort to bolster vocational education, apparently against all odds (Jónasson, 1998, 2003, 2008), but it also believes that schools may themselves, given extra freedom, find ways to diminish the dropout rate.

The Icelandic tertiary system is essentially a unitary one, kindred to the United Kingdom and perhaps the Swedish systems, and thus fits 5A level of Unesco's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) (Jónasson, 2004). In terms of the European Bologna framework for higher education, the university level is largely a 3+2+3 cycle system, with essentially no post-secondary non-university track. This refers to a first cycle of three years (baccalaureus level), two years at masters level and three years for the PhD.

Currently there are four public and three private institutions operating at the higher educational level in Iceland. The oldest and by far largest institution is the University of Iceland established in 1911. The other three public institutions are University of Akureyri, Agricultural University of Iceland and Agricultural College at Hólar. The three private institutions are Reykjavík University, Iceland Academy of the Arts, and Bifröst School of Business. In Icelandic higher education institutions are called háskóli and there is no distinction made between universities and non-universities. All the institutions are subject to the provisions of the Higher Education Institution Act of 2006 (Lög um háskóla, nr. 63/2006) and in addition there is a special act for public universities (Lög um opinbera háskóla, nr. 85/2008) (Eurybase, n.d.).

In principle, university education is financed by the state. In practice the situation is slightly more complicated. At the state universities students pay registration fees,

which are meant to pay mainly for registration and handling of the bookkeeping of around the student body. Also, the University of Iceland has a Lottery which pays for the construction costs, which are then not provided by the state. Public university education is free of charge apart from small registration fee (around ISK 46,000). Private higher education institutions receive considerable financial assistance from the state. The tuition fees for private institutions vary between higher education institutions and fields of study. The tuition fees for undergraduate programmes are approx. ISK 140,000 – 350,000 for each school year. In private institutions students pay additional payments to student organizations. The government has operated the Student Loan Fund for several decades, with the aim of providing equal access for students with different socio-economic backgrounds. The Fund offers student loans to cover the costs incurred by the students (tuition fees, books and materials, travelling expenses, etc.) as well as the cost of living (Lög um Lánasjóð íslenskra námsmanna, nr. 21/1992).

Because Icelandic students do not normally complete their studies at upper secondary school until the age of 20, they might be expected to graduate from university at somewhat higher ages than their peers in the neighbouring countries, especially as it is not uncommon for Icelandic students to take a year off after matriculation. Comparison of the proportion of students in Iceland, Sweden and Denmark who completed a matriculation examination and Bachelor's degree in 2000 and 2001 as a percentage of the reference cohorts, indicates that the picture is not so clear-cut. While Icelandic students graduate from upper secondary school somewhat older than in Denmark or particularly in Sweden; the Icelanders are not as distinct from the Danish students as the formal systems might lead us to expect. Moreover, the differences largely disappear when we move to the level of higher education, as the highest proportion of students graduated at the same age in the three countries, around 24 to 26 years old (Jónasson, 2002). Note that these points are only meant to bring out qualitative aspects, i.e., show that the basic profiles of the three countries are quite similar. In any case, we may see that formal system descriptions fail to tell us a full story. Those descriptions would imply that Icelandic students should lag behind the Danish and Swedish students by a whole year; but they don't.

### **Icelandic education: A history of a century**

Iceland is a small country, with around 300 thousand inhabitants, historically a rural community, and was a part of Denmark for several centuries. The ties were gradually loosening from the latter part of the 19th century up to 1944 when total formal independence was obtained. Thus the Icelandic education system was partly situated in Denmark for a long time and took its domestic course only from the late 19th century.

As to simplify matters we suggest that the modern history of Icelandic education as it is today starts in the last quarter of the 19th century, or in the 1870s.<sup>2</sup>

We will explore the development of Icelandic education, with the emphasis on upper secondary and tertiary education from this time to the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will draw attention to a number of characteristics of this development and we will argue that many of our conclusions can only be drawn on the basis of a very long-term perspective. A shorter perspective would hint at different and in our view somewhat erroneous conclusions. Among these characteristics are the rate of growth of educational attendance at secondary and tertiary levels, the differential growth of attendance and track choice by males and females, the differential educational attendance and choice of children in urban and rural areas, the status and development of vocational education, the academic drift of programmes and institutions, the types and fate of educational reforms and the basic educational problems such as the implementation of the school for all and drop-out rates, are all issues that show remarkable affinity between systems that are apparently very different. We will draw attention to these similarities, which offer an important perspective from which educational development in general can be observed. The characteristics we want to emphasise include a remarkably close resemblance, both in qualitative and quantitative terms, with developments in larger and even much larger systems. There are of course notable differences as well, some of which we may point out, despite our emphasis on congruence. The small size of the Icelandic system and a fairly accessible documentation affords a transparency that may be rather unique.<sup>3</sup>

### **Five perspectives**

We will describe the development of Icelandic education from five different perspectives (Jónasson, 2006a) or lenses through which educational development can be observed. The first is the constancy in the issues being discussed. In spite of the justifi-

<sup>2</sup> This gives an anchor for the subsequent discussion, but it must be emphasised that this is a substantial oversimplification. It is defended first by the fact that substantial developments took place in this period but also by the fact that the Danish king provided Iceland with a constitution in 1874 that gave Icelanders both formal and informal encouragement to think more about their education and to take the initiative. The proponents of Icelandic independence had for a while described and argued for the further development of our own system, notably Jón Sigurðsson (1842/1994). There had existed both primary schools for some years and in particular a gymnasium that was the descendant of the schools for priests at the bishoprics in Iceland. The present author (Jón Torfi Jónasson, 2000) has also argued, based on Icelandic examples from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, that the continuity of educational development is typically overlooked. A fairly lively and important educational history can be traced back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>3</sup> An example is a fairly comprehensive history of the Icelandic (compulsory+) educational system ranging from the latter part of the 19th century right up to 2007 that gives a good overview (Guttormsson, 2008), with a number of chapters by the present author. The Icelandic Statistical Bureau has a very comprehensive and accessible data base for a lot of educational data especially from the 1970s (Statistics Iceland). A comprehensive historical statistical data base is also of great value, (Hagskinna, Icelandic Historical Statistics).



able feeling people often have that things are changing very fast, some things change more slowly and the themes or issues that underlie the educational discourse are remarkably stable, even if the flavour of the debate may change. The second perspective is characterised by continuity in educational development. The advent of new pedagogical ideas, the passing of new laws, the establishment of new institutions, all may seemingly signal important initiatives or changes. We will note that this is, however, not the way education develops; in most cases clear traces of the antecedents or precursors to the changes seen can be extracted and made clearly visible. A related issue is the causal history in education, where especially governments are prone to attribute educational developments to their action, when often their actions are simply in line with normal developments or a response to these. In this case the continuity of educational changes is underestimated. The third perspective is the regularity of educational development. On the whole the changes are small but consistent, and even when there is some growth, it seems to follow a very consistent or regular pattern. We will argue that regular growth is not only characterized by linear growth, exponential growth can also be regular. The fourth perspective is that of academic drift, of individual courses, programmes and even a group of programmes or whole schools. It suggests that programmes become more academic or theoretical or perhaps best described as increasingly codified. Thus it is suggested that these entities rely consistently more on presenting codified knowledge, rather than procedural or practice based experience. Even when the latter is being emphasised, it is increasingly confined within the school setting rather than in the field of practice. The last perspective presented here is that of institutional drift, where whole institutions or even a group of institutions drift upward in the educational system, either on their own accord, but more often, at least finally through governmental intervention.

These perspectives have been applied in a non-systematic fashion to the development at all levels of the Icelandic educational system, originally to the upper secondary and tertiary education, but more recently also to pre-school and primary education. The discussion has been focussed on the macro features of educational change and important invariants, but has also attended to developments that may not fit well with the general characteristics which are being described here.

### The methods of description of educational expansion

There are of course various ways to describe the development of education. One is to note important events, in particular the enactment of new laws, establishing institutions or the provision of more (or less) money for certain programmes. By analysing these developments, one may be able to discern certain patterns, continuities or discontinuities, and thus observe important characteristics of the development. Figure 2 is

an example of the changes in the cohorts that fall under compulsory education during the last century in Iceland, and the graphical presentation is intended to demonstrate the continuity and regularity of the changes that take place. We note that there are fluctuations in these increases in the number of years in compulsory education, but the regularity or rather the incremental nature of the changes is noteworthy. Apparently one can also predict that this increment will go on, even though at any point in time many people would think that enough is enough: there is no need for further increments. By inspecting Figure 2 we may also note that most of the changes that occurred, only established a *fait accompli*, i.e. a cohort was made compulsory at the time when most of it was already attending school anyway.

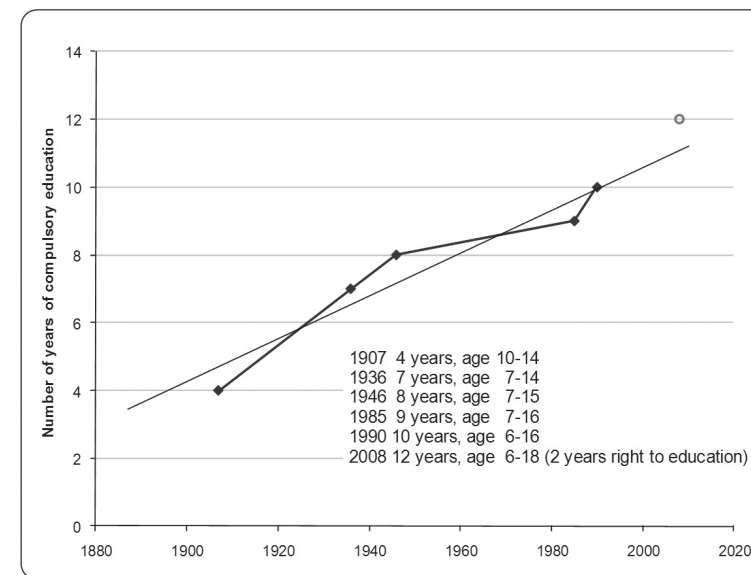


Figure 2. The years in which changes in compulsory education were enacted, with the first law passed in 1907. The compulsory range was 4 years, for children who were 10 when they entered school and 14 when they left. In 2008 a law stated that young people up to 18 had the right to education even though this was not compulsory for the age group 16-18. In 2008 the state is obliged to provide the 16 and 17 year-olds with education if the so wish. The line drawn as the best straight line fit through the points from 1907 to 1990 is meant to underpin the constant increment in the numbers of compulsory years of schooling.

Figure 3 shows the attendance pattern for primary education. This is an example of another measure of educational development that may reveal important characteristics of the development of education. Here the absolute attendance numbers are shown. The Figure is meant to show four things in particular, which all turn out to reveal important facets of educational development. First it shows that the gap between the size of the ten cohorts (which is the number of cohorts now (2011) in-



cluded in compulsory education) and the number of pupils in school gradually decreased, narrowing appreciably in the 1940s and closing in the 1970s; a gap that might have seemed inconceivable in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that would be bridged, was completely closed before the last quarter of the century. This, apparently, happened in stages. Secondly the Figure is also meant to show that there was a sudden and quite a dramatic increase in the cohort size from the middle of the 1940s to the early 1970s. Thirdly the Figure shows how the school system accommodated the increased cohort sizes and thus had to grow quite rapidly during the 1940s to 1970s. This put an enormous strain on the system, even though the drift from the rural to the urban areas continued. Fourthly the Figure shows that the compulsory legislation always lagged the actual school attendance of the relevant cohorts, even in 1907 when the first compulsory act was enacted. The law itself did not increase, or change for that matter, school attendance. The number of children the school system accommodated did not change much, when laws were enacted. Thus adding age groups to the compulsory base, by law, did not, in itself, place any noticeable burden on the school system. The implication is that from this perspective the law followed the changes in attendance and did not precede it. This crude picture, however, neglects the uneven attendance of many of the rural children, which is an example of the problem inherent in showing overall, gross patterns.

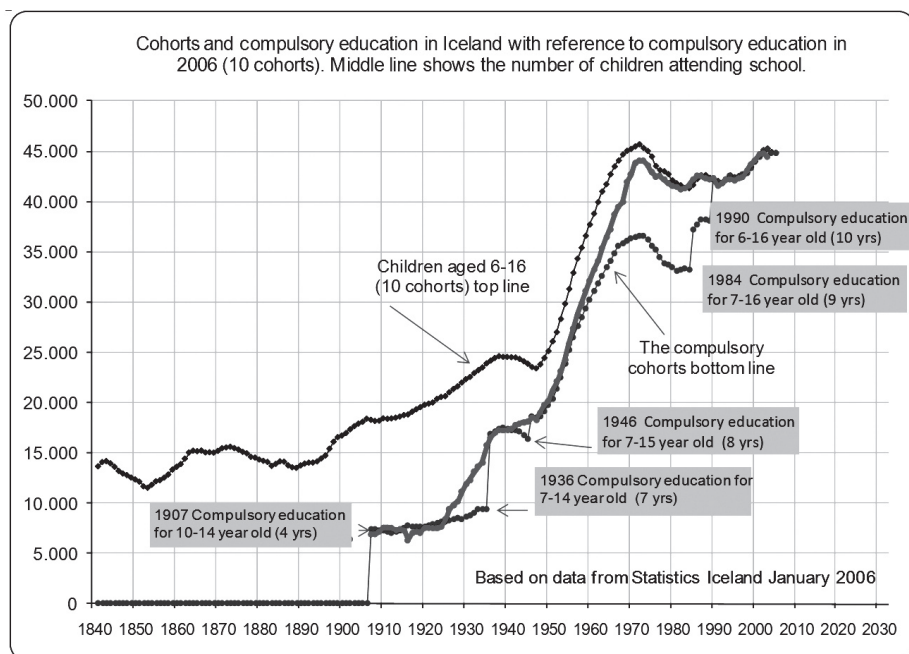


Figure 3. The top line shows the number of children for the period 1874-2006 in the age range 6-15, i.e. the ten cohorts that in 1990 were the compulsory cohorts. The next line, with the circles shows the number of pupils in the primary and lower secondary schools, showing an estimate already in 1903. The bottom line shows the number of pupils that are obliged to go to school at any one time.

### The growth of upper secondary academic education

The development of the upper secondary system is in most ways more revealing of how an educational sector grows as this occurred outside the demand of obligatory school attendance. It thus shows what people choose to do; what options they selected and how the patterns changed. The growth of the UEE, which is definitely the most visible and prestigious upper secondary set of tracks, has been relatively continuous, but interestingly, different for males and females. There are at least six aspects to this growth that are of special interest. A) The form of the growth curve, B) the stability of the growth, C) the difference between the sexes, D) its relationship to the growth of the journeyman's examination, E) the relationship of this growth with the development of the upper secondary system and the education system in general and finally, F) the generalizability of educational expansion. Let us consider each in turn.

### The form of the growth curve and the future of educational development

The growth of the Icelandic education system, both at the upper secondary level and at the university level has been analysed in some detail (Jónsson, 1997, 1999) and there were presented arguments for claiming that an exponential function<sup>4</sup> well describes the growth of these sectors of the educational system. This is important for several reasons, one of them is that accepting it as a good descriptor one may venture to discuss educational credentials as consumer goods, where the curve describes a typical growth in consumption. Also, on the basis of a robust exponential curve one may venture to predict what happens in the future to some sectors of education. It also affords an important perspective of the patterns of educational expansion.

<sup>4</sup> The detail of the exponential function and the limiting saturation curve as they relate to educational attendance are discussed in some detail in Jonasson (1997) and in Jonasson (2003).

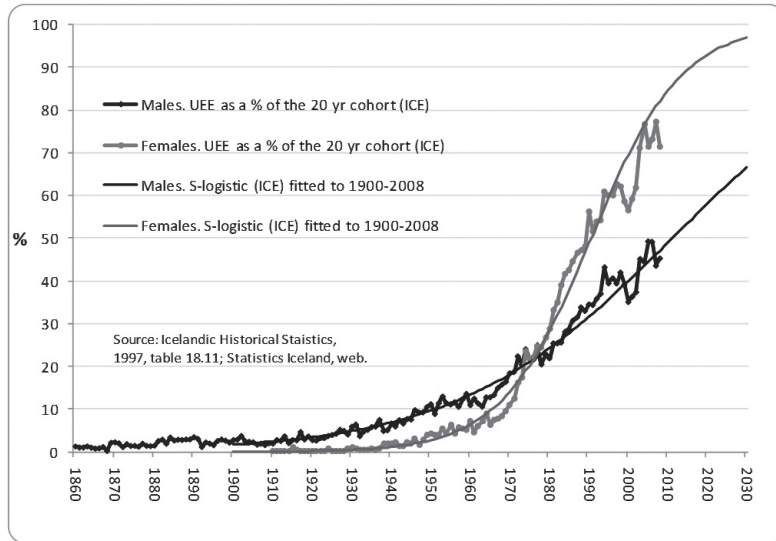


Figure 4. The development of the UEE (University entrance examination, *stúdentspróf*) from 1860-2008, shown separately for males and females. The numbers are expressed as a percentage of the 20 year cohort. The fitted lines are the logistic curves with the saturation level set at 100%.

Figure 4 indicates that the growth both for males and females can be well fitted by essentially an exponential curve that tapers off with saturation (i.e. an S-curve) at the 100% mark.<sup>5 6</sup> There is a fairly general understanding in Iceland that the educational system took an upward swing in the 1970s; the discursive phrasing is that there was an “explosion” in the attendance to the academic programmes (leading to the UEE) during that period.

<sup>5</sup> Very simply put, an exponential curve may reflect a steady growth. If one had placed one euro in a bank account in a very stable economy at the turn of the 20th century with an interest rate of about 4% one might have described it by the curve shown in Figure 6. The growth would have been described as regular, stable and exponential.

<sup>6</sup> The ceiling must be set at 100%. No more than 100% of a cohort will in the long run complete that examination if the reference is the cohort size. But for a short while the curve may overshoot this mark if older students flock to complete the examination and we still use the size of one cohort as the reference.

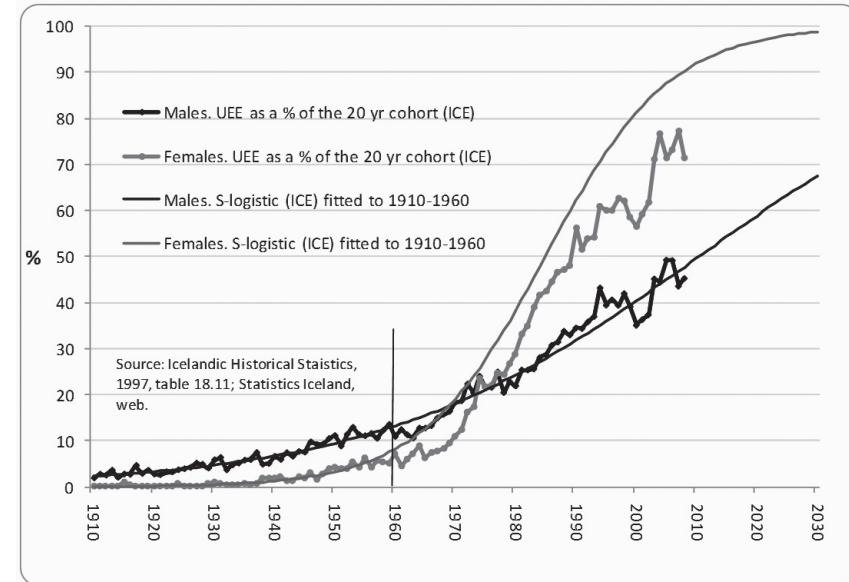


Figure 5. The figure is essentially a repetition of the previous figure, but now with the fitted logistic lines based on data from the years 1910-1960, i.e. ranging over 50 years with a forecast for the next 50 years and on. The vertical line is meant to emphasise that the predictive lines are based on data to the left of that line.

Figure 5 is an attempt to reflect on such a view and reject it. Quite the opposite view will be presented here, i.e. that the growth in educational attendance was in fact surprisingly stable and robust for a very long time. For over a century for males, for less, but as long as data exists for females (they started later than the boys). In the Figure a logistic curve (i.e. essentially the exponential curve) is fitted to the data from 1910-1960, which is then extended into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and may thus be seen as a predictor for the period from 1960.<sup>7</sup> The curve for females shows that an exponential curve with a relatively high exponent, e.g. over 7% gives the impression of an explosion; it describes an “explosive growth” even though it is from another perspective very stable. A lower exponent, e.g. around 3-4% as for the males gives less impression of an “explosion”. The Figure also shows that given the history of female attendance there was in fact a temporary delay in the growth of females completing the UEE in the sixties, which was then “corrected” later with the upswing in the seventies. But in many important respects does the growth during 1960-2010, reflect better than many people might have expected the growth that had already taken place

<sup>7</sup> Jónasson (1997, 2003) discusses in some detail the advisability of referring to certain years and also that changing the reference window may give visually different results even though the qualitative conclusion is the same.

during 1910-1960. Figure 6 indicates a similar stability for tertiary education. The trend line is fitted to the data from 1911 (when the University of Iceland was formally established) to 1970 (when the popular consensus seems to indicate an “explosion” in the university attendance). Again the data seems to show considerable stability in the attendance growth for a whole century. The short-term appearance of an explosion in attendance in the early seventies at the tertiary level can be shown to be an illusion given the long-term perspective.

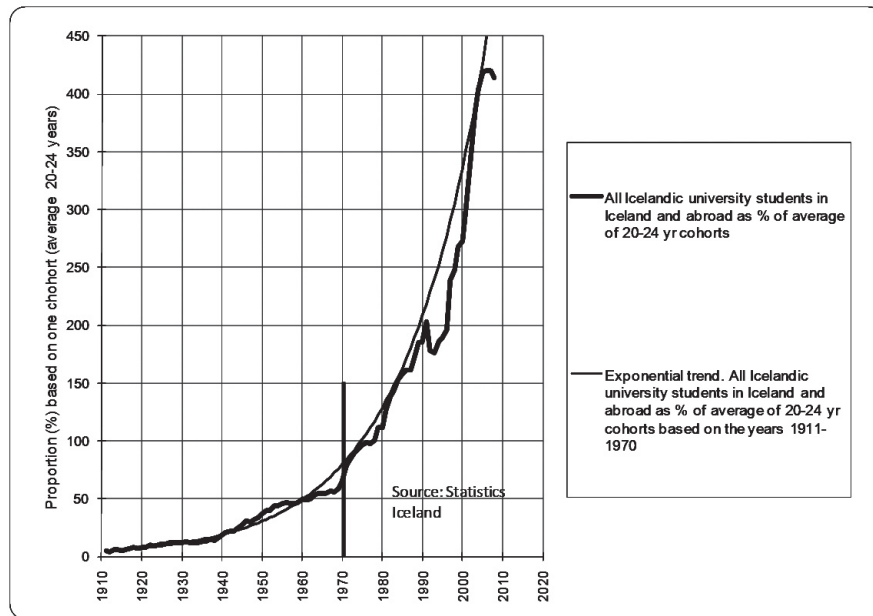


Figure 6. The figure shows Icelandic students attending university (at home or abroad) expressed with reference to the average size of the 20-24 year cohorts. The fitted line is based on the data from 1911-1970 (with the vertical line emphasising this range).

**The gender difference**

The gender difference is very stable and its form is worth exploring (Jónasson, 1997, 2003). Females started far behind males in attending any post-compulsory education, but increased their attendance at a much higher rate, and, what is most interesting, parity with males did not affect the growth at all. Some people might have thought that once attendance by the females had reached that by the males, the curves for the two sexes would have grown in unison from then on. But this did not happen; the growth in female attendance continued unabated. This is very consist-

ent for all the Nordic countries (Jónasson, 2003) for the UEE and also across Europe and North America in tertiary education (Jónasson, 1999). In these papers I have argued that males and females are in some sense in different education systems. Not literally, as they indeed are in the same schools and in the same classes, but seem to have different aspirations and aims when they go through the system, given this bird’s eye view. Figure 4 indicates that the female population is on its way to saturate the UEE, whereas the males are very far from it. They are still only at the 50% level, and it would be very premature to claim that the “boys” are all on their way to complete the UEE. Thus the gender difference is huge, and demands close attention.

**Urban rural variability**

In a small country like Iceland it is likely that some of variations within the population remain hidden as one uses the national statistics to gauge the developments. One example of this would be quite dramatic differences in the development of educational participation between the rural and urban areas in Iceland.

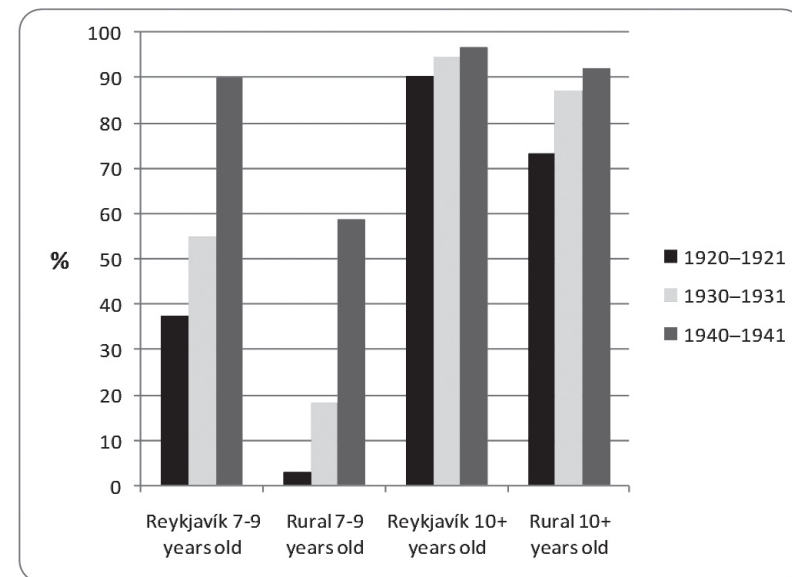


Figure 7. The figure shows the percentage of 7-9 year-olds and 10-14 year-olds in Reykjavík area (the capital area) on the one hand and the rural areas on the other, who attend school, noting that the rural data also include some villages or townships. A law on primary education passed in 1926 opened for individual counties to make education compulsory for the 7-9 year-olds. A law in 1936 reversed the situation, allowing counties to be exempted from compulsory education of 7-9 year old children. The figure is based on data in Guttormsson (2008).

Figure 7 shows the difference between the rural and urban situation and development very clearly. Note that for all the three periods shown, i.e. 1920-1921, 1930-1931 and 1940-1941, school was compulsory for the age group 10-14. In the Reykjavík area (the capital area) about 90% of 10 – 14 year-olds were attending school, already during the first period, and subsequent developments could not change very much, as they started so near complete attendance. In the rural areas the situation was initially somewhat worse, perhaps not dramatically, but it was gradually improved. But the situation for the 7-9 year-olds is more interesting. During the first period, about 40% of the children in Reykjavík were attending school, even though it was not compulsory, but hardly any of the rural children. During the last period, compulsory education applied to all 7-9 year-olds, but just over half of the rural children attended school. Thus the Figure indicates how dramatically different the situation was in the rural and the urban areas, even though the legal framework was the same.

But crude attendance numbers don't tell the whole story. When a new comprehensive law on compulsory education was being prepared in the late sixties it was clear that practically all children, whether in rural or urban areas attended school. Nevertheless there was a wide discrepancy between the children in terms of the services they got, an example of which is shown in table 1. Even though nearly three fourths of the children received 9 months of school during the school year 1969-1970, there was the one quarter that got less, and some (even though a small minority) got less than 8 months. Looking behind these numbers one would find further, sometimes quite dramatic, evidence of the difference between the facilities and services afforded to the urban and rural children.

Table 1. The percentage of pupils in compulsory education, that attended school for 3, 4, etc. up to 9 months during the school year 1969-1970. The table is based on Table 2 in Jónasson (2008b).

School year 1969-1970	Months in school	% of pupils
	3	0,17 %
	4	0,16 %
	5	0,3 %
	6	1,5 %
	7	4,2 %
	8	22 %
	9	72 %
		100 %

### The stability of growth

We have repeatedly referred to the stability of growth, allowing an exponential growth with a stable coefficient to represent stability (see e.g. Jónasson, 1999, p. 118). We have also argued that the internal stability for males and females provides evidence of a fundamental difference in their aspiration (Jónasson, 1997, 2003) which in turn tells an interesting story about the nature of education. In particular we have argued that the nature of the growth function and its stability suggests that some kind of a credential mechanism is the primary driving force for educational growth at these higher levels in the educational system (Jónasson, 1997, 2003, 2004b, 2006a)<sup>8</sup>. If this account holds up it has very important implications for the development of the educational system in the decades to come, for the future of vocational programmes at any level and for various quality issues within the field of education (Jónasson & Jóhannsdóttir, 2008).

### The relationship to the growth of the journeyman's examination

A perennial problem in practically all educational systems is the popularity and status of various vocational programmes (Jónasson, 1998a), or the lack of these. There is also a slight problem in defining what should count as vocational programmes and what as academic programmes, but here we will discuss the journeyman's examination, which has been considered in Iceland the most stable and generally speaking the most important group of vocational programmes within the educational system. This includes examination for a host of different trades, inter alia, all machine, building, cloth-making and catering trades. Figure 8 shows the substantial parity between the two groups of programmes, i.e. the UEE and the journeyman's examination from around 1910 when the latter started to emerge as an option in Iceland right up to the seventies, when the vocational tracks started to taper off.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> We have shown that the exponents for males and females are different, so may be exponents for different groups, such the rural and urban populations.

<sup>9</sup> Data for males and females separately would have shown somewhat different patterns.



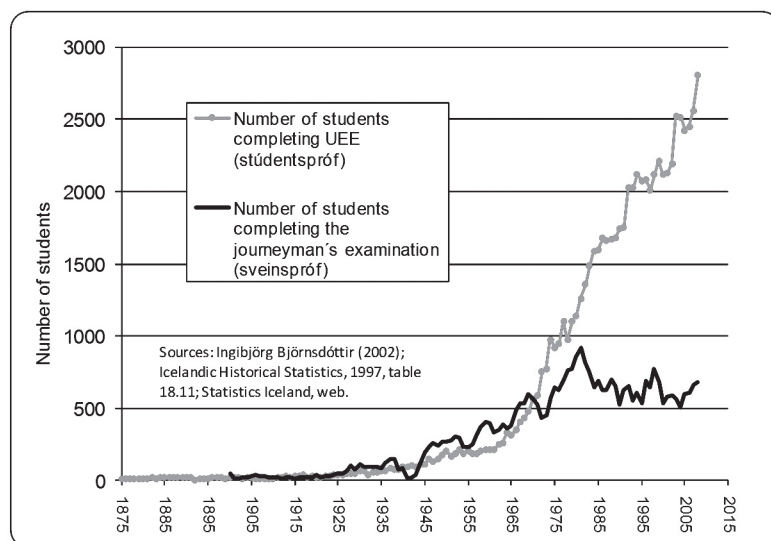


Figure 8. The number of students passing the UEE (the university entrance examination, stúdentsspróf) and those passing the journeyman's examination (sveinspróf) during the period 1875-2008.

There are probably several reasons why these two types of programmes start to diverge in terms of attendance. With the expansion of tertiary education, with the flourishing of the service industries and with endless new opportunities in the arts, media and business the relative attraction of the vocational trades may have diminished. Thus in an important sense there is a competition between different programmes, and the type that is controlled by a credential expansion (for bona fide reasons) takes over, i.e. the UEE.<sup>10</sup>

#### Further characterization of the growth of the education system

Governments may think that they expand the systems of education. They set the laws, they provide the resources needed and they often establish institutions: They take the lead.

There have, indeed, been several important adjustments made to the Icelandic educational system since the enactments of the first law on compulsory education in 1907; these relate to all levels of the system but vary in the comprehensiveness of the changes made.<sup>11</sup> But the question is, how do these fit in with other developments of education?

<sup>10</sup> In order to give the complete picture a correction for the age of the students would be required. In both groups there are students of all ages, but the relative spread in the journeyman's examination is greater. If we only presented data for the age range of 19-22 who completed these examinations, the gap would be bigger.

<sup>11</sup> See in particular, Guttormsson (2008). On the changes made to the Icelandic HE system, see e.g. Jónasson (2004a).

The perennial question is: to what extent does the state control educational development?<sup>12</sup> Analysing educational development in several European countries Müller, Ringer and Simon (1987) are sceptical about the causal role played by governments and Müller (1987) suggests for the German system, that

“at the same time, the consequences of the state intervention must not be over-estimated. The actions of states made the institutionalisation of the modern educational system possible: they established frameworks and they increasingly ordered and controlled the process of educational development. But they did not determine that process” (p. 16-17).

We concur with the tone in this quote, except for the crucial assertion that the state controls the process of educational development; it is clear in the tone of this paper that it is not the government, nor the institutions, but to a striking extent, the students themselves who are in control. It is the students who decide to register, or not, in the school system after the end of compulsory education, and it is them (or their families) who decide which tracks to attend, given that they fulfil the criteria set. Thus it is not in the hands of either the government or industry or even the schools to decide which way the potential students decide to go. It is the ethos, determined by the economic situation, the labour market, the status of the different tracks and general attitude of the students themselves in response to these factors that determines where the students choose to go, see e.g. Jónasson (2003).

We have already hinted that the changes in the laws on compulsory education did not affect school attendance (see discussion on Figure 3), where the pupils being required to attend school were already doing so (even though some of them couldn't because of distance from school (see Jónasson, 2008a). We have also argued on the basis of data from pre-primary (Jónasson, 2006b), primary (Jónasson, 2008b) and secondary education (Jónasson, 2008c) that educational development seems to precede governmental action, which nevertheless was necessary to allow the aspiring development to take its course. This is also supported by the data already discussed, which show robust stable development, apparently not substantially affected by several laws and institutional developments.

In our discussion of the tension between vocational and academic education above it was noted how well balanced the relative status of both tracks was well into the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But when we take a bird's eye view of the development of the academic track, as shown in Figure 9 we see its robust growth, which

<sup>12</sup> This is indeed the title question in Jónasson (2003) and also implicit in the title of a number of papers on HE, e.g. Jónasson (2004b).



was, however, temporary stemmed, but only relatively briefly during the heyday of vocational flourishing at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This invites the inference that the growth of academic education was only shadowed by an upsurge in vocational education during a brief period, approximately during 1890-1915. The history of vocational education lends support to this inference.

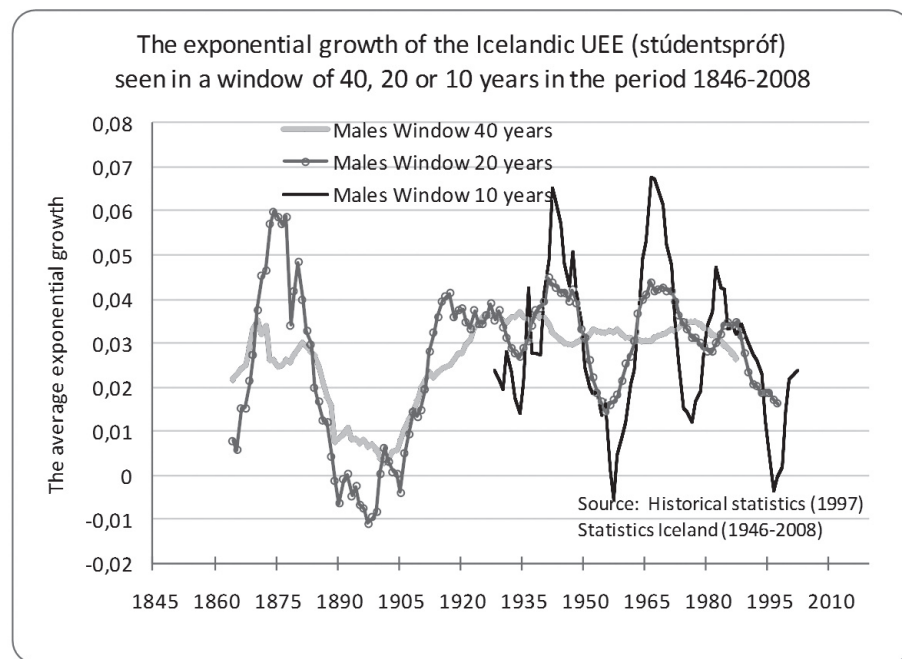


Figure 9. The Figure presents the exponents of the UEE proportional attendance for males for the period 1846-2008, as shown in earlier figures. It uses three different windows, a 40 year window (20 years to each side of the year in centre), a 20 year window and a 10 year window. The 10 year window shows expectedly the greatest fluctuation, the 40 year window the least. The 40 year window shows that the exponent centring on the years 1865-1880 (approx.) is around 3%; then it goes down to near 0% growth during 1890-1905, returning to just above 3% growth in the 1920s.

Figure 9 is here taken to indicate that the roughly 3% growth characterising the UEE for males during the 20<sup>th</sup> century became relatively stable (with interesting fluctuations) in the 1920s; therefore we suggest that the modern Icelandic education system overwhelmingly characterised by the UEE, took hold in the 1920s (see also Jónasson, 1998b). We use the same data to indicate, but less directly that the heyday of vocational education at the secondary level was at the turning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus the stagnation of vocational education at the secondary level has two explanations that mirror each other. One is that the academic tracks at the secondary level simply took over, leaving the vocational programmes somewhat out in the cold. The other and the complementary explanation is that in relative terms, vocational educa-

tion at the upper secondary level was not an attractive option, for students who could cope with the academic tracks, even though it was more so for males than females. There are hints, but not clear data yet, that similarly the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the heyday of vocational-professional tracks at the tertiary level.<sup>13</sup>

### The generalizability of educational expansion

It is a crucial question, when describing the development of a system of education in a particular setting, to what extent the same kind of descriptors may apply to other systems; a question discussed both explicitly and implicitly by several authors (Archer, 1979, 1981, 1986; Fuller & Rubinson, 1992; A. Green, Wolf, & Leney, 1999; T. F. Green, Ericson, & Seidman, 1980; Müller, et al., 1987). It is taken up by (Jónasson, 2003) where it is argued that the affinity between systems is substantial and the congruity of educational expansion should receive considerable attention, based on data primarily from upper secondary education but also on data from tertiary education (Jónasson, 1999; Jónasson, 2000). It is argued that the patterns of educational expansion, the fate of vocational education, the gender differences, and the long-term continuity are all characteristics that may be more global than is often expected or appreciated. The same applies to the patterns of drop-outs or the social patterns in the attendance within adult education. Reforms, but also constraints (e.g. attendance quotas) in individual countries may of course affect the general picture, but often they modulate it only for a period of time (which may of course span decades).

### The patterns interpreted in the light of credentialism and academic drift

#### Credentialism

We have already suggested that the long term robustness of educational expansion, both at the academic tracks at the upper secondary level and at the tertiary level are best accounted for by reference to credentialism. This is a pattern driven by the students and not the labour market (but definitely strongly supported by it), not the institutions (but strongly supported by them) and not by governments (that delight in it, despite the temporary financial problems it may cause). Sometimes governments claim credit for educational expansion, forgetting that it is the students who apply, who register and who often pay for their education; at the upper secondary level and at the tertiary level. It is most probable that they are aiming at building cultural, social and human capital, all at once. They may, individually place different emphasis on

<sup>13</sup> This is a somewhat complicated prediction because so many professional degrees are now placed at the masters, rather than the baccalaureate levels, such as engineers, nurses, teachers and social workers.

the different types of capital, but it is largely their decision (often aided by their social environment, especially their family).

It is therefore the case that if the State does not provide sufficient places for a credentialed population it will, after a while seek its own venues for proceeding, see e.g. Geiger's (1985) first of the three main reasons for the establishment of a privately run education sector, i.e. just to provide places to respond to a massive demand.

If we consider educational degrees are a form of cultural capital and their acquisition can be described by simple consumption functions, then a number of predictions about the expansion of the system become fairly clear. One can extract empirically the different consumption functions for different social groups and on that basis predict the drive for education (and the type of education) for each group. We have already hinted that from this perspective females show different consumer behaviour from males and also that rural children at the compulsory ages show different behaviour from urban children. But the principal conclusion is that we can predict the behaviour of different groups.

We can also claim that there is no limit to this expansion of credentialist expansion except the ceiling set by saturation. This means that the pressure for educational expansion, will nothing but expand, at least in relative terms (i.e. relative to cohort size in particular).

Furthermore we can predict that the educational provision will change as to adapt to the greater cohorts seeking the credits. The general educational demands will probably be lowered somewhat but this is extremely difficult to assess as the content and methods of teaching change. The opportunities at the output end of the system will continue to develop and become increasingly varied, but the basis will gradually become more homogeneous.

### **Academic and institutional drift**

We have previously argued (Jónasson, 2006a) that the development of academic programmes and of institutional changes can, at least partly be accounted for by credentialism and how it manifests itself in the attractiveness of academic over vocational programmes. This is of course not the whole story, and there are other reasons for both, but from kindred aspirations of the academic staff of the institutions in question. But as the selection of institutions is determined by credentialed students, the institutional flora must adapt, and it does. The institutions are sensitive to what the students choose, and even which students choose what. The popular tracks or programmes flourish, the poorly attended ones wither away. If the "good" students

start to change their course and move away from certain programmes the vulnerable programmes attempt to change their status; the same applies to whole institutions. There are other internal drivers of academic drift, such as internally defined academic status, the drive for research funds (which are normally only available to research active institutions) and the opportunity to run doctoral programmes, which is desirable for a variety of reasons. We insist, however, that the students are a crucial driver of a large part of institutional dynamics, directly or indirectly.

The exploration of educational participation and non-participation and drop-out does, however, not fit well into this credential account and it is precisely for that reason interesting to explore this discrepancy between the dropout phenomenon and the account of institutional dynamics presented here. Here the account goes like this: We argue that at any given point in time, the characteristics of the emerging system of education does only partially align itself with the ambition and motivation of a sizable part of the population – or phrased differently, the development of the system adapts too slowly to their, albeit changing, aspirations and aptitudes. Thus a part of the cohort may have interests and aptitude for attending school, but not for the programmes or settings the system offers at any given point in time. The system has indeed a variety of reasons to reach an ever greater proportion of the cohort, but may lack the flexibility, the understanding or the motivation by individual players to reach out to the groups that are not participating.

### **Educational participation and non-participation and drop-out as a characteristic of Icelandic education**

In the following discussion, we will describe participation and non-participation patterns in upper secondary and tertiary education. We will present findings on social selection within the system in recent decades with regard to access to the system, school dropout and success. We will focus on how the patterns of participation and non-participation in upper secondary and tertiary education are related to students' background, i.e. gender, age, domicile, parents' education, social economic status (SES), family structure and immigrant background.

### **Access to upper secondary education**

All pupils who complete compulsory schooling or equivalent education or have reached the age of 16 have the right to enrol in upper secondary school, irrespective of academic results at the end of compulsory education. Nevertheless, there are varied admission requirements to different programmes of study and to individual schools.

Until 2009, at the end of the last grade of compulsory school (10<sup>th</sup> grade) students took nationally co-ordinated examinations in up to six subjects; these were in fact optional, but entrance into different secondary programmes was to a varying degree conditional on passing at least some of these. In 2009, new national co-ordinated examination with somehow different aims replaced the former ones. These examinations take place at the beginning instead of at the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Like the old ones the examinations are intended to give information on student's progress to the students, his/her family, the school and to the educational system. However, the upper secondary schools do not get access to the results of these examinations as before. Instead, students' school grades at the end of compulsory school are now used for admittance purposes to different programmes and schools. In most cases students can enter the study programme they prefer, if they have passed 10<sup>th</sup> grade. If not, they can take a preparatory course of study and then enter the programme they want. Most students can get into the preferred upper secondary school as well. Nevertheless, in the capital area there has been a lot of competition to get into a few elite schools. These schools have mostly chosen their students based on their grades. This has been criticised; some good students have not been admitted to the schools in their neighbourhood due to a hard competition, also it has been pointed out that it may not encourage academically weak students' educational success to be forced to attend schools in the other end of the city. Therefore, the ministry of education is now working on an agreement with the schools to ensure that all schools admit certain percentage of students from their neighbourhood before selecting students solely basing on grades. It should be emphasised that although some students may not get into the one at the top of their list, at the end of compulsory school everybody gets accepted into at least some school (Ólafsson, 2011).

We will now look at the upper secondary enrolment of 16 year-olds, the normative age of accessing the system, in the light of students' background. According to Statistics Iceland, the enrolment rate of 16 year-olds in upper secondary school has been increasing over the last decade from 90% of the whole cohort in 2000 to 95% 2009. Figure 10 shows that enrolment rate has been little higher among females but the last couple of years it has been very similar for males and females. In 2010 women were 52% of students at the upper secondary level (Statistics Iceland, 2011c).

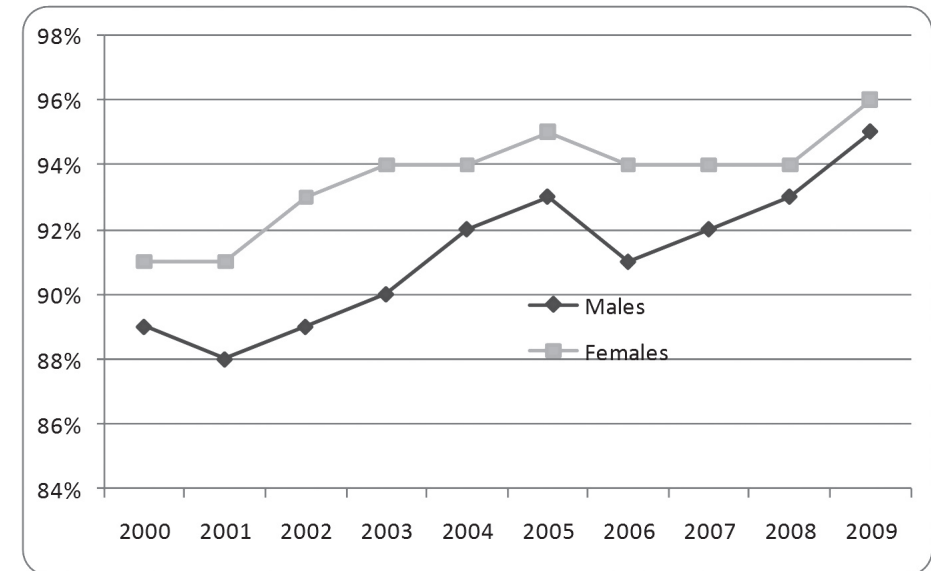


Figure 10. Upper secondary enrolment rate of 16 year-olds by gender 2000-2009 (Statistics Iceland, 2011b).

In Table 2 the division of 16 year old students at upper secondary school is shown by programme and gender for the years 2000, 2005 and 2009. Most students enter general programmes that give access to further education even though higher percentage of males compared to females enter the vocational and technical programmes. Also, as can be seen during the last decade proportionally fewer males and females chose vocational and technical programmes. In 2010, two thirds of students at the upper secondary level were registered in general programmes (Statistics Iceland, 2011d).

Table 2. Students' programme orientation at age of 16 at upper secondary school 2000, 2005 and 2009 by gender (Statistics Iceland, 2011b).

	2000		2005		2009	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
	%	%	%	%	%	%
General	71	81	74	86	80	88
VET	29	19	26	14	20	12

In Table 3 enrolment rate of 16 year old cohort at upper secondary level in 2000, 2005 and 2009 is shown by domicile (all regions in Iceland are included). In 2000 around 90% of a cohort entered upper secondary school in all regions except the

Southwest where the enrolment rate was only 80%. In the last decade the rate has increased in all regions, becoming more similar between regions with the years. That may reflect that the last years new upper secondary schools or first levels of upper secondary education have been established in more remote areas. The increased affinity may also be due to a ceiling effect. The Icelandic '75 cohort study explored the relationship between students' educational progress and the distance of student's domicile at the end of compulsory school to the nearest upper secondary school. The findings indicated that the students who lived in the capital area or in urban areas where upper secondary school was situated were more likely to enrol than other students (Jónasson & Blondal, 2002b).

Table 3. Upper secondary enrolment rate of 16 year-olds by region 2000, 2004 and 2009 (Statistics Iceland, 2011b).

Year	Reykjavik	Capital area excl. Reykjavik	Southwest	West	Westfjords	Northwest	Northeast	East	South
	%	%							
2000	90	92	80	87	89	88	90	89	88
2005	95	95	90	91	95	98	94	93	90
2009	95	97	92	94	97	95	95	96	93

Information is not readily available on the relationship between students' enrolment at upper secondary school and their background with regard to parents' education, social economic status, and family structure. Still, findings of the '75 cohort study *Young people and Icelandic upper secondary education* (Jónasson & Blondal, 2002a) indicated that students from families with lower educational background were less likely to enrol at upper secondary school. Of those who at the age of 24 who had never enrolled at upper secondary school (7% of the '75 cohort) over 40% came from families where neither parent had obtained any formal certificate after compulsory education.

There has been strong growth in immigrant population (born abroad with two foreign born parents) in Iceland in the last decade, from 1.8% (roughly 5 thousand immigrants) of the population in 1996 to 8% (around 25 thousand) in 2008. The share is now comparable to other Nordic countries. However, second generation immigrants are fewer and much younger than in other European countries. Most immigrants are in working age, only 6% are below the age of 15. Until the 1990s, the majority of immigrants came from the other Nordic countries but in 2008 most immigrants came from other European countries (68%). By far the largest group is from Poland, 36% of all immigrants in Iceland are born in Poland. Other large groups are from Philippines and Lithuania (Statistics Iceland, 2009a). Figure 11 shows the enrolment rate at upper secondary school of 16 year old students depending on foreign

background. As the number of 16 year-olds belonging to second generation was so small they were not included in the analysis. As can be seen, from 2004-2009 enrolment rate was always the lowest for immigrants (70-75%). Also, compared to 16 year-olds with no foreign background the enrolment rate was lower among 16 with one foreign born parent, although the difference seems to be decreasing while it is not the case for immigrants.

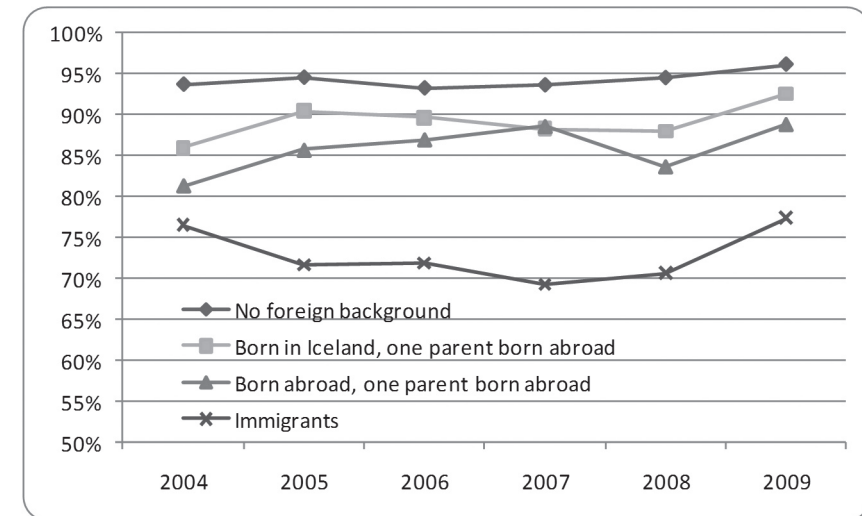


Figure 11. Upper secondary enrolment rate of 16 year old students by foreign background 2004–2009 (Statistics Iceland, 2009a).

We have been focusing on the access of 16 year-olds to upper secondary education as it is the normative age to enter the system. In the last decade, 16 year old students have in general had good access to the system from 90% of cohort in 2000 and up to 95% in 2009. Most students enter general programmes and higher proportion of females than males. In the last decade the trend has been that both fewer males and females chose vocational education. The access does not seem to depend strongly on gender and domicile, especially not the last years. However, enrolment among students with immigrant background is considerably lower than for other 16 year-olds or around 70-75% during the last decade. Little information exists on enrolment by family background but study of Jónasson and Blondal (2002a) showed that enrolment is lower among students from families with little formal educational accreditation.

There has been no policy related to age with regard to admission to the upper secondary system. Figure 12 shows the proportion of students in upper secondary



education in three cohort ranges during the years 2000 – 2009. It shows that the upper secondary programmes are open for older cohorts than the system is geared towards. Even though the system accepts students at any age, it presumes that they are in the age range 16-19, but the figure shows that only about 60% are. A lot of the older students attend evening classes or register in distance education, in both cases more so as they get older.

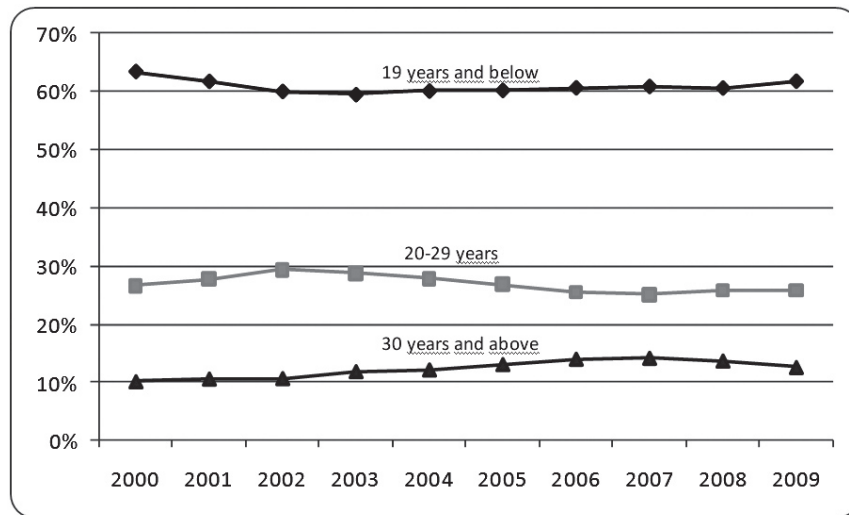


Figure 12. Upper secondary enrolment rate in three cohort ranges 2000-2009 (Statistics Iceland, 2011b). The figure shows the age distribution within the upper secondary system.

In the new Upper Secondary School Act of 2008 a special right to study at this school level was given to students until the year they reach the age of 18. This underlines that the school system has very clear obligations towards students two years after completing compulsory school. This is a change in the law that underpins formally what has been in effect for a number of years. It is not clear what difference this makes, as there are no school fees and everybody has been accepted into at least some school. The benefit may be that schools will feel encouraged to offer programmes better suited to the students most likely to drop out. But it could also mean that the system could be less flexible to certain group of students who have reached the age of 18. Over the years, youth who have dropped out from upper secondary schools, often because of low academic achievement and low attending record, have had difficulties to re-enter the system, especially to day courses. The new law on special right to study until the age of 18 could make it more difficult for this group to

get admitted. The educational budget cut is also to be considered, resulting in individual schools admitting fewer students and fewer distance classes being offered. In 2010, there was 8% decrease in the number of students at upper secondary level for the first time since 1997, when Statistics Iceland started to publish data on registered students. The reduction was mostly among students in distance learning and evening schools (Statistics Iceland, 2011d).

### Dropout from upper secondary education

By comparison, the Icelandic system still faces one outstanding problem: an extremely high dropout rate from upper secondary education. This phenomenon is considered so crucial that in the recent legal reform carried out by the Icelandic central government the dropout issue was given absolute priority in the legislation. Early school leaving is more common in Iceland than in many other OECD countries and has been stable for years. We think that three indicators of students' success are important in understanding the problem of school dropout in Iceland. One is the graduation rate from upper secondary school, the second is the status dropout rate which is defined as a percentage of cohorts in certain age that is not enrolled in school and has not graduated from upper secondary school and the third, event dropout rate measures the proportion of students who drop out in a single year without completing upper secondary education. Let us first look at the graduation rate. Icelandic cohort data showed that 62% of a cohort born in 1982 had graduated from upper secondary school at the age of 24 keeping in mind that the normal completion age is 20 for most study programmes (Statistics Iceland, 2008). The results resembled remarkably that from earlier studies of two cohorts born in 1969 and 1975, where the graduation rate was 56-57% (Jónasson & Blondal, 2002a; Jónasson & Jónsdóttir, 1992). These findings indicate that around 40% have not completed upper secondary education at the age of 24 and that this situation has been stable over time. Nevertheless, of these 40% some are still studying. The '75 cohort study showed that of those who had not completed the upper secondary level, around 16% were studying there at the age of 24 or about 7% of the cohort (Jónasson and Blondal, 2002a; Jónasson and Jónsdóttir, 1992).

The stability of the non-completion or dropout pattern is of particular interest. It must be noted, however, that the employment situation has been very stable in recent years (i.e. up to the economic crisis in 2008). But the stability of the size of the dropout population has lasted much longer.

A recent study on early school leavers (European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture, 2005) showed the Icelandic situation to be somewhat special, in that the Icelandic population gradually does complete school, showing



changes even in cohorts aged over 30. It shows that people are completing their studies very late, but also that upwards of 30% of the population has only completed compulsory education at the formal level. It is (fortunately) not that the situation is getting worse, but it is clear 'nevertheless' that it is not improving either for the male population. The dropout rate remains quite high for both males and females of every age group, even though the resultant completion gradually increases with age, reaching around 80% when the females are in their thirties (i.e. non-completion around 20%) and similarly for the males when they are in their forties. Recent data shows that the situation has not changed since 2003 (Personal communication, Statistics Iceland, March, 2010).

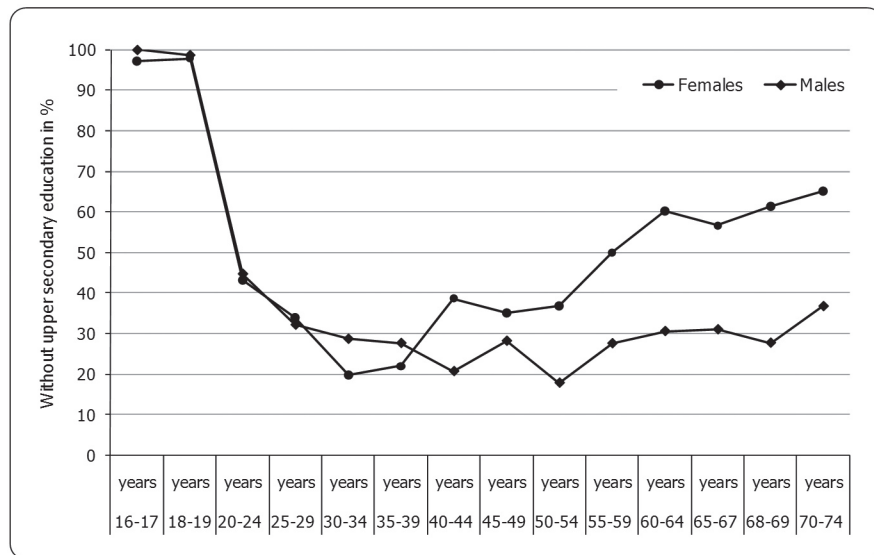


Figure 13. Proportion of a cohort which has not obtained any formal certificate after compulsory education in Iceland, 2003 (Jónasson and Dofradóttir, 2008).

But it is also clear that those who have overcome a certain barrier within the education system keep on going and the gap between those who have completed some education continues to increase. Interestingly, life-long education only exasperates the division that is to be seen already at the completion of compulsory education.

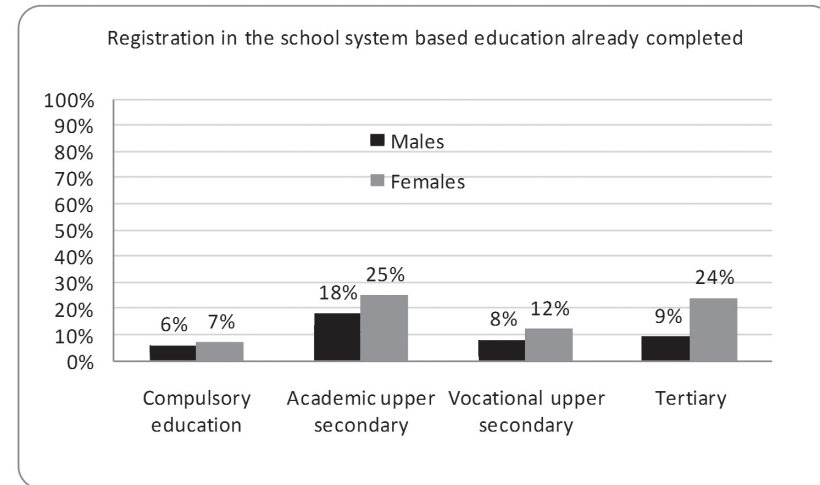


Figure 14. The figure shows e.g. that only 7% of females who have only completed compulsory education are registered in school (presumably upper secondary school), while 24% of females who already have a university degree are still registered in school presumably higher tertiary education.<sup>14</sup>

The credential forces certainly apply to those females who have completed tertiary education, and apparently also those who have completed upper secondary education. This is less clear for males, even though we know that it applies to them to some extent, but the picture is less clear. We still don't know if the credential argument does not apply to those who have least education because they are not sensitive to it, by nature or culture, and do therefore not seek further education, or if by experience they have learned that the path is not for them so they attempt to take other routes. This is important to investigate in order to understand the nature and power of the credentialist forces, but of course much more importantly in order to understand the nature of interaction between a large section of the population and the educational system.

Those who drop out have generally completed few credit units at upper secondary level. The Icelandic study of a cohort born in 1975 showed that when aged 24, almost a quarter of the cohort had either never enrolled in upper secondary school (7.3%) or had not completed any courses there (15.3%). Moreover, of the students who dropped out, over half (55%) left before completing the equivalent of one school year. This means that they had completed less than one-fourth of the majority of programmes offered at this school level, whether towards matriculation examinations or many of the vocational programmes. As for completing the equivalent of two

<sup>14</sup> Similar data exist for participation in informal education of various types.

school years, about 80% of the group which quit had left before that stage (Jónasson and Blondal, 2002a). Similar findings were obtained in the comparable study of a cohort born in 1969 (Jónasson and Jónsdóttir, 1992).

We will now look at the event dropout rate (the proportion of students who drop out in a single year without completing upper secondary education) in the years 2004 to 2009. Table 4 shows upper secondary enrolment rate of cohorts born in 1988 to 1993 at the age of 16 to 20.<sup>15</sup> The table gives two kinds of information. On one hand, cohorts can be followed (the grey diagonal lines) and on the other it shows proportions of different cohorts enrolled each year. The difference between enrolment rate between years for each cohort indicates the event dropout rate, especially for the first years as most study programmes take four years. For example, in 2004, 93% of the '88 cohort entered the upper secondary system at age of 16. The year after, the enrolment rate dropped to 84% and 74% two years later (at age 18) indicating 9% dropout between the first and the second year and 10% between the second and the third year. The dropout rate between the first and the second year is incredibly similar for the cohorts, about 10%, except for the cohort who started upper secondary school in 2008 where it dropped to 3% (marked with circles). The proportion of different cohorts enrolled gives similar picture. It is very similar each year, except 2009 where the enrolment rate is higher than all the years before. One of the explanations that have been given for the high dropout rate in Iceland is that throughout last years there, has been an expansion at the labour market resulting in unusually good job opportunities for young people with few formal educational qualifications compared to other European countries. From 2000 to 2008, the unemployment rate was very low, on average 1-3%. Since 2009 as a result of the financial crisis this has changed dramatically, with unemployment rate around 8%. Younger people at the age of 16-24 are more likely to be unemployed than others and especially those without formal credited skills (Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security, 2009; Statistics Iceland, 2011e). This change in the labour market situation is probably the major reason for lesser dropout in 2009, in comparison with 2004 to 2008.

<sup>15</sup> The analysis is based on data on enrolment and population by age each year. Mostly the data involves the same group but of course some students move from and to the country but there is no reason to assume it changes the overall picture.

Table 4. Upper secondary enrolment rate at age of 16 to 20 of six cohorts in the years 2004 – 2009 (Statistics Iceland, 2011f).

Year:	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Cohort:	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
	%	%	%	%	%	%
16 years	93	94	93	93	93	95
17 years	83	84	85	83	85	90
18 years	75	73	74	77	75	80
19 years	68	68	67	68	69	72
20 years	38	36	36	35	36	38
fædd	88	89	90	91	92	93

During 2004 to 2008 there was very little gender difference for the cohorts of the dropout rate between the first and the second year, around 10% for males and 8.5% for females. However, between the second and the third year the dropout rate was higher for males than females, on average 10.5% for males compared to 6% for females.

Table 5 shows the proportion of students aged 16 to 20 who were registered in vocational or academic programmes in 2002 but not registered in the following year (event rate). The higher proportion of students dropping out of vocational rather than academic programmes is especially apparent among those aged 18 and 19.

Table 5. The percentages of students dropping out of upper secondary education, divided with regard to academic vs. vocational programmes 2002-2003. (Statistics Iceland, 2004)

Age	Academic tracks		Vocational tracks	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
	%	%	%	%
16	11	11	16	9
17	12	15	21	14
18	10	8	27	20
19	10	7	24	21
20	16	13	22	18

Figure 15 shows how the age distribution in completions extends into the twenties and even thirties for the vocational licences, much more than for the academic matriculation examination. One is the industrial trade licences, most of which the students can complete at the age of 20 (enter the last class at the age of 19) as the system is designed, and the matriculation examination, which the students can likewise complete at the age of 20 according to the expected norm. Note that the numbers are normalized, as the total completions add up to 100% in each case. Both these

figures emphasise how irrelevant it is to talk about these tracks as upper secondary tracks intended for the 16-19 year-olds.

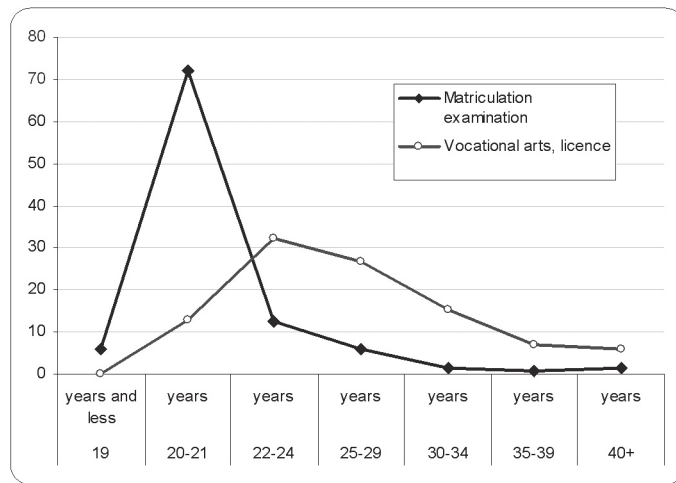


Figure 15. The age distribution for two categories of completions from upper secondary education 2004-2005. (Statistics Iceland, 2006).

Findings on students' background in relation to school dropout are similar to the trends found in other Western countries (e.g. European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture, 2005). The analysis above shows that the dropout rate is greater among males than females, and from vocational programmes compared to academic programmes. It has also been shown that dropout is highest among part-time students in distance courses and lowest among students in full-time day courses (Statistics Iceland, 2004). Also, the dropout is greater outside the capital region (Jónasson & Blondal, 2002a, 2002b). Furthermore, the risk of dropping out is higher among students from families with low socioeconomic and educational status, and among students who don't live with both parents (Adalbjarnardottir & Blondal, 2006; Blondal & Adalbjarnardottir, 2009; Blondal & Jónasson, 2003; Óskarsdóttir, 2000). Students' academic achievement on a standardized national test at the end of compulsory school (10<sup>th</sup> grade) has also been shown to be positively related to parental socioeconomic status (Adalbjarnardottir and Blondal, 2004). It should be noted, however, that according to PISA impact of socioeconomic background on students' performance is below OECD average in Iceland. One of the reasons of low socioeconomic impact on educational performance might be that the Icelandic educational system can be characterized as comprehensive rather than differentiated.

Through the years, students in the capital region have, on average, achieved higher grades than students outside it, on the nationally co-ordinated examinations at the

end of compulsory school (Jónasson and Blondal, 2002a, 2002b; Námsmatsstofnun, 2006). The studies of student cohorts born in 1969 and 1975 showed that their dropout rate was higher outside of the capital region. When controlled for academic achievement on the national examinations in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, however, the difference in dropout rate between the capital region and other regions disappeared (Jónasson and Blondal, 2002a). This suggests that the problem of varying regional educational attainment at upper secondary level can be traced to academic achievement in elementary school. Similar analysis showed much lesser effect of gender when academic achievement had been taken into account.

### Individual and family factors predicting school dropout

*Performance in academic programmes* at the lower secondary (compulsory) level has been clearly demonstrated to be one of the strongest predictors for upper secondary dropout, in Iceland as well as elsewhere (see Alexander, Entwisle & Kabbani, 2001; Battin-Pearson et al., 2000; Blondal & Adalbjarnardottir, 2009; Rumberger, 1987). Figure 16 shows percentage of a cohort of Icelandic students who had completed upper secondary education—either matriculation or vocational programmes—by the age of 24, as a function of grades on a standardized test in Icelandic at the end of compulsory school (age 16). It also shows the percentage of the cohort that got certain grades (the line), for example in this cohort 5% got grades lower than 3, and 31% got grades higher than 7 (the grade system is from 1-10). The figure demonstrates three points. First, grades clearly predict the graduates from academic programmes; the higher the grades the more likely are the students to have completed matriculation examination by the age of 24. Second, grades do not predict completion of vocational programmes; and third, the figure also shows that only 60% of the group with average grades (5-6.9), completed upper secondary education. This means that while the relationship between academic achievement and educational outcome is very robust and clear, we know very little about the most numerous group, despite realizing that their probability of graduation is 60% and therefore their chance of dropping out is 40%.

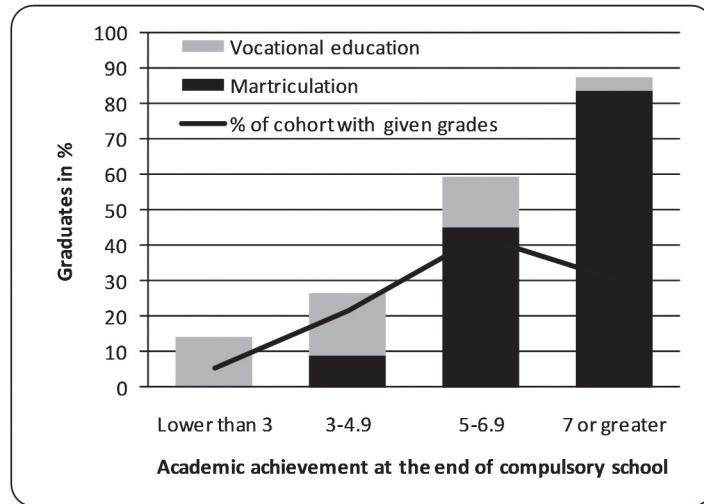


Figure 16. Proportion of a cohort who completed upper secondary education by program in light of academic achievement at the end of compulsory school (based on Jónasson and Blondal, 2002a).

Even though academic performance predicts dropout, it is particularly noteworthy that what is predicted is the dropout from academic programmes (see Figure 7) but not their dropout from vocational programmes. The '75 cohort study also showed that students, who completed vocational education, to some extent, had different attitudes towards school and education than their peers who completed the matriculation examination. Interestingly, the attitudes of those who left school were similar to the attitudes of those who actually completed vocational education. These findings indicate that, compared to those who completed a matriculation examination, those who left school or completed vocational education were not as pleased with either the institution they attended or their studies, and had been more interested in vocational than academic subjects during lower secondary school (Jónasson and Blondal, 2002a).

*Students' educational preferences.* Even though most students choose academic programmes at upper secondary school, many students prefer vocational studies even though they choose academic tracks. In the '75 cohort study the groups that preferred vocational studies (43% of the cohort) and academic studies (39%) were similar in size. One fifth did not have clear preferences (Jónasson and Blondal, 2002a). The study showed that much higher percentage of students who dropped out preferred vocational studies compared to students who completed matriculation examination. Moreover those who completed upper secondary school by the age of 24 were more interested in academic than vocational studies compared to those who

dropped out, taking into account students' background, academic achievement, parental educational encouragement, and their own attitudes to school (Blondal and Jónasson, 2003). This may indicate that because of a societal emphasis which in Iceland is placed at general rather than vocational education and many students feel pressure to choose academic tracks despite having deeper interest in vocational subjects. It may also be the case that students who have vocational interests may find it more difficult to find studies that fit their interests. This may even be more so in the case of females. Males are more likely to choose vocational track. Finding of a qualitative study on women who dropped out from upper secondary school indicated that women had more interest in vocational studies but felt they had limited study options in their field of interest (Gísladóttir, 2009).

*School engagement and unexpected educational pathways.* School engagement which is an umbrella conception for students' attitudes and behaviour is a central concept in most theories of school dropout (Finn, 1989; Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992). Dropping out is viewed as an ultimate end to a long-term process of students' disengagement from school, frequently beginning in early grades). Blondal and Adalbjarnadóttir (in print) examined students' different educational pathways in relation to their disengagement during adolescence. Icelandic youth (N=832) were followed from the age of 14 through the age of 22. Based on their academic achievement at the end of compulsory school (age 15) and educational attainment at the age of 22 they were classified into groups that took expected versus unexpected paths. Four groups were compared, namely students who followed expected pathways: (1) students who got low grades at the age of 15 and had not completed upper secondary school by the age of 22 (expected dropouts), and (2) high achievers who graduated (expected graduates); and students who followed unexpected pathways: (3) students who graduated by the age of 22 despite low grades at the age of 15 (unexpected graduates), and (4) high achievers who nevertheless dropped out (unexpected dropouts). The findings indicate that adolescents' feelings towards their academic tasks and school, as well as their school behaviours and the way their disengagement develops the following year differentiated according to their pathways. At the age of 14, those "at risk" academically who graduated unexpectedly showed fewer negative behaviours than the expected dropouts. Moreover, high achievers who dropped out unexpectedly showed more negative behaviours as well as academic disinterest, and misidentification with school compared to expected graduates. The following year (age 15), in general, disengagement increased among unexpected dropouts but decreased among expected graduates. Males and students from lower-SES backgrounds were generally more disengaged, and males



from those backgrounds became more emotionally disengaged during their last year in compulsory school.

*Family factors.* A child's family has been recognized as one of the primary contributors to school success (e.g. Rumberger, 2004). The findings of the '75 cohort study indicated that Icelandic school dropouts were more likely than graduates to perceive little educational encouragement from their parents during compulsory school. Moreover, the discrepancy between the youth's and parents' educational preferences was more pronounced among those who dropped out. Our survey asked the student whether parental emphasis on the matriculation examination had been similar, greater or less than the student's. What we were looking for was consistency between the educational choice of the student and parental preferences. Since most Icelandic parents want their children to take the matriculation examination, we asked about it in particular. The findings were that those who left school experienced more inconsistency between their own and their parents' preferences than other students (Jónasson and Blondal, 2002a).

Another Icelandic study has shown that the adolescent's perception of parenting style and parental involvement in education relates longitudinally to dropout. At the age of 14, adolescents who characterized their parents as authoritative (parenting style characterized by granting of autonomy, warmth and support, as well as firmness and clear standards for the child's behaviour) were more likely to have completed upper secondary school by the age of 22 than adolescents from non-authoritative families, controlling for the adolescent's gender, socioeconomic status (SES), temperament and parental involvement. Whereas parental involvement at the age of 14 uniquely predicted school dropout, however, it did so only when not controlled for parenting style, SES, gender and temperament. Thus, parenting style seems to predict school dropout more strongly than parental involvement. Further, parenting style may moderate the relationship between parental involvement and dropout, though not in every case; some of the findings indicate that only in authoritative families does parental involvement decrease the likelihood of school dropout. Finally, even after controlling for previous academic achievement, adolescents from authoritative families were less likely to drop out than adolescents from authoritarian and neglectful families. The authors concluded that their findings indicate that the quality of the relationship between parents and their child seems to predict better the likelihood of the child's staying in school than do specific parental actions that are aimed directly at the child's education. Moreover, the findings give insight into possible explanations of the relationship of structural characteristics such as socioeconomic status and children's school success and failure. Adolescents who perceive their parents

as being more authoritative do far better at school than adolescents who perceive their parents as being more authoritarian or neglectful. This applies to both males and females, regardless of their socioeconomic background and previous academic achievement (Blondal & Adalbjarnardottir, 2009).

### Access to tertiary education

To enter tertiary education students need to have completed matriculation examination or equivalent education. Universities can additionally accept students who possess equivalent level of maturity and knowledge. The admission requirements and educational standards have to be comparable to those demanded in certified higher education institutions with similar fields abroad. Specific admission requirements may be set, for example entrance examinations or assessment (Lög um háskóla, nr. 63/2006). For state universities there are only registration fees but there are tuition fees in private institutions.

There has been a huge expansion of tertiary education in the last years. From 1997 to 2007, the number of new entrants (students enrolled at the tertiary or doctorate level in Iceland for the first time) increased by 70% and more for males than females. Females comprised, on average, about 60% of the new entrants and around 40% were 20 or 21. In 2007 more than one of three new entrants studied social sciences, law or business, little less than one fifth studied humanities and arts and around 15% studied education. Females were majority of new entrants in all fields (education, humanities and arts; social sciences, business and law; health and welfare; agriculture and veterinary; and services) except sciences, mathematics and computing; and engineering, manufacturing and construction. In 2007, the number of foreign new entrants was 518 and had increased five times from 1997. Foreign new entrants were mostly from the European Union countries (Statistics Iceland, 2009b).

As shown in Table 6, in the last decade the tertiary education enrolment rate was highest among 21 to 24 year-olds and decreased with age. In 2009 the enrolment rate for 21 to 24 year-olds was around 30%. There enrolment has been rather stable throughout the last decade, with slight increase. However, in 2009 there is a noteworthy increase in enrolment, especially for 20 and 21 year-olds. One reason might be the difficulties in the labour market starting in 2009.



Table 6. Tertiary education enrolment rate by age in 2000-2009 (Statistics Iceland, 2011g).

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
19 years	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
20 years	14	15	17	17	18	17	17	16	16	23
21 years	23	23	28	28	28	28	27	28	27	32
22 years	27	29	30	33	33	32	32	31	32	32
23 years	26	27	29	31	33	31	32	30	29	32
24 years	23	24	26	29	27	29	28	28	25	28
25 years	19	19	22	24	24	23	24	24	21	24
26 years	16	15	18	21	20	21	19	20	20	21
27 years	12	14	15	16	18	18	18	17	17	18
28 years	10	11	14	15	15	15	15	16	15	16
29 years	8	9	11	14	13	14	13	13	14	14
30-39 years	4	5	7	8	8	9	9	9	9	10
40 years+	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2

Females have outnumbered males at tertiary level since mid-eighties. In 2010 about 60% of students at the tertiary level were females (Statistics Iceland, 2011d). The last decade substantively higher proportion of females in all age group enrolled in higher education, as shown in Figure 17. For 20-24 and 30-39 year-olds the gender difference has increased with years.

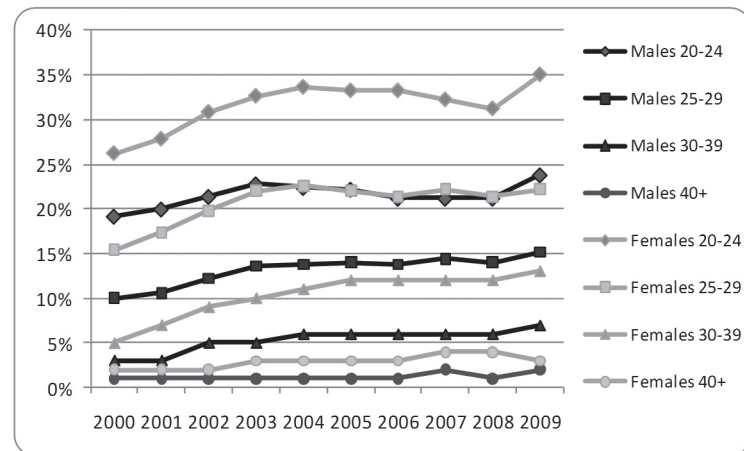


Figure 17. Tertiary education enrolment by gender 2000-2009 (Statistics Iceland, 2011g).

In 2010, 36% of students at tertiary level were enrolled in social sciences, law or business, and 15% studied humanities and arts and 13% studied education. Females were majority of students in all fields (education, humanities and arts; social sciences, business and law; health and welfare; agriculture and veterinary; and services)

except sciences, mathematics and computing; and engineering, manufacturing and construction.

University of Iceland (state university) is the largest of tertiary institutions. As can be seen in Table 7, in 2010, 70% of students studied at University of Iceland and 80% studied at public institution. The largest private institution is Reykjavik University with 15% of students. Interestingly higher proportion of females studied at University of Iceland but the reverse was true for Reykjavik University.

Table 7. Tertiary education enrolment rate by institutions in 2010 (Statistics Iceland, 2011h).

	Total %	Males %	Females %
<b>Public:</b>			
University of Iceland	70	63	75
University of Akureyri	8	5	9
Agricultural University of Iceland	2	2	2
<b>Private:</b>			
Reykjavik University	15	24	9
Bifröst School of Business	3	3	3
Iceland Academy of the Arts	2	2	2
<b>Numer of students</b>	19,456	7,546	11,910

The enrolment rate has increased at public tertiary schools in the last decade (2001-2010) and until 2008 that was also the case for private schools but in the last two years the number of students has declined a little (Statistic Iceland, 2011g). The main reason for this development is most likely the financial crisis in Iceland that started in the autumn of 2008.

### Dropout from tertiary education

There is a lack of studies on dropout from tertiary education in Iceland and most have focused on dropout from University of Iceland. Still, analysis from Statistics Iceland (2004) shows, that in 2002 to 2003 the dropout rate at tertiary level in Iceland was 15%. The dropouts were defined as the proportion of student enrolled in one year and not the year after and had not graduated in the meantime (event dropout rate). Dropout was more common among males (16.5% compared to 13.6 for females), among older students and part time students. Also, lower proportion of undergraduate students dropped out. Among undergraduates, the dropout rate was highest the first year; 15% compared to only 5% after the second year. Higher proportion of student dropped out from private school, or 13.7% compared to 10.6%. The analysis also showed that the dropout rate from tertiary level five years earlier, from 1997 to 1998, was the same (15%) even though the number of students in-

creased considerably from 8,372 to 13,357 in that five years period. Interestingly, a follow up on this dropout group five years later showed that about half of those who dropped out had resumed study, mostly at tertiary level (81%) and one out of four had graduated.

The comparison on dropout among students studying business in two public schools, University of Iceland (UI) and University of Akureyri (UA) and two private universities Reykjavík University (RU) and Bifröst School of Business (BB) showed that the dropout rate was considerably higher from the public schools (The Icelandic National Audit Office, 2010). Dropouts were defined as those students who had not completed their undergraduate studies 3 or 5 years after they started. Table 8 shows the dropout rate among two groups of students, i.e. those who started their business studies in 1999 and 2005. First it shows that the percentage of students who dropped out in 1999 and 2005 was much higher at public schools, UI and UA than the private schools, RU and BB. Secondly, dropout was much higher among students who entered 2005 in all the schools. The reason for this is probably a very good situation in the labour market in 2005 – 2008, resulting in students opting out for good job opportunities or working a lot along school taking longer time to complete their studies.

Table 8. Dropout from business studies by institutions (The Icelandic National Audit Office, 2010).

	Entered 1999		Entered 2005		Proportional change	
	Not graduated	Not graduated	Not graduated	Not graduated	2002 and 2008	2004 and 2010
%	2002	2004	2008	2010		
UI	85	66	89	77	4	11
UA	61	56	83	70	22	14
RU	28	18	50	37	22	19
BB	34	26	46	27	12	1

This study also showed that the students in the private schools were generally more satisfied with the teaching, conditions and service. The authors of the report point out that the results of the comparisons can at least partly be traced to different financing between the institutions. The private schools can in some ways spend more on their student and the fact that the students pay tuition fee most likely decreases school dropout. They also point out that the institutions are different in many important ways.

As already mentioned University of Iceland is the far largest institution with around 13,500 students in 2010 compared to little less than 3,000 students in RU, the second biggest university. The UI offers studies in almost 300 programmes in social sciences, health sciences, humanities, education, natural sciences and engineering. There are no tuition fees (like UA) and apart from matriculation examination or

equivalent, no restriction of admission, except there are entrance examination in medicine and physiotherapy. This means that the compositions of students entering the school are different from those entering private schools.

Recent study among school dropouts from University of Iceland showed that 54% of the students who had registered in the years 2003-2006 had not actually attended any lessons. Moreover, high proportion of students dropped out the first year and dropout was greatest from humanities and social sciences. Considerable number of students leaves after completing half their studies. As the authors point out, university dropout does have a different meaning. Registering but never actually starting is not problematic compared to students leaving after completing significant part of their studies. Moreover, high dropout at the first year of studying might indicate that the university has high educational standards and quality, not least as the University of Iceland has been called that national university with far the highest number of students of the Icelandic universities. One third of the students quit because the school did not live up to their expectations, others mention personal or financial reasons. The most common reasons the students gave for leaving were that the studies did not appeal to the students, personal difficulties, little opportunities to interact with teachers outside the classroom, too crowded lessons and problems with coordinating the studying with the parenting and family life. The explanations could be divided into the impact of the school, students' performance and interest in the studies. Impact of school seems to have the strongest influence on students decision to leave involving not enough service to students, little opportunities to interact with teachers outside the classroom, too crowded courses, bad study conditions and poor teaching. One of every five regretted his /her decision to leave (University of Iceland, 2008).

## Summary part I

The general conclusion derived from the analyses of transformation in the contemporary educational system in Poland and Iceland is that we may notice an independent, of socio-cultural discrepancies, similar process of educational expansion on increasingly higher levels. In case of Polish educational system this seems to be most apparent in the development of tertiary education, increased coefficient of solarisation on tertiary level of education and the growing number of individuals receiving secondary education and tertiary education among society. As the analyses of Jon Torfi Johansson have shown, "educational boom" noticed in the 70's is of an apparent character and comprises an element, seemingly stable for modern society, of the mechanisms of educational expansion on increasingly higher levels together with the development of the whole civilization. In this matter, Poland has suffered something that may be called an "interval" or "delay", related to a pause in the process of modernization in 1980's. One may say that in 1990's we return to the "standard path of modernization" quickly catching up. The above mentioned return is undoubtedly related to both system and economic changes.

We may clearly state that the "hunger of education" may be noticed on all levels of society, the composition of secondary education schools providing with "Matura" seems to be indicating democracy in the access to education. Nevertheless, when we have a closer look at the processes responsible for selection and allocation in the field of education, we may see that it is the case of differentiation of educational paths among people coming from various levels and milieu of society (both in Poland and Iceland). Essential here is also the discrepancy between the sexes – as we may see, the "hunger of education" is higher among women than men – no major difference between two countries exists here either.

Educational expansion does not level educational inequalities. It can be stated that, educational expansion fosters the growth of social inequalities, at least to level of maximum achievement of those, who hold top social positions. Educational inequalities disperse on lower levels of education (elementary and secondary), though they are manifested on tertiary level of education and education for adults.

To make the picture even more clear, the general level of education among society increases, however, the reproductive character of educational system does not vanish, in relation to social structure. In the following part of this elaboration we will focus on the relation of such outlined processes with the mechanisms of social capital.

## Part II

### Social capital and education – interpretation attempt

## Introduction – Social capital and education

The immediate topic of this paper is the relation between the processes occurring at the meeting of education and social capital. In the first part, we have presented a number of ways of understanding social capital. The second part is devoted to the presentation of the main processes connected with educational expansion in Poland and Iceland. Now we will discuss the application of the theoretical categories developed by the authors of the social capital concept in the analysis of education-related topics.

### Following Putnam...

Adopting the concept developed by Robert Putnam one may attempt to look for reasons of inequalities in access to education between youth from various backgrounds by analysing the degree of social capital in individual types of communities or in specific population groups. Social capital in this case means the degree of social engagement of residents. The above seems to be the most popular way to study social capital and it involves the application of quantitative measurements of membership in associations, of knowledge about the local government or amount of time devoted to social life. It is an analysis using the “large/small” categories: the larger and deeper the knowledge of political mechanisms, of neighbours, the bigger the engagement in social life, the stronger the social capital [see e.g. Fedyszak-Radziejowska, 2006, Czapiński, 2005].

This is how Putnam himself describes the use of social capital in the field of education:

“Bob and Rosemary Smith, parents of six-year-old Jonathan, live in an urban community in which there is an equal number of good and bad things going on. Bob and Rosemary support the idea of public education and they would like their six-year-old child to interact with children of various social backgrounds, which a public school offers. But the local primary school is a mess: teachers are deprived, paint is peeling off the walls and there is no money for extracurricular activities or for new computers. Concerned about the conditions of their son’s education, Bob and Rosemary have a choice. They may take their child from the public school and send him to a private one or they may stay and try to improve the situation at the public school. What to do?” [Putnam 2005, p. 289].

The solution is to get involved in the starting of a parent-teacher association. Their social capital plays a fundamental role here because the more social contacts

the Smiths have and the higher trust of the community they enjoy the more parents will become involved in the work of such an organisation and will form a lobby to pressure local authorities to provide financial and organisational support for the local school. On one hand, such an association serves as a testing ground for democratic habits and attitudes of the people involved, and on the other hand it reinforces the feeling of interdependence and mutual responsibility across the local community. Another effect is the creation of mutual support networks between association members. Besides, by gathering for meetings and discussions, people get to know each other better, build and reinforce their friendships which may be cultivated later outside their activity for the school. In this way the community becomes better integrated and socially coherent. “All these gains – civic skills, social support, professional contacts, volunteer labour, movie going partners - arose because the Smiths wanted to put computers in their kid’s school.” [Putnam, 2000, p. 290].

Trying to assess the impact of school and the role of social capital in these processes we focus on evaluating the quality of civic culture of a given community. The relevant research projects try to discover whether the residents of a given community have significant civic knowledge – whether they know the mechanisms of democracy, local government, whether they know how to influence these mechanisms? Are they involved in political life, do they take active part in elections, are they members of local organisations? Do they often meet other residents, is their social life fulfilling? In other words, is the structure of mutual relationships within the community dense and strong or, using the terminology of other analytical systems, is there a strong social bond within the community or whether people are isolated from one another and the bonds are weak?

Another dimension of the analysis is the question about the type of social capital of a given community in relation to the distinction into bonding and bridging social capital. Are strong bonds prevailing within the community but there are no bridges to other groups and resources or do we find such connections and readiness for contacts with others, with those from outside our own group? An important question that arises when one thinks about the bonding social capital is who does this bond connect? What are the characteristic features of the group defined as one’s own? When one considers bridging social capital, the main question is what groups, what cultures and what lifestyles the members of the specified communities build bridges to?

**Following Coleman...**

Using the concept originating from the work of James Coleman, one can see a wider area of social interdependencies. What especially needs to be indicated here is the double nature of social capital – its intra-familial and extra-familial aspects. Differences in school achievement of rural and urban youth may be caused by different family models, different involvement of parents in supporting their child in learning, different quality of contacts with relatives, different degree of parental control over the child (measured e.g. by the number of the child's friends known to the parents). Besides, when analysing extra-familial social capital, one should take into account (like in the case of using Putnam's concept) the network of social contacts, membership in organisations and religious practices. Additionally, we may take a look at the quality of the school and the perceived quality of the neighbourhood.

Following the above train of thought we should analyse family relations, the quality and type of contact between parents and children, family structure and types of support that young people can receive from their families. Moreover, our attention should be focused on the extra-familial social capital, i.e. on the relations within the local community. Are there any clear norms and rules shared by members of a given community and do the mechanisms of social control operate properly? What is the degree of trust in other people and in the institutions that are to enforce the above control?

Using the example of Putnam's Smith family we will analyse whether they may count on the help of their relatives, whether they do homework with their son and whether they are interested in who their son plays after school with. We will also consider whether other parents support the Smiths through exercising control over the behaviour of Jonathan on his way to and from school, and through playing the role of guardians of norms and values as they observe children playing in the street and admonishing them if they infringe the socially accepted principles.

**Following Bourdieu...**

When we adopt the perspective proposed by Bourdieu, our attention is shifted to other areas. For Bourdieu, social capital is the resource of an individual or a network of individuals, and not of a community. Bourdieu points out not only the number or range of social contacts enabling access to other resources but also the "quality" of the people with whom we interact (their cultural and economic capital). The analysis of social capital in this case does not only mean measuring the amount of this resource but it involves the analysis of the process of building and using it (consciously or not). The difference in school achievement of rural and urban youth

may be a result of different ways in which social capital is used. Where social capital is treated as a resource of individuals, one should ask about the quality of the network of social contacts between residents of specified communities and members of specified families. What resources in the form of social contacts, relations of mutual recognitions and obligations do individuals and their families have? What economic and cultural resources do the above contacts give them access to? How do they build the above capital, what strategies are applied to build the above networks? Are the resources they gain access to in the above way useful and functional in the processes of reaching social status?

A vivid illustration of the use of social capital by middle-class families was presented by Stephen Ball [2003]. The social capital of the middle class is rich, well-developed and directly helps in the selection and access to valuable goods. Middle-class parents are an abundant source of support. First of all, either themselves or their friends work in professions aspired to by future students. Close or more distant family members already go to schools to which their children want to go. Such situation serves as a good testing ground and an opportunity for seeing "how it works". Young people may observe the educational conditions, working conditions, they can learn about the concrete forms and activities connected with professions whose general names are "lawyer", "economist", "architect" or "doctor". They know what specialties may be pursued within a given profession and what efforts they require. Working class youth do not have such knowledge, they do not have insight into the "world of middle-class professions". They have only a vague idea of the nature of the profession they aspire to and of the ways it can be achieved.

Young members of the middle-class may tap into the relationships and obligations of their parents, family and friends or gain access to people holding the necessary positions or having the necessary information. It is an example of the "strength of weak ties" (concept developed by M. Granovetter). People we know only as "friends of our friends" or "dad's colleague" may give us advice, indicate possible difficulties or provide with an idea of work and career in a given profession. It is a so-called hot knowledge. It enables one to eliminate certain possibilities, reject unrealistic plans and dreams. In this manner, one gains the ability to "manage aspirations" or "to put one's ambitions in order" [Ball, 2003, p. 85]. Moreover, participation in these networks constitutes a foundation for learning adequate social behaviours – ways of self-presentation, speaking, dressing, etc. As a result, middle-class youth know how to act, how to fill out an application form or how to behave at a job interview.

Apart from family resources, the efforts of a school aimed at building the social capital of pupils are important. As Ball points out, many private schools in the UK



try to organise practical training for their students in places where these students can get in touch with specialists in the field they are interested in. Schools also use their own resources in the form of contacts with professors and lecturers at prestigious universities. The above pupil internships are not only an opportunity to observe specialists but also to build resources (young people receive advice on how to behave, how to organise their time at the university, what major to choose, etc.). In this way, by sending their children to an appropriate school, parents buy them a complex social capital.

School also constitutes a social resource through teachers who know how to guide and support adolescents in their efforts to be accepted by a prestigious university. They offer advice, show possibilities, help pupils manage their time and efforts. Another element is the possibility to participate in extracurricular activities at school and outside of school (photography courses, theatre, additional mathematics courses, piano classes). Thus, it is a space for creating a whole spectrum of cultural competencies.

On the basis of the above research, when analysing the educational strategies of pupils and parents we discover the manners in which they create and employ the networks of social relations. Thus, an analysis of social practice is needed, an observation of concrete behaviours or analysis of the parents' discourse about the school. Taking again the example of the Smiths given by Putnam, we should ask about what friends Bob and Rosemary have, what cultural resources their social networks can lead to and how they use these contacts to support the education of Jonathan.

These various perspectives are reflected in the following analyses, which are directly devoted to the existing relations between social capital and education in Poland and Iceland.

## Cultural and historical conditioning of social capital in Poland

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Changes taking place in modern Polish society since the end of the 1980s need to be considered at many levels where issues concerning democratization, transformation and ongoing social changes appear. Departure from communism resulted not only in political and administrative changes in the functioning of the state, but also identity, sociocultural and axiological changes. Thus, as if in a social laboratory, we can observe this "living organism"; its dynamics and morphology of the human universe by watching relations between its particular elements: values, social ties and economy. In other words, we refer here to relations in a dynamic triad: culture – society – civilization.

The interaction of these three spheres is particularly important in the context of more and more popular concepts of social capital which attempt to connect the world of culture, society and economy. Among numerous concepts present in scientific discourse, Putnam's concept seems to be the most useful in discussions on cultural and historical conditions of social capital in Poland and on the influence of tradition and heritage on the development of social bonds. In his work *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* ("Demokracja w działaniu. Tradycje obywatelskie we współczesnych Włoszech" (Putnam 1995)), Putnam analyses the case of internal diversity of Italian society connected with different traditions of the North and the South of Italy. He sees the source of these differences in different historical experience, belonging to different cultural circles, and consequently, in different values permeating social life.

In his concept of social capital, he makes civil society the fundamental category where participants should actively participate in public life and demonstrate care for the common good rather than for their individual interests. Putnam openly notes that "it is not law and formal institutions introduced by the state that decide how a country or region is structured and functions (...), the decisive role is played by differences in social activity traditions and self-organization of communities constituting individual societies" (Putnam 1995, p. 13).

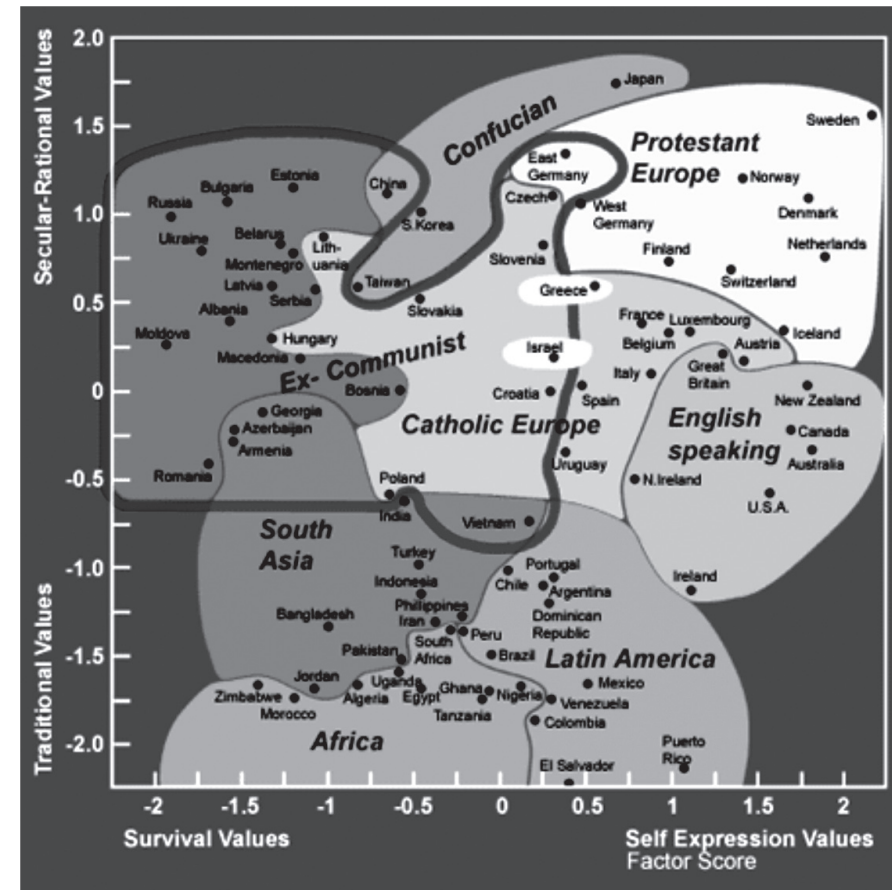
Putnam's second crucial category is trust. The level of trust depends to a large extent on tradition, past, cultural heritage, existing resources, infrastructure or social mobilization, and to a certain degree, on the economic situation of the region. However, in Putnam's opinion, searching for simple links ("hypnotizing correlations" (Putnam 1995, p. 236) between a high level of economic development (good health-

care, industrialization, wealth) and a high level of social capital is wrong reasoning. He believes that “economy level does not forecast civic traditions, but civic traditions do forecast the condition of economy better than economy itself” (Putnam 1995, p. 246).

The connection between economy and social bonds can also be found in the concept of Ronald Inglehart who, based on his research of Western Europeans, concluded that societies at a certain level of industrial development are characterized by a specific set of values, and the higher level of modernization, the less materialistic attitude of the community members. Inglehart divided values into materialistic (survival oriented) and post-materialistic (oriented towards free self-expression of individual identity) and he linked the functioning of a specific set of values with the economic level of a given community. On the other hand, he searched for the source of cultural change in the transition from one stage of development (industrial society) to another (post-industrial society) (cf. Inglehart 2003, Kempny 2004b, p. 145). Materialistic values are connected with satisfying physical security and economic needs (work, money, economic development) (e.g. Inglehart 2003 and others), whereas post-materialistic values, which aim at self-expression, include environmental protection, tolerance of minority groups and diversity, demand for civic and political participation as well as trust, independence, freedom of choice, tolerance, life satisfaction, self-development (cf. Inglehart, [http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs/articles/folder\\_published/article\\_base\\_54](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs/articles/folder_published/article_base_54) 2011.02.05). Cultural diversity underlying social capital resources indicates smaller than previously thought significance of the concept linking social transformations with economic modernization. Ronald Inglehart, the author of the theory mentioned herein, revised his radical approach and in the interaction of culture, society and civilization pointed out that the role of economic development in shaping diversity of particular societies is smaller than he had initially assumed while crediting traditional values (including religion) with bigger influence.

On the basis of the World Value Survey (cf. [www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)) and taking into consideration the already mentioned heritage factor, Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel created a world “map of values”. The map illustrates the hierarchies of values functioning in given societies and cultural circles (e.g. Confucian, Catholic Europe, Protestant Europe, English-speaking countries, Africa) using two major criteria. One of them is the division of values into two main tendencies – traditional, where emphasis is put on life according to religious rules and consequently a specific understanding of the role of family, nation and community (community identities) or secular-rational (individual, free-choice oriented identities) presented on the vertical

axis. The second categorization is the division into countries which focus their activities around values promoting self-expression (post-materialistic) or survival (materialistic), that is societies more economically developed or poorer (the horizontal axis: the more right side position, the more highly developed societies).



Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map of the World

(from: [http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs/articles/folder\\_published/article\\_base\\_54](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs/articles/folder_published/article_base_54) 2011.02.05)

Following Inglehart’s concept, we can search for differences in experiencing cultural change by post-communist societies in long-lasting structures, which is originating from different historic cultures. It can account for the unique position of Poland on the map above. On the one hand, it is a very religious society, which clearly distinguishes it from other post-communist societies, and on the other hand, it is culturally very remote from its closest neighbours (e.g. the Czech Republic, Germany, Russia) and yet it is located on the same axis (middle of the scale between rational

and traditional) where more highly placed (richer) Northern Ireland and the United States of America are found. This can be explained in many ways, for instance, by looking at similarities such as, e.g. “pathological individualism” dominant in Polish culture and also close to American culture, or strong Catholicism and traditionalism bringing Poles closer to Ireland (cf. Czapiński, quotation: Żakowski 2009; see also Żukowski 2008). Nevertheless, the reasons for these differences should be most of all looked for in the diversity of culture models and codes handed down and the uniqueness of historical experience.

Traditions of civic engagement passed from one generation to another influence the level of social capital and the degree of civil society development. In this context, culture (Kempny 2004a, p. 148) is understood as a source of individual and collective resources supporting the process of identity creation and organizing a discourse on the past. It is hard not to notice the impact of communist totalitarianism on the functioning of the modern Polish society. Using Stefan Nowak’s category of “social vacuum” or Richard Rose’s “hour-glass society” (cf. Kempny 2004a, p. 146) we can see the specific nature of social structure of the People’s Republic of Poland. The communist society created two types of identity – national and kin-neighbour. Ties at the local level were not cultivated, on the contrary, they were “hostile to the system”, any spontaneous civic activity could potentially support subversive or rebellious activities and as such was legally banned. Most institutions were centrally controlled and monitored, which made them ineffective in supporting civic participation because citizens organized by the system were unwilling to take part in such structures.

A society described by the “hour-glass” metaphor is built from masses forming its foundation and the “top” consisting of power-holding, privileged, system beneficiaries. There is no communication between the top and the bottom; both groups are closed to strangers, focused on achieving their own goals and watching their personal interests. Trust and ties are strong enough but only within primary groups – family and friends. The two groups treat each other like enemies – it is “we” as opposed to “them”. Using Putnam’s terminology, the nature of such social capital is bonding not bridging.

In such surroundings it is difficult to talk about high level of trust and standards of reciprocity in an environment wider than the closest group. And it does not matter whether this reciprocity is an exchange of certain favours or goods according to the rules of reciprocity defined as “I will do it for you if you do it for me” or altruistic investment in someone else’s best interest within generalized reciprocity “I will do it for you not expecting anything in return, expecting that maybe someone else

will do it for me in the future” (cf. Putnam 2008, p. 37 and also p. 226 and next). We can talk about negative effects of the existing social capital, the so called “dirty community”, “amoral familism” or even “alternative society” acting in opposition to the state and “power-holding groups”. The realistic assessment of standards followed by the members of such divided community can lead to a simple conclusion that honesty pays off but only provided that others comply with this principle, since as Putnam says, “it is generalized reciprocity that is a community resource while generalized gullibility is not” (compare Putnam 2008, p. 228).

“Production” of trust (especially towards strangers, defined as “thin” – diluted, generalized) is connected with democratic, civic traditions in an individual region. Putnam points out how powerfully history influences the present – the community’s past affirms certain patterns within collective memory promoting the duplication of internationalized patterns which decide whether the community turn to cooperation and competition or competition and clientelism.

Particularistic national culture influences the specific nature of social participation and ties. Collective memory, traditions and vision of common past handed down to next generations form not only national community but also facilitate community building at the regional and local level while creating functioning models for individual communities.

Based on the research on interrelations between social capital and tradition in modern Polish local communities, Marian Kempny confirms that Putnam’s conclusions are up-to-date and also in the context of our country: “in modern Polish realities, tradition (history) still remains one of the most important factors involved in specifying variable hierarchies of importance of solidarity ties and distances and there is no indication that it will soon be eliminated from this process” (Kempny 2004b, s. 160). The same research shows the variety of tradition roles in local communities. As Kempny says, according to the local elites he surveyed, “the past leaves its traces everywhere” (e.g. as national values, patriotism, action model, authority, ceremony or sanctity). Based on the same research, Hanna Bojar distinguished two basic types of treating the past in local Poland: firstly, autotelic-oriented shaping of values and attitudes (with special emphasis put on moral, family and religious values, patriotic, national and local traditions, tolerance, etc.) and secondly, action-oriented fulfilling of legitimizing function to support the status quo and civic activities (Bojar 2004, s. 173-176).

The relationship between Poland and history can also be seen as a two-way process where on the one hand, the fundamentals of national identity are built by a sense of common past and shaped by the models of culture and the quality of hu-

man existence passed down to next generations; on the other hand, it is tradition that influences the choice of certain culture codes, the decision which elements will be regarded as valuable and passed on to next generations, how we will choose “our ancestors who shape our future” (Domańska 2005, p. 169).

Polish national culture is full of references to the past, one can even say that it is the past that to a large extent builds Polish national identity and a sense of belonging. History, national myths, collective memory and stereotypes are used as instruments of the past in the service of the present and future. In this context the most powerful discursive formations which create the construct of Polish identity include such elements as Catholicism, Romanticism, fight for independence and related defeat, experience of totalitarian systems and emigration. Special attention should also be paid to social stratification which resulted in a division of the modern Polish society that does not promote development of civic mindedness, participation and social capital.

The role of Catholicism in the Polish society cannot be associated only with Weber's or Hofstede's religion-civilization division where particularistic religious beliefs are associated with the position on the economic and civilization development ladder. On the other hand, it is difficult not to admit that G. Hofstede is right when he attributes to Catholic-dominated countries, among other things, a centralized government and a codified law system, which in turn creates large distance of authorities and strong avoidance of uncertainty (cf. Mikułowski Pomorski 2006, p. 321). These features, however, do not fully reflect the image of catholic power in Poland.

The unique role of religion in Polish culture has been built for centuries and with no exaggeration it can be said that the first signs of that could be seen as early as in the Middle Ages. The symbolic conversion to Christianity through the Baptism of Poland in 966 was not only a religious act, but also cultural, political and civilization advancement: “New faith made it possible, to a certain extent, to neutralize regional particularisms (...) and build along with the secular, not yet very efficient administrative apparatus, an efficient church apparatus independent of local factors and strongly connected with central power, duke power” (Bogucka 2008, p. 22).

The new social class – clergy – can be even treated as the beginnings of intelligentsia, especially if we take into account their basic activity which was intellectual work and an exchange of non-material goods, as well as their civilization advantage and organizational skills (compare Bogucka 2008, p.22). In the course of time, intense Christianization of the country reinforced the already dominant role of the clergy which became not only an intermediary passing on technical novelties, foreign customs, but also an advocate of national spirit. Thus the Church wielded power,

knowledge and hegemony in the symbolic layer which translated into social support for its activity.

The increasing involvement of the clergy in politics made Catholicism in Poland be perceived mainly in categories of cultural and national status. Despite the parallel myth about the 16<sup>th</sup> century tolerance, democratic and diverse Poland, it was a symbolic construct of Catholic Pole which dominated the discourse and became a basis for the modern Polish identity. This is also connected with the role of the Church as an institution and its involvement in Poland's political life in various historical periods. As early as in the time of Poland's tragedy during the country's partitions, people sought support in the Church and the occupant of a different faith also became a religious enemy (e.g. an Orthodox church as a symbol of oppression suffered from Russia). Lacking the state organism, the modern 18<sup>th</sup> century national community was more and more frequently built around faith symbolism. A roadside cross, a chapel or saints' figures began to function in a double national and Catholic role. The Church also became a site of pro- independence activity, it was popular to erect statues with a distinctive pro-Polish message in religious cult sites, which according to Nijakowski, fulfilled the role of fight for Polish symbolic domain in common consciousness and sacralised the presented heroes, and thus built an even stronger bond between what was national and what was religious (Nijakowski 2008, page 77 and next).

Another aspect is the cult of Mary, although typical not only for Poland, quite a fundamental element of Polish Catholic rituals. As early as in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to the Jesuits' revelations and then Jasna Góra miracle during the war with Sweden, Christ's Mother was proclaimed The Holiest Virgin Mary Queen of Poland which in 1764 was officially declared in the Sejm laws, and in 1909 confirmed by Pope Pius X's decree. During the interwar period, in the weak, newly developing state organism, the Mother of God was re-elected the Queen of Poland. After the victorious Battle of Warsaw also referred to as the Miracle at the Vistula River, the painting was decorated with a sceptre and a royal orb as a token of serfdom and gratitude – it would be hard to find a more symbolic act of unification of the nation and faith.

It is hard to overestimate the influence of the Church during the Second World War and communist system. World War II was the time of the clergy and society cooperation to liberate the country and fight with the occupant. Back then, the national and religious themes were interweaving again – a Catholic Pole's home country and national identity are endangered. The places of Virgin Mary's cult and religious paintings (e.g. Black Madonna of Częstochowa and Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn) become national sacrum for Polish people.



The Communism era is a time of constant tensions between the authorities and the Church. This almost half-century long period was not homogenous in this respect with thaws and strict repressions both against the clergy and secular Catholics. The state authorities, however, were aware that it would be difficult to get social legitimacy for the new system without even silent acceptance of the Church and its huge influence.

Unlike in other countries of the Communist Bloc, secularization policy was not imposed at the beginning of the People's Republic of Poland. On the contrary, in the first post-war years, politicians tried to walk arm in arm with religion: "President Bolesław Bierut finished his oath of office in the Parliament with the words "So help me God" and participated in Corpus Christi processions" (Bogucka 2008, p.471). In the course of time, atheistic propaganda became more and more widespread, it was forbidden to take part in religious ceremonies for which secular counterparts were created (the whole range of festivities, national holidays and secular ceremonies, among them so-called "secular baptism" which was an absolute oddity).

The 1960s were characterized by activity of Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland, and his subsequent imprisonment, the Millennium Anniversary of the Baptism of Poland and its appropriation by secular authorities as the 1000th Anniversary of the Polish State. The struggle for symbols went beyond the absurd when, to stop religious celebrations of the millennium, the authorities ordered to arrest the painting of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa. The opposition replied with a religious procession whose members were carrying significantly "empty" frames of the painting.

The 1970s were the years of thaw, the authorities entered into relations with the Vatican and a Pole was elected as Pope John Paul II: "the election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła as Pope shocked, infuriated and terrified the authorities, but at the same time forced them to conduct further negotiations with the Church although they realized that the opposition was strongly supported by the clergy and secular Catholics" (Bogucka 2008, p. 583). In the 1980s, one of the symbols of the communist opposition was Lech Wałęsa who always wore the badge with the image of the Virgin Mary in his lapel. Obviously, the clergymen's activity was not always purely anti-communist (e.g. the so called priests-patriots or priests who collaborated with the repressive state apparatus as secret informers). However, collective memory bears the picture of the Church as a spiritual leader, a place of refuge and support in fight for independence and every attempted crack on that image brings up a lot of emotion and discussion.

The clergy supported the opposition not only in the political fight (although their strong dedication in this field cannot be forgotten, it is enough to recall the cruel

murder of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko by Security Service in 1984 and further priests' murders even in 1989) but the Church was also the centre of underground culture, the only place where patriotic, uncensored activity could find refuge and where illegal artists of the "second circulation", or those boycotting the official mass media could perform. Christian magazines *Tygodnik Powszechny* (*Common Weekly*) or *Znak* (*Sign*) carried on philosophical discussions, supported the intelligentsia ethos and published texts by Western intellectuals. The clergy also became involved in education (in 1979 there were 21 299 religious education centres in the country (cf. Bogucka 2008, p. 587)) and providing aid: during the martial law the Church offered financial support and distribution of foreign donations (medicines, baby food, foods and clothes) in the poverty-stricken country.

One can say with no doubt that Catholic Church was the only social institution able to rely on non-state, grass roots spontaneous activity of its members which was tolerated by totalitarian authorities to a certain extent (Wnuk-Lipiński 1996, p. 101). It would be hard to list all areas of co-operation of society and Church in the communism era or all levels of the Church support for anti-communistic activity. It is also hard to overestimate the importance of support provided to individuals, the spiritual leadership, the delusion of freedom and the power of fresh spiritual breath in the atmosphere of pseudo-freedom created by Church. Reverend Tischner summarised those years of church activity in a rather explicit manner: "Who would we have been in this country if it was not for the Church, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła and later Pope John Paul II? This question is hanging over our heads like a cloud. We would have been ... nothing" (Tischner 1990).

Polish Catholicism is mostly folk traditional non-intellectual Catholicism, which does not mean void of Polish Christian philosophy or theology heritage, however, these voices do not dominate in the popular discourse. Modern Catholicism carries traditional values, strengthens the role of family perceived in the most traditional manner, the inferior role of the woman and supports patriarchal culture. The Church discourse in 1990s was dangerously focusing around discussions on the right to abortion and family planning as well as establishing co-operation between the state and church authorities (Concordat of 1993).

Along with the increasing power of the Church, political arena welcomed statements criticising clericalization of public life (e.g. por. Miłosz 1991; Kołakowski 1991). More and more frequently the nationwide debate would be dominated by the dark side of Polish Catholicism, the one which was connected with gallantry, xenophobia and fierce resistance to symptoms of any western models and, above all, to western liberalism which lead to inner divisions in the fledgling society. Regression

manifested itself also in shaping of religious life, one example being creation of the atmosphere of fear and hostility by some ultra-catholic media. "The Radio [Radio Maryja – author's comment] arouses fear. First they point out those to be feared. And then they tell you to bring that fear to the altar where "the frightened receive solace" (Tischner 1998). Also in the united Europe, a Catholic Pole is in danger - the spectre of Europeanization, progressing secularisation of life and crisis of values threaten the specificity of his homeland and culture. Since in Polish discourse the homeland became absolutized and, according to Reverend Tischner, fear of the unknown, yet very realistic enemy reached a level of "national psychodrama" (Tischner 1998). At that time, a number of strong anti-Semitic tendencies emerged - "the Pope may visit synagogues but the Polish Catholic radio and Polish Catholic daily news know better what to think of Jews who killed Jesus and who want to destroy Poland" (Bogucka after Tischner 1998).

Linking of "imperial" and "divine", unthinkable in many countries and unfeasible in even more, yet this symbolic merger of the nation and church into one structural unity was possible owing to activity and power of another Polish myth – the myth of Romanticism.

Romanticism as the nineteenth century movement in Europe revived emotionalism, spirituality and individualism in art. Such vision of the world emerged in reaction to the triumph of mind in the Enlightenment period, and as a reaction to the French Revolution and the Spring of Nations, in terms of outlook on life, it was heated by the idea of rebellion against the existing world, protest against oppression, fight for freedom. A Romantic hero was alienated, social outcast, sacrificing his own personal good for higher causes (country, love, new order of the world) and typically his life ended tragically with failure and disgraceful defeat of his mission or sacrifice for the higher cause.

Romanticism in Poland was a time of the country's partitions, Napoleon's defeat, the fall of the Duchy of Warsaw, and the Kingdom of Poland founded after the Congress of Vienna (1815) when the Russian tsar Alexander was the King of Poland. No better foundation was needed for the newly created trend which particularly dominated literature. Till nowadays, the majority of people educated in the Polish education system are familiar with artistic works of poets of that period. However, this is not an evidence of Polish Romanticism being still vital. It formed a foundation for building the national myth and a model of patriotic feelings. A culture researcher, Maria Janion, notes that despite the Romanticism era having passed into oblivion, one can notice in Polish culture an unrelenting Romantic paradigm whose ideas were followed in three stages of Poland's twenty centuries of history.

Maria Janion refers to this relatively uniform paradigm that dominated from the post-partition era to the fall of communism as a Romantic-symbolic culture style (Janion 1996, s. 9) and describes it in the following manner: "Romanticism as a sort of style, a concept and practice of culture building the idea of national identity, was attempting to cope with the tragic-ironic situation, (...) by its articulation, aesthetic depiction" (Janion 1991). Romanticism organised life around patriotic values to such extent that it led to a complete disorganisation of order resulting in sacralisation of the country, secularization and politicization of religion. Messianic ideas promoting Poland as the "Christ of nations" (Pietrasik 2005), took possession of patriotic imagination. Poland, being the chosen nation with great goals to save the world, sacrificed itself just like martyred Jesus Messiah and Polish people loved this archetype: "No one was so heroic, no one suffered so much in the entire world" (Janion 1996, p. 50).

Next Romanticism outburst took place during the First World War and the Second Polish Republic. "The religion of patriotism" was useful in fighting for independence, in building a new state and in unifying the society around the idea of sacrifice for the country. Special attention was given to Marshal Józef Piłsudski. History researchers talk about a phenomenon referred to as a "Piłsudski's cult" (see also: Hein-Kircher 2008), manifested in rich symbolism (portraits, monuments and even props such in daily life such as his special hat called *maciejówka* or his chestnut colour horse *Kasztanka*), patriotic model of upbringing and cultivated models.

Reproduction of the Romantic paradigm occurred yet again during the Second World War when it had much more tragic outcome. The "Generation of Columbuses" who were brought up with ideals of the twenty-year's independence period after the First World War abounding in emotional patriotism, absolutizing of homeland and apotheosis of suffering, believed in the necessity of ultimate sacrifice of themselves in a desperate fight. Resistance to Germany, creation of the Polish Underground State, sabotage and underground army were a continuation of well established models: "Again it turned out that recalling heroic past is what mobilizes Polish people. Presenting Polish history as a sequence of heroic self-sacrifices would increase their inclination to sacrifice their own lives on the altar of the country" (Nijakowski 2008, p. 111).

Such practices were fuelled by works of artistic culture of those times. During the Second World War, culture and literature were cures for fear of biological extermination, annihilation of the nation, occupant's barbarity and ruthlessness and nightmares of totalitarian experiences. Bogucka claims that "artistic work of the Second World War period comprises such a great emotional and ideological load that it hin-

ders its formal and artistic analyses" (Bogucka 2008, p. 463). Patriotic songs, national poetry and prose describing the trauma of living under enemy's occupation seem to have sealed in a symbolic way the fate of Polish victimhood, necessity of sacrifice and tragic destiny.

A separate chapter of the national culture pantheon is formed by Polish uprisings to mention just the most famed ones: the Kościuszko Uprising, November Uprising, January Uprising, Wielkopolskie Uprising, three Silesian Uprisings, Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and Warsaw Uprising. Only one of them ended in victory.

The last of the listed ones, the Warsaw Uprising, was such a controversial event that its sensible and emotionless assessment has not been possible till nowadays. Nijakowski called it a "self-burning symbol" by which the romantic ideal bled to death. On the one hand, it is hard not to acknowledge heroism of the young insurrectionists, on the other hand, not to sympathize with the misery and hopelessness of their fate. The uprising suffered a painful defeat with overwhelming casualties and damage to the city. Considering the above, it is hard to talk about the Uprising's great symbolic, mystical and culture-building meaning without a trace of bitterness. Looking for a sense in the sacrifice, one can speculate like Tazbir that owing to the sacrifice of the Warsaw Uprising, death of thousands of people and destruction of the city, the romantic spirit faded away for some time, otherwise a third outburst of the romantic paradigm in Poland would have been in 1956 or 1970 (cf. Nijakowski 2008, p. 112) which could have had even more tragic consequences (e.g. armed intervention of the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries).

The Romantic code turns each defeat into victory or at least into a moral triumph, thus unpopular or controversial decisions that led to sacrifice ending up in loss or pain are recalled reluctantly. Suffering was elevated and it elevated those who suffered and assigned heroic sense to victims. Tischner writes about the typical romantic levelling of heroic order with sacred order in Polish culture: "Who sacrifices his life, he sacrifices it for the values he considers absolute. For a believer patriot, sacrifice meant accepting the cross of Christ. A hero would offer his life for his country on Christ's altar. Thus he gave a religious meaning to dying for worldly matters." Tischner asks further: "The fact that a believer hero sought his ultimate hope in the cross is obvious. Another problem emerges: did the hero's offering himself to God mean sacralisation and absolutization of homeland? It was beautiful that Poles died for their country for Christ, however, does that mean that Christ died exclusively for Poles?" (Tischner 1998).

The third explosion of the Romantic paradigm in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the creation and activity of Solidarity which led to a revolution in Poles' perception of his-

tory. Using the familiar paths traded by fight-for-independence models developed in the past, it was possible to create an alternative circulation of press, information and ideas along with underground opposition inspired by the Polish Underground State. Janion summarises the explosion of Solidarity ethos in the following way: "Solidarity took over and further developed in their own manner the Romantic emotional culture, its pompous patriotism and faithfulness to independence ideals. Martial Law intensified the Romantic emotionality: national identity manifestations used symbols, gestures and rituals of the Romantic culture, in particular the martyrologic Messianism" (Janion 1996, p. 12).

Solidarity is also connected with activation of society in the common goal; quoting Nijakowski's metaphor, we can speak about "eruption of citizens' activity" (Nijakowski 2008, p. 121). Undoubtedly, the community of Poles of that time was inspired by common goals and experience as well as establishing one common and clearly identifiable enemy. Owing to Solidarity's activity, Poles' longing for something that could unite the divided and wounded society was at least partly satisfied: "Psychosomatic reactions of shipyard workers and journalists who accompanied them, spasmodic crying, feelings of sudden euphoria, heart attacks and illnesses developed by party members, emotional elation of the doubting when confronted with straightforward and honest religiousness – these are all testimonies frequently occurring in the reports of August 1980 events. The intensity of experience reflects deep agitation, touching of the deepest layers of personalities, finding answers to the longing so far not expressed" (see Ciżewska 2010, Łuczewski 2010a, s.17)

Developing national identity is also a result of work of those Poles who remember about their homeland while watching it from a distance while living abroad. On the one hand, distance enhanced longing for free Poland, on the other hand, those living outside their homeland would often feed on mere images, visions of free and powerful Republic. To quote Najder: "in their minds they keep a vision of Poland not as it is but as it should be. (...) they think of Poland but not of the Poles" (Najder 1998).

It would be hard to find a family in Poland who would not have some relative living abroad. The extent of the phenomenon might be substantiated by numbers, although it is hard to get accurate data due to this phenomenon's scope and extent but it is estimated that besides 39 million Poles living in Poland, approximately another 20 million are living abroad. Polish emigration took place in several waves connected with changing political and economic conditions. The following emigration waves can be defined: emigration after national uprisings in 19<sup>th</sup> century, economic migration in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century till World War II, political migration during and after World War II, migration of Polish Jews and Jewish descents follow-

ing anti-Semitic riots (mass migrations to Israel as indicated country of destination provoked by events which took place in March 1968 and based on the anti-Semitic campaign run at that time in Poland), economic and political migration in the 1980s, labour-seeking migration after 1989 and after 2004.

The existence of such extensive Diaspora outside the country has an ambivalent impact on social capital. Part of the Polish community abroad come from forced political migration where people cultivate their bonds with the country, mainly spiritual and symbolic ones, aimed at maintaining Polish language and culture (e.g. The Great Emigration, Instytut Literacki (Institut Littéraire) in Rome, Maisons-Laffitte and "Kultura" in Paris (the monthly Polish-émigré literary-political journal "Culture") and London postwar emigration or activity of contemporary associations and clubs of Polish emigrants) even if it is against the policy of the country of their settlement. Migration, whether for ideological or financial reasons, destroys primary local systems, structures and social bonds, which is best illustrated by the lately developed and frequently used term "euro-orphans" referring to the kids whose left for EU states which opened their labour market in 2004.

On the other hand, the connection of Poles living abroad with events in the country is an inseparable element of Polish fate. Emigrants, in particular those who do not need to worry about their personal or financial safety, often get involved in various aid projects and mobilize themselves when facing a threat. Over the recent years, such moment of mobilization happened during 2007 elections when young Polish emigrants did not get discouraged by long hours waiting in queues in front of Polish consulates in London and Dublin to vote in Parliament elections. The National Electoral Commission reported participation of 77% of all entitled to vote abroad (78% in foreign voting districts and 97% offshore) compared to 54% participation in the voting in Poland (<http://wybory2007.pkw.gov.pl/>, 2011.02.05).

Culture-creating activities of the Great Emigration patriots, works of artists in emigration and finally Polish Government and President in exile functioning parallel to the government of the People's Republic of Poland, constituted an arsenal for creation of "double identity" for the Polish community abroad. The dissonance was so strong that Bogucka mentions a long existing unique division of Polish culture into emigration culture and home culture (Bogucka 2008, p. 510). Talking of polyphony of Polish emigrants' fate, although it is hard to compare the situation of Poles in Kazakhstan or Belarus with lives of seasonal workers in the EU states, however, it is worth mentioning that emigrants' bonds with their homeland not always made the expats go back to their home country. Even though the democratic changes after

1989 convinced some of them to return to Poland (political refugees, Polish expats in Kazakhstan), many others had left the country with a one-way ticket.

Another migration, quite specific as it was an internal migration was that connected with the necessity of migrating from Eastern Borderlands to Western Lands of Poland as a result of post-war changes in the country borders following decisions of the conferences in Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam. After the Third Reich's defeat, German citizens were forced to leave the territories of Warmia, Masuria and Western Lands and these areas were populated with Polish citizens mainly coming from Eastern Borderlands which after World War II were annexed to the Soviet Union. This destroyed for a long time local communities which after the compulsory repatriation (as it was officially referred to) had to build their daily life from scratches. Undoubtedly, this narrowed down trust circles; bonds wider than with family and relatives were administratively strained by changing environment, neighbourhood and by destruction of social structures of local communities, which led to a permanent transformation of the resettled communities. Stressing the mutual influence of culture and society, researchers mention a creation of so-called post-migration societies when referring to the population in the areas of relocation (see Sakson, Siedlisko nr 1; Machaj 2005). Emphasising social distinctiveness of the new regions opened up a discussion about Poland's social and cultural division. Distinction into individual historical regions indicates some differences at the social level. Even though there is no uniform agreement on how a country which is considered homogeneous is internally divided (Żeromski's "three indifferent halves (Samsonowicz, Wyczański, Tazbir, ..., 2007, p. 36), division into four regions Jałowiecki and Szczepański's (Jałowiecki, Szczepański 2002), Bartkowski's five regions (Bartkowski 2003)) but some constant leitmotifs of such classification keep coming up, e.g. poor East vs. rich West, stable social structure in eastern regions, part of the southern and central Poland.

According to Machaj, local, national and identity values, respect for heritage and territorial bonds predominate in eastern Poland while in the West of the country we have a disrupted culture continuity, rational and individual character of people's activities, connections with supra-local structures (cf. por. Machaj 2005, p. 115-116). This division corresponded in some way to results of research on electorate and voting preferences which showed a division of Poland into three regions, in majority corresponding to the areas annexed under Prussian, Austrian and Russian partitions of Poland and their cultural influence (more about this cf. Zarycki 2002; Bartkowski 2003). In popular discourse, which in time spread to politics and journalism, a division along the Vistula River is mentioned; the so called division into Poland A (former territories under Prussian occupation, better developed industry, better transport sys-



tem, lower unemployment and larger number of foreign investment) and Poland B (former territories under Russian and Austrian rules, backward agriculture-oriented economy, higher level of unemployment). This problem is so significant that in 2007 the European Community implemented the Development of Eastern Poland Operational Programme to level economic and social differences in the region.

Machaj suggests that despite weak countryside bonds, low community integration level, poorer role of traditional values, the social capital of young societies living in the western territories is higher (cf. Machaj 2005, s. 83) than in eastern areas. This is due to, among others, a high rate of social mobilisation and efficiency of local self-governments, higher activation of residents and higher level of economic development.

The crisis in social trust translating into the level of social capital was also increased by totalitarian experience. Five years of war with the Nazi invader followed by almost half a century of communist regime must have left a trace in the contemporary society. Starting with damage to human capital, cultural heritage and infrastructure, to destruction of social bonds resulting from crisis in trust for both the authorities and the society, to degradation of values and existential uncertainty.

The degradation of values that took place during the communist era is presented quite thoroughly by Andrzej Tyszka in his article *Wartości zdegradowane, wartości ocalone* (*Values Degraded, Values Saved*) (Tyszka A., *Wartości zdegradowane, wartości ocalone*, [w:] Stefan Bednarek (red.), *Nim będzie zapomniana. Szkice o kulturze PRL-u*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 1997), where among the reasons for the above degradation he lists the crisis of authority and personal models growing over decades, consent to dull existence and erosion of life ethos which he understands as a "breakdown of professional ethos, workers' morality, civic ethos and the citizens' sense of subjectivity, family ethos, degradation of tradition and communal life" (Tyszka 1997, p. 32). Although the author admits that some relict ethos exists in some areas of social life, but in other areas, by no means less important, he indicates its overall deconstruction (school, youth organisations, scouts, army, the judiciary) (cf. Tyszka 1997, p.32)

The era of the People's Republic of Poland takes credit for the total destruction of civil society by deliberate destruction of interpersonal bonds, creation of the atmosphere of fear and distrust, as well as fragmentation of social bonds, a necessity to control and institutionalize collective actions, in particular those tending to evade rules – spontaneous and uncontrollable (with the exception of the closest family, friends and the church) (cf. Szacki 2003, p. 418). Struggle for daily bread, hypocrisy,

injustice and a praise of opportunism did not favour community bonding whose welfare seemed as something distant and abstract.

An example of a symbolic rift in the principles for functioning of various spheres of life can be the reward and penalty system used in the times of People's Republic of Poland, which was totally incompatible with common logic of who deserves what and why. Over time, this logic got closer to the socialism's interpretation of gratification: everyone should be rewarded based on what he needs, what he has accomplished, his social status and his service for the ruling authorities (cf. Ossowski 1962, p. 107-108; Tyszka 1997, p. 33). This resulted in instrumentalization of honorary distinctions – medals, decorations, awards were often connected with financial bonuses and they were granted so frequently that almost everyone deserved to get one. It looked that more and more often an advocate of values, a man of honour and defender of principles was not the one who was granted a medal but the one who opposed the authorities and refused to accept it. Such social pedagogy, based on monopoly of values, corrupting and breaking characters, introduced confusion in the relations of socialist society. To quote Tyszka again, "two extreme categories were being formed – "suckers" used to being deprived of their dignity and discriminated and "wimps" with medals on their chest and stuffed wallet, ignoring any principles or values. Besides these two groups, there was a confused and passive, deceived by the observed ambivalence, and silent and passive majority" (Tyszka 1997, p. 34).

The researchers of socialistic society and culture provide numerous examples of axiological about-faces in the People's Republic of Poland's society. Andrzej Tyszka, whom we quoted before, distinguishes such actions on values like deformation (e.g. human rights became rights of a human being to live in peace), reverse of their meaning (e.g. "state's assistance" equalled citizens' dependence on institutions or even control or surveillance), swap of values by dummies (e.g. a national hero would be replaced with a "hero of the year", happiness – with money, celebration day of the Constitution of May 3 – with a Culture, Education, Book and Media day), appropriateness (religious holidays replaced with national holidays), devaluation of values (depreciation of family by introducing suitable laws), elimination of values in social and cultural life (in particular in relation to sacral values), reorganisation of hierarchy of values, absolutizing of vital values (Tyszka 1997, pages 35-44)

The People's Republic of Poland era was also interpreted as a culture of falsehood (as Maciej Zięba puts it: "Let's not forget that falsehood was the core of the system. (...) They taught lies everywhere. Least painfully in schools, more painfully in institutions and laws and most painfully inside police stations. For almost half a century, this system poisoned millions of hearts and minds in a number of ways" (Zięba

1996, p. 48-49)) and times when values such as shame, equality or honour would function but their correlates would take forms specific to the form and modality of the totalitarian system (for more, see e.g. Wolska 1997; Tańczuk 1997; Przysiaś-Faruga 1997). They talk of creating a new type of a human – a “*homo sovieticus*” – an ordinary man, violated, subordinate to superior authority, opportunist, conformist, humble servant of the system that feeds him, deriving profits from it and used to being taken care of by the Nation (compare e.g. Tischner 1990).

Crisis of values is also connected with the fall of intellectuals’ ethos. This social class, deriving from aristocracy, came to existence following changes to the feudalistic social order, progressing modernisation and migration from farmlands to towns. Since partition times, this social class was the major eulogist and carrier of national ideals and culture models as well as builder of a sense of belonging to the community. Intellectuals’ mission derived from the care for common good, tradition and culture. Intellectuals’ ethos would be characterised by cultural advancement, education and creative work, cultural aspirations, superiority of honour over pragmatic attitude, sensitivity to befallen injustice, care for national treasures and the country (Bartoszek 2003, p. 91-92).

The aim of the activities of Nazi and Soviet authorities was not only to indoctrinate the above social class and force it to collaborate but first of all to exterminate the apostles of the national culture physically. As a result of the extermination of the Polish elites carried out successively by both occupying forces, in the post-war Poland, the old-time intelligentsia became a minority while “nouveau intellectuals” prevailed (party-member intellectual, intellectual by promotion) serving the political system. Independence of opinions, rejection of opportunism, attitude of integrity and spiritual culture as the driving forces of the old intelligentsia were now replaced by servitude to the political system, complete dependency on it, particularism and rat race. As opposed to the pre-war class of intellectuals, a class of social advancement intellectuals was formed: “[the political system – author’s note] was based on forced indoctrination of the young generation, mass education, uniform transmission of culture realized by censored mass media and party-controlled educational circles.” (Bartoszek 2003, p. 86)

Despite their opportunistic verve, the educated party intellectuals with working class or peasant roots could neither feel full intellectuals (since their accelerated social promotion did not enable them to acquire truly intellectual tradition, knowledge or ethos) nor could they feel safe among henchmen of the political system as there was a platform distrust among authorities of the educated citizens (cf. Bartoszek 2003, p. 85). Intellectuals enjoyed some prestige even though authorities would do

their utmost to downplay their role for the benefit of workers and farmers favoured by the system. Lowest salaries dominated among white collar workers which significantly damped the rush for a professional career.

The reduction of the social position of intellectuals was used to create a discourse on domination of workers and farmers as social classes in the People’s Republic of Poland. A powerful myth is still alive about the great role communism had played in the development of the Polish countryside (especially as regards electrification, fight against illiteracy). However, it should be remembered that the above development was in a way naturally forced by Poland’s civilizational and technological backwardness. Although to some extent, they were ostensible and showy investments, however, agriculture, folk culture and workers culture in some of their manifestations did receive the system’s ideological and financial support. Class struggle, the alliance between workers and farmers were frequent subjects of speeches made by state authorities or subjects of Social Realism art. A unique example of an interesting approach of the state to the social class issue was the policy of “points for parentage” granted in the recruitment process to university applicants with peasant or working class backgrounds. The aim of the system was to compensate for the deficiencies in the cultural capital of these social classes and to offer equal opportunities for university admission. Consequently, candidates from intellectuals’ families (working-class intellectuals) were hindered in their actions.

Not only the socialist class struggle, but also the much earlier feudal society have left their stamp on the social stratification in which the middle class appears only in discussions or questions about its existence. The remnants of behavioural models, cultural codes and the specific type of social bonds inherited from “backwater Poland” and “manor house culture” are believed to be strongly present in Polish culture. According to Szacki, the “gentry manor house” was still a home of Polish identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a typical Polish citizen lived in the country (Szacki 2003, pp. 414-415). Typically, such citizen was a Polish nobleman, since Polish peasantry were marginalised for a long time until the post-war times (Land Reform after WWII). The “manor house class” used to dominate both economically and culturally. Edwin Bendyk (referring to Hryniewicz’s research) uses the constant presence of these manor house or feudal culture models in today’s Poland.

An additional element supporting the above hypothesis is the weakness of Polish bourgeoisie, which makes English culture significantly different from Western European culture. The bourgeoisie represented “bourgeoisie awareness” rather than a social class and their potential was too small to become an alternative to the manor-house culture.

Following Hryniewicz's thought, feudal systems can be traced in the communist Poland's workplace (employees are alienated, do not identify themselves with the employer and are focused purely on pursuing their own economic goals). The results of the above model are present till nowadays at the organisation building level, both in the attitude of employees and employers. Polish employees tend to prefer an affiliation-defensive incentive model, e.g. job security, good organisation, good relations with co-workers and managers, respect, warm relations with friends and family while individual achievements are not highly valued (cf. Bendyk 2007). As Bendyk says, "Employers' attitudes are predominantly commanding, authoritative, or at best, bureaucratic. Commanding-style management is based on discretion, it is emotional and hardly predictable" (Bendyk 2007).

Feudal traces in mentality are still visible in the sphere of widely-understood culture which translates into social and economic life. Is People's Republic of Poland's "moonlighting" or contemporary "wheeling and dealing" all but a result of feudal system based economy? Anna Sosnowska found more such connections (cf. Sosnowska 2008, s. 39-40), but even when just looking at this single mechanism, we can see the force of feudal tradition and power of past heritage in shaping of modern community and civil society: "Social and economic results (now): Poor modern economic calculation skills. Feudal type of economy characterized by secrecy, cheating, pretending. The country (socialistic and present) seen as a manor house and the lord who exploits his subjects and must be outsmarted. Tax evasion, extortion of benefits. Double income in the state-owned sector" (Sosnowska 2008, p. 39 [table]). The manor-house culture is characterized by such elements as farmer's materialism and greed and inferiority complex towards the West, corruption, inequality before law, "having contacts" (amoral familialism, nepotism), lack of matrix to implement a sense of responsibility, lack of methods, "grassroots work" and co-operation between the citizen and the state to develop both the state and the citizen.

In the remains of the manor house heritage, Edwin Bendyk sees good foundations for a phenomenon which he calls "metaculture of passiveness" (Bendyk 2008, p. 33 and following) - a structure which disturbs communication, hinders innovation, fails to inspire creativity and supports traditionalism. This can be seen as the biggest problems of Polish culture, possibly not researched enough yet and the one which requires a thorough interdisciplinary research. Despite such deficiencies, even with a general look at the problem, we can show the impact which the metaculture of passiveness has on other spheres of human life: "Economy today is going through a revolutionary transformation, similar to the one that took place at the turn of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Knowledge-based economy is emerging. It is a source of greatest ben-

efits but it requires suitable mentality and organisational culture. Its development will lead to a new division of labour. If we fail to participate actively in the process, then, just like 400 years ago, we are going to be left on the margin and just like then serve as supply base and the bulwark of civilisation" (Hryniewicz, quoting: Bendyk 2007).

The above aspects, considered as the most important components of the Polish symbolic sphere, were presented only briefly and in a rather simplified manner without even pointing all their possible shades and mutually exclusive areas or overlapping cultural and historical trends. One should remember about the heterogeneous character of culture, diversity of this phenomenon, existence of variants and variations, alternative cultures and, most of all, the danger resulting from any form of generalisation. The ideas presented above are only to indicate a general trend in the mythic-symbolic reality. Its elements were selected to show how history and culture may determine the level of social capital, how they are interrelated and where their impact is derived from. Being a far more complex phenomenon subject to a number of influences falling outside simple principles of social pedagogy and national propaganda, social capital is formed by a number of complex conditions. Therefore, it can be concluded that in Polish society, the process of creating bonds and grassroots activation was connected with the Polish past and culture, and for centuries, the Polish national heritage and tradition were both a catalyst and an inhibitor of the development of participation models.

The modern dynamics of cultural changes also affects social structure. The simultaneous occurrence of both local and global movements, which Bauman collectively calls "glocalization", leave their mark on Polish people's behaviours and attitudes. The long awaited and won "normality" after 1989 turned into a disappointment to many. New dilemmas emerged while the old ones could no longer be resolved in the old way. It was necessary to give up old habits and learn social and economic life all over again.

This tragic situation in post-communist Poland is accurately described by Zbigniew Najder, a historian and dissident: "The behaviour models known from Słowacki's poetry, from the works of Orzeszkowa, Sienkiewicz and Żeromski, from Piłsudski's *Bibuła* (illegal uncensored publication) and from tales of the 1939-45 soldiers – those in uniforms at Narvik and Monte Cassino and those from the Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*) – they all ceased to be models for modern Poles. The problem is that those were the models defining Polish identity; we do not have any others. Models of practical life, models of fulfilment of duties, but only the safe ones, without taking any risk – those models, so frequent in other countries, in Poland did not reinforce the national identity, on the contrary" (Najder 1998).

Maria Janion is more radical - she believes that the crisis of values and the crisis of the Romantic paradigm caused the fall of the ideal of heroism, which in turn implied broader changes at the community level: "To all the misfortunes we have suffered we can add losing the beauty which used to surround our Romantic heroes, our ideal of heroism, sometime latent and sometimes evident, but one that used to accompany us at all times. The Romantic heroism – our great dream of community about itself, begins to fade. Have we become so ugly, dirty and bad? We are not able to love ourselves in our ideal, and nobody is ever going to love us ..." (Janion 1996, p. 15).

Without doubt, in the times of peace, market economy and consumerism, the Romantic ideal has been degraded and lost its power, but has it really disappeared? When we look at the celebration of mourning after the death of John Paul II (2005) and then after the tragic death of the Polish government delegates in the airplane crash (2010) in Smolensk, we can see the intensity of the longing for Romanticism, sacrifice for the homeland, elaborate national symbolism, common experience. We can also see how the society is able to organize itself in emergency situations. As Tischner puts it, it may well be that only a drama of such magnitude, going beyond the community, is what allows it to establish itself (Tischner, page).

The capitalist reality translating into market and business principles and departure from ethos and ideals revealed the weakness and incapacity of Poles in the times of stability. The strategies and cherished models that, so useful in the times of defeat and disgrace, are not as effective in the new reality. Maybe this is the reason for the poor quality of Polish-Polish co-operation, mutual respect and trust. Żakowski refers to the above using a very apt metaphor of "the society of mushroom pickers" providing the following explanation: "We have become a society of mushroom pickers, which means: we get on a bus, we go mushroom picking, everyone goes their own way but on the Third of May (Constitution Day) the Eleventh of November (Independence Day) or whenever a plane crashes, we go back to the bus and for a moment, we are there together. Then we go back to the forest and hope nobody comes too close to us and pick our mushrooms! When a mushroom picker spots another mushroom picker nearby, he would shoot him on the spot (if only he was a hunter) or he would plant him a toadstool. It is best if there are no other people around, because meeting other people cannot possibly mean anything good" (Żakowski 2010, p.53-54).

The conglomerate of national experience consists of a number of elements such as e.g. a long (almost 200-years) tradition of being in the opposition, against the state, against the administration authorities: "However, when I cast my ballot, I do not feel I am changing anything for the better. I don't think that the authorities we elect are going to work for our good. I believe that this attitude is shared by a vast majority of

our society. The belief that the authorities work for us is not very popular" (Żakowski 2010, p. 54).

This imprinted matrix of "standing aside", lack of democratic influence on the fate of one's country and environment, additionally fuelled by the complex of passivity and mixed with the sense of being the chosen one and a hero deserving the highest recognition, is the reason for the absence of affirmative mechanisms and positive models of participation in social life, of common responsibility for the shared country and the common future. The Polish society is a rather negative community and every choice is a choice of the lesser evil, a choice of something against someone or something else. It is hard not to agree, with an approving smile, with Żakowski's statement: "It is commonly believed that we are being taken advantage of by farmers, miners, teachers, and pensioners. Politicians and journalists take advantage of us (and they are swines). When they take from the retired, disability pensioners are happy; when farmers are doing well, intellectuals are worried. I remember a famous discussion between Professor Geremek and Waldemar Pawlak, where Geremek said: 'Because we care for people, and you care only for cows and horses'. This clearly shows a big crack. We do not share the same emotions. The feeling of community has fallen apart. And not just into two parts, but into a number of hostile communities." (Żakowski 2010, p. 54 ). With such an approach, it is difficult to talk about establishing a community of action, about actively going beyond a symbolic community. A solution could be (quoting Aneta Gawkowska and once again using the mushroom picker metaphor) an in-depth change of reasoning; moving away from thinking about just our mushrooms and starting to think about the forest. (Łuczewski 2010b, p.10).

The status quo does not look optimistic. The question arises whether an antidote can be found? How can we counteract? How to increase the feeling of community and civic activity? How to change the perception of our homeland? How to influence social capital using the existing cultural heritage and tradition? The above questions are certainly multifaceted and they touch a number of aspects of the Polish society and to answer them would require thorough studies.

The solutions suggested in research and social and political commentary works mainly point to the need for positive development in the every meaning of the word. A need for drawing from tradition is pointed out but not only from the tradition of Romantic-religious models but also of rational and secular ones. One of the authors notes: "The Jagiellonian dynasty has made a significant contribution to our history: strong Catholic Poland but at the same time multinational, open to Europe, tolerant, characterised by denominational pluralism and creative openness to other re-



ligions” (Nosowski 2008, s. 113-114). Another politician, Rafał Dutkiewicz, in the *Więź* magazine adds: “Such radical modernization projects can only be successful if during their implementation we will be able to preserve our unusual value in Poland – respect for traditional values. Otherwise, the social network which, for various reasons, is not efficiently dense, will start eroding very quickly and the modernisation process will not gain social depth, it will not have solid social foundations” (quotation Nosowski 2008, p.111).

The strongest carrier of these values in Poland is the Catholic Church. Therefore Dutkiewicz concludes: “(...) our success in the EU depends on how widespread the Internet will be and on whether we will continue to go to church on Sundays” (Nosowski 2008, p.111).

Coming back once again to Inglehart’s concept, we can see hope in the generation change. His hypothesis of socialisation and of deficiency relate to the hierarchy of needs that is different in different generations undergoing cultural changes. The generations which grew up in difficult economic times, in the times of crisis, even after their living standards improve, tend to focus on material needs and therefore material values will prevail. Thus, changes in the hierarchy of values come with a one-generation delay and only the following generation which will be socialised in the times of prosperity, whose basic human needs are satisfied, will be able to reach for higher values which Inglehart referred to as post-materialistic. The above means that we can also see chances for increased activity for the benefit of the community, for others, for those in need, thus, for the development of social bonds and social capital. Collective memory concepts relating to how the collective past is perceived, claim that if certain concepts are passed to even further generations (e.g. the third or fourth), they can function on a more objectivised, interpersonal level as they are transferred from communicative memory to collective memory which is no longer owned by individuals but by the community (Assmann 2008). Thus another question arises, how to educate the next generations so that they are able to carry that responsibility for activation and socialisation of Poles? It looks like the only solution is to refer to Bauman’s postulate of postmodern pedagogy: “educate sentimentally while teaching how to make ironic remarks on cultural ideas” (Bauman 2000, p. 252).

## Educational expansion and social capital – case of Poland

Piotr Mikiewicz

### Social capital in Poland

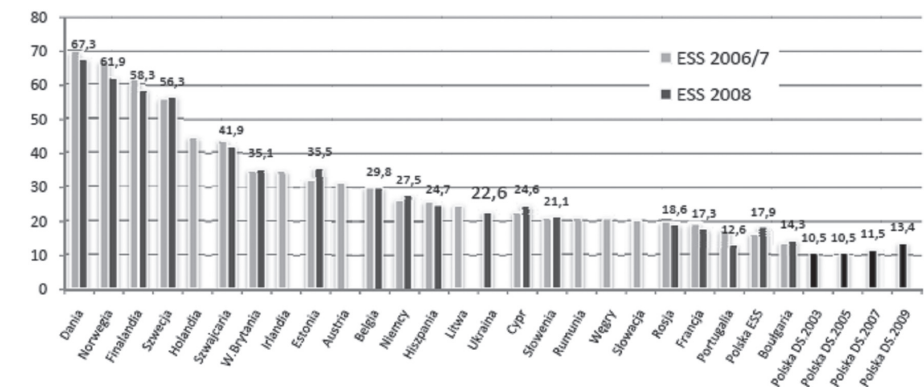
A social survey conducted under the supervision of Janusz Czapiński clearly shows a deficit in social capital and civic society in Poland. As he vividly puts it, we have the nation and family but we lack the society:

“In Poland there are two collective subjects where the instruments of cooperation function quite effectively: the family and the nation. Between the family and the nation, however, there are also other communities constituting a society. As far as these in-between collective subjects are concerned, instruments of cooperation either do not function in Poland at all or they are based on solely legal instruments. The vacuum between the family and the nation mentioned by professor Stefan Nowak in the 70s has not disappeared, has not been filled with civil society” (Czapiński 2005).

The indicators of social capital included in social surveys conducted in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009 were as follows: interpersonal trust, membership and performing functions in organizations, participation in free public gatherings and voicing one’s opinions, undertaking voluntary activities and initiating joint activities for the benefit of the local community, participation in national or local elections and referenda and a positive attitude towards democracy.

The result of the survey based on the measurement of these elements is devastating: **Poland does not meet any of the criteria for civil society**. With regard to general interpersonal trust, we occupy the last position among the countries included in the European Social Survey.

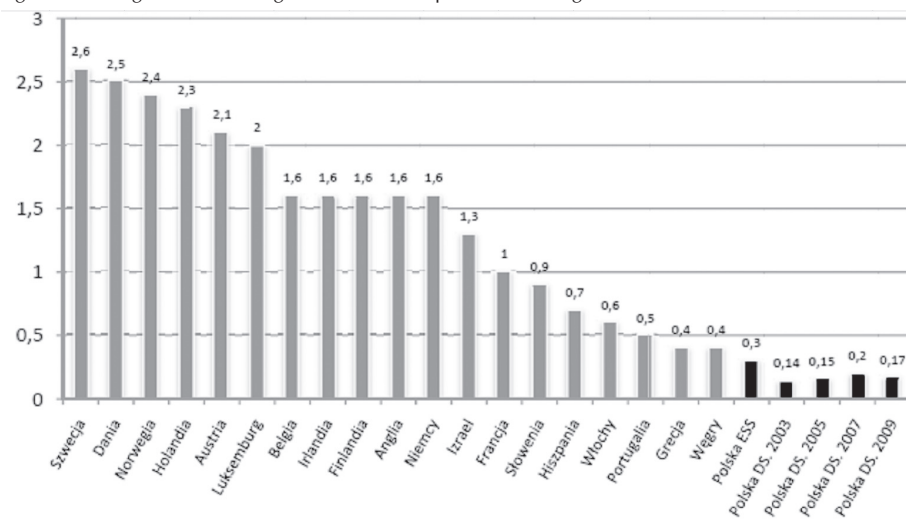
Figure 1. Percentage of people who claim that other people can be trusted



Data source: for all countries, including Poland ESS - European Social Survey 2002, for Poland DS – Diagnoza Społeczna (Social Diagnosis) from 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009.

In 2008 in Poland there were 58 237 associations and over 9000 foundations registered in the REGON register<sup>16</sup>; if we extend the definition of the NGO sector, there are 96 000 registered non-governmental organizations; 58% of which are actively operating whereas 10% are not operating at all. The tendency to form associations in the situation when membership in organizations, after the change of political system, became entirely voluntary, rapidly decreased from 30.5% in 1989 to 13% (15.6%) in 2007. In this respect, similarly as with regard to trust, we occupy the last position among the countries included in the *European Social Survey* (Czapiński 2009).

Figure 2. Average number of organizations the respondents belong to



Source: for all countries, including Poland ESS - European Social Survey 2002, for Poland DS – *Diagnoza społeczna (Social Survey)* from 2009.

In 2009 in Poland 13.2% of the respondents were members of “some organizations, associations, parties, committees, councils, religious groups, unions or clubs”; 10.1% of which belonged to only one association; 2.3% to two and 0.8% to two or more; 86.8% does not belong to any organizations” (A. Sulek, Social Survey 2009, p. 265).

The authors of the Social Diagnosis further point out that Poles show a **low sensitivity indicator with regard to the common good** – what is important is the fact that it reaches **the lowest value among people up to 24, and is only a little higher among people aged 24-34**. What is even worse, between 2007 and 2009, the val-

ue of the indicator went down. The sensitivity indicator is the lowest among villagers and small town residents, the poor and poorly educated. **In this respect Lower Silesia is at the national average – low average.**

In 2009 Social Survey the researchers studied not only the level of formal membership in associations, but also participation in informal gatherings and community initiatives. As Antoni Sulek indicates: “People who want to do something for their community, do not have to set up formal organizations. It is enough when they undertake or join any activities for the benefit of their own community. However, the survey shows that **this phenomenon is as rare as membership in a formal organization**” (P.M.). In the last two years only 15.6% of respondents became involved in “activities for the benefit of the local community (commune, housing estate, town, the closest neighbourhood)” – activities important enough to remember while answering the question. In 2007 the percentage of such people amounted to 14.1%, in 2005 – 13.6%, in 2003 – 12.9%, and in 2000 – 8.0%. Although the level of Poles’ commitment for the benefit of local communities is low, the last decade shows its systematic growth” (Social Survey 2009, p. 266).

“If Poles are so unwilling to form associations, rarely undertake activities for the benefit of their own communities, reluctantly gather to make joint decisions and put them in practice afterwards, they do not have an opportunity to learn organized social activity and to acquire skills necessary to live in a civil society. They cannot learn how the simplest voluntary organization works, how to solve a local problem together, how to run an effective meeting, how to be convincing and find supporters, how to arrange election, how to write a formal letter to an office and influence its decision (...). They cannot do it because they do nothing, and they do nothing because they cannot do it – they lack know-how, they do not know how to deal with it and how to do it.” (Social Survey 2009, p. 270)

A general conclusion from the analyses of transformations in the contemporary education system in Poland and Iceland is that one can observe a similar process of expansion of education on continuously higher levels and that this process is independent of social and cultural differences. In the Polish educational system it manifests itself especially in the development of higher education schools, increased tertiary education rates and in the increasing share of persons with secondary or tertiary education in total population. In Iceland, the expansion began in the 1970s while in Poland it was undoubtedly connected with the political and economic transformations of the 1990s. It may be clearly stated that the “hunger for education” is present in all social classes and the demographics of secondary schools offering a secondary

<sup>16</sup> National Official Register of Business Entities

education certificate seems to confirm the democracy of access to education. At the same time, a closer look at the selection and allocation processes within the education system shows that we are dealing with a differentiation of educational paths of people from various social classes and backgrounds. Thus, educational expansion does not level out educational inequalities. In other words, the general education level of the society increases but the clearly reproductive nature of the education system in relation to the social structure does not disappear.

How can the above observations be linked with the theses about social capital presented above? How can the theoretical apparatus of social capital be helpful in understanding of the fact that educational expansion does not eliminate social inequalities?

Let us start by stating that the transformations in the functioning and use of education are connected with the general social processes accompanying “postmodernity” - increased complexity and intransparency of social structures and lack of clear-cut allocation rules in the constantly changing social structure. Risk and uncertainty are among the main characteristics of contemporary world. Education is treated in this context as an investment which is as much necessary as not offering any guarantee of results. It is a common belief today that education is important. At the same time, it is a tool used in different ways by various social groups with various awareness of the significance of the investment. Social capital in this context:

- a) (when analysing the problem from the point of view of the concept proposed by J. Coleman and R. D. Putnam) stands for the general social conditions for the functioning of education;
- b) (when analysing the problem from the point of view of the concept proposed by P. Bourdieu) stands for the resources of various social strata in their competition with other strata for access to social positions.

Using the above two trains of thought in the analysis of the Polish education system and of the impact of school on various social groups, we must indicate three types of conclusions.

Firstly, using the Coleman/Putnam perspective, taking into account the general conditions of social capital shown in the preceding section, we must conclude that in Poland, the social conditions for the carrying out of any social projects – not only educational ones – are difficult, to put it mildly. The low degree of social trust, the social vacuum consisting in the lack of intermediate structures between the micro-environments of families and the state, lack of a feeling of effective social control and on the other hand bloated bureaucracy, cause the phenomenon of “inefficient society”.

Thus one can say that the educational success in Poland (if expansion is regarded as success) is implemented not owing to but despite the resources of social capital.

Secondly, using the Bourdieu perspective, we can suspect (unfortunately there is no research applying this perspective) that like it is the case in other capitalist societies (see Ball, 2003), social capital is a resource used by the Polish “new middle class” to build their position in the social structure. It is them, thanks to their cultural resources, who can see the logic of the educational field, realise the need for a specific intervention in this field to guarantee proper educational effects for their children. Putting it simply, middle-class parents know that they should and they know how to get involved in the education of their children to increase their chances for success and in this way they influence the processes of social selection within the field of education.

Thirdly, it should be pointed out that formal education, being subject to the influence of its social environment, may have a return impact on this environment through the effects of its activities and through the phenomena accompanying the operation of educational institutions, including unintended social effects of the school’s functioning in its environment.

### Case study

The history of the project of starting small preschools in the rural areas of Lower Silesia may serve as an example of such a two-way relationship. A research project the purpose of which was to evaluate the impact of the project titled “We Are Going to Preschool” implemented by the Preschool Education Foundation (for more details see e.g. Jaros, Margiela, Mikiewicz 2009) assessed, among other things, the impact of the resources of social capital on the implementation of an educational initiative and its return impact on the local community. The project covered various rural communities in which different mechanisms of social relationships were observed. In the subsequent part of the paper we will focus on two extreme cases (village X and village Y). In village X, the “We Are Going to Preschool” initiative found favourable ground created by a local association participating in many educational programmes. As a result, it was easier to mobilise the organisational resources needed to start the preschool that was established at the premises of the primary school run by the association. The school in the above locality is a powerful organiser of social activities which can skilfully engage the local residents in helping children. The above is an example of how a school may serve as a very important transmitter of values and symbols of the society at large, how it may activate the local community and prevent its social marginalisation. The local community has relatively good resources of bond-

ing and bridging social capital (in accordance with Putnam's definition), it seems to be open to external stimuli and it is not characterised by a significant decay of social relations. All the above is owed to the activities of the association running the school and the preschool. Among other factors contributing to the above situation is the vicinity of Wrocław (capital of the region) and of another larger towns offering employment opportunities. As a result, the living standards in the village make it possible for the residents to become engaged in public welfare activities.

Quite a different situation was the case in village Y taking part in the project in which deficits in social capital were discovered both in terms of bonds within the community (bonding social capital) and in terms of links to wider social and cultural resources (bridging social capital). Atomised and full of negative attitudes, the local community wrestles with infrastructural deficiencies and poverty. The lack of trust in one another and in the institutions of the wider social background – local authorities, central institutions, entities operating regionally and nationally – are the factors limiting the development potential and causing reluctance of the locals to get involved in any activities for the public benefit. Such activities are taken only by people from the outside – businessmen investing in regional ventures, entities involved in regional politics and organisations whose range is larger than local.

Given the above conditions, the preschools managed under the “We Are Going to Preschool” project are bound to operate differently, although not in all dimensions. The differences are visible primarily at the level of perception of the reasonableness of the initiative and readiness to participate in the implementation of the project. In the above regard, the situation was best in village X and worst in village Y where the **residents protested the initiative**. When attempting to present the results of the research in the form of synthetic conclusions we should indicate that despite the demonstrated differences, there were certain elements shared by all the communities:

- the majority of residents lack trust in group ventures and in the reasonableness of working for the benefit of the group;
- in each of the communes (districts) analysed, the initiative of starting a preschool was received with distrust and lack of belief in success;
- there is no positive model of a “social activist” or of social participation;
- there is a lack of knowledge about the possibilities of social participation;
- ossification (rural tradition?) and resistance to change as such, lack of tolerance for others, strangers, for new ideas, isolation in a small community, which is sometimes a difficult obstacle for new inhabitants who seem to be from a “different world”;

- distrust for politics – in the macro scale, lack of trust in one's own capabilities and in having any impact on reality;

Different reactions and quality of the work of preschools were observed in the analysed communities. At the same time, in all of them social mechanisms were activated accompanying the operation of the preschool. So far distrustful and isolated, people started to meet during various events organised by the preschool and when they were taking their kids to and from preschool, working together on the adaptation of rooms or on the organisation of transport for children living farther away. In this way, the social context appeared for the development and reinforcement of bonds and for overcoming mutual distrust. Thus, clear effects of the creation of social capital could be observed. At the same time, we should remember about the above-mentioned vicious circle of social capital that is at play here – it is easier to implement new projects in communities with considerable social resources and in this way the existing capital is reinforced; while in communities lacking social capital any activities are much more difficult, and as a consequence there are no stimuli that would spur the development of the local community. The above is a classic illustration of the Matthew effect<sup>17</sup>.

The general low affluence of the population, especially in rural areas, is an additional aspect of the functioning of social capital in Poland. As Piotr Sztompka indicates, trust, one of the key elements of social capital, depends very much on the level of affluence. In areas where people live on the threshold of poverty it is more difficult to expect any initiatives for the public benefit because they involve a risk that in the event of failure, individuals will lose even the small resources they have (see Sztompka, 2010). In accordance with the estimates of GUS (Central Statistical Office), close to 20% of the Polish population live on the threshold of poverty. It is obviously connected with other economic indicators, including especially unemployment rate which in December 2010 stood at around 12.3%. They are only general indicators, with significant geographical differences observed and considerable disproportions between large cities, regional “centres” and peripheries. For example, in Lower Silesia, the average unemployment rate at the same time stood at 13%, in Wrocław (capital of the region) at around 5.4%, while in the Jelenia Góra district it was 27.4%. The above is a good illustration of the differences in the amount of resources held by individual local communities.

<sup>17</sup> *For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away* – biblical principle whose application in sociology is discussed among others by Kazimierz Słomczyński (2009)



## Social and cultural capital in the development of upper secondary education in Iceland in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Gestur Gudmundsson

The theoretical approach of this chapter is primarily based on Bourdieu's conceptions, which not least means that we will examine how social capital functions as a means to acquire socially recognised cultural capital. However, it is also an attempt to move the Bourdieu perspective closer to Putnam's, in the sense that we will not only look at social capital as means to influence the distribution of economic and cultural capital but no less as means to create other forms of capital and or to create synergy in social groups and communities.

The intertwined formation of social and cultural capital was an important element in the societal development that made state formation in Iceland possible around year 1900, and education became probably the most important sphere of activity for this development.

In this article the establishment of vocational and professional education will be described briefly and analysed in the terms of social and cultural capital. Emphasis will be laid on the role of social capital in educational innovation at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the changes that followed the general growth of education in the wake of World War II and in the present situation of upper secondary education.

### Reproduction and production of social and cultural capital in the founding and shaping of Icelandic upper secondary education around 1900

Well into the 19th century the sole forces of social power in Iceland were the representatives of the Danish King and the social class of the relatively well-off native farmers, who had shared power for centuries (Gunnar Karlsson, 1995; Guðmundur Hálfðanarson, 1995). During the latter half of the 19th century some pillars for limited internal autonomy in Iceland were raised, institutionally marked by the (re)establishment of Parliament – Althing – in 1845, a separate constitution for Iceland in 1874, and the Home Rule of 1904.

During this period the administrative power elite in Iceland became more "Icelandic" not least through educational reforms such as the establishment of Reykjavik Grammar School in 1846, and of University schools of Law, Medicine and Theology in the late 19th century – in 1911 these three schools were later fused into the University of Iceland. Graduates from these schools formed a small privi-

leged group that monopolised public offices. There were close social ties within this group and strong rivalries and conflicts, but until 1904 loyalty to the Danish King was the "doxa" of the game.

This group was small, a few hundreds persons, and was a diminished version of a similar power elite that had developed in Denmark at the same time and was later termed "Dannelsesmonopolen" (which in a mixture of German and English could be called "The Bildung Monopoly", Mørch, 1982). During the 19th century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> the top administration layer of the Danish state consisted almost exclusively of candidates of Law from Copenhagen University, who were recruited from a few elite grammar schools who recruited mostly from families already established in the administration.

The small power elite of Iceland was recruited through the Grammar School of Reykjavik, attended mostly by sons of state officials and rich farmers. During their studies officials residing in Reykjavik helped socialising them into the living style of the elite, by invitations to modest soirées with educated conversations, sophisticated arguments and flirtation with the small group of eligible young women in town (Guðjón Friðriksson, 2002-3; Sigrún Pálsdóttir, 2010).

After 1904 loyalty to the king was no longer the precondition for career in the Icelandic administration and at the same time some boys (and even girls) from leading business families attended the Grammar School of Reykjavik. These small sprouts of democratisation were however limited by the facts that this road was still mainly a road to public administration and political participation and that for decades to come an overwhelming majority of the students came from upper class families, or 75% in the 1930s (Guttormsson 208, I, 241).

Iceland's economy had always been based on agriculture and fishing and industrialisation began only slowly in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The slow development turned into a revolution around the turn of the century, when about one-third of the population moved from the countryside to the coastal villages, a modernisation of agriculture was started and the mechanisation of the fishing fleet took place. The educational institutions were not built to educate or train for the economy, but the new entrepreneurs proved to be as entrepreneur within education as in their trades and economic transactions. In a few decades farmers, master tradesmen, merchants and others organised to build education within their trades, they pulled strings and pressed politicians to support these efforts and they contacted their peers in the neighboring countries to find suitable teachers for each trades. Within these few decades they managed to build a handful of schools that trained far more individuals than the public monopoly of academic education.

The skilled trades formed the backbone of vocational education. Until the late 19th century formalised education in the skilled trades did not exist in Iceland. Every year some young men went to Denmark to become apprentices – however, this story has not been documented to the same degree as the history of university students going to Copenhagen. Most of them returned to Iceland, as did Danish craftsmen, who were often working for the Danish merchants, and often they trained young men in their trade without being able to give them the stamp of a trade. (Iðnskólinn í Reykjavík 50 ára, 1954)

In 1874 formal vocational education was established in Reykjavik but it remained weak until the Vocational School of Reykjavik was established in 1904. At this school the general subjects were taught, and committees of masters and journeymen supervised the quality of the apprentice training in workplaces. In the beginning only few subjects were taught in this system, such as carpentry and printing, but soon new subjects as electricity and metal work were included, helping Icelandic industry to go through a revolutionary growth.

Although industrialisation was taking place in villages and small towns, reforms within agriculture were a vital part of the modernisation of Iceland, and already in the 1880s four schools for farmers were established in different parts of the country. They were a part of a reform movement among farmers that was inspired by similar movements in Scandinavia and fuelled by the growth of seaside villages that expanded the domestic market for agricultural products. Separate schools were established for farmers' wives and for coming housewives in big households (Eyrún Ingadóttir, 1992).

During the last decades the modernisation of Iceland was based on an increase in fishing and trade with different countries and the growing importance of the learned trades was mainly based on construction of houses and boat-building. One of the first trade schools that was established was a school for the training of captains established in 1891, educationally demanded as the number and size of fishing vessels was growing. Almost two hundred years after the invention of the steam machine in England, the start of industrial revolution in Iceland is often placed at 1904, when the first motorised vessels were acquired in Iceland. At that time Norwegian whale boats had been fishing from Icelandic harbours for a few decades, they had been motorised and Norwegian mechanics were placed in Icelandic harbours, where they gave informal training to young Icelanders in the harbour villages. These “mechanics” along with housebuilders and other crafts associated with merchants became the backbone of skilled crafts in the growing seaside villages, and sometimes worked with farmers who out of necessity and desire for progress had learned some metal

work and other skills. However, Reykjavik was growing fast as the centre of the country; here most merchant ships landed, the central administration was placed, and by the end of 19th century craftsmen were also filling the social space of Reykjavik. Shortly after the establishment of the Vocational School in Reykjavík in 1904, a handful of machine mechanists formed an association/guild and soon started to prepare a education to meet the growing need for tradesmen. A school for machine mechanists started in 1915 and within few years it did not only supply the fleet but also machine shops and power stations (Franz Gíslason, 1990).

An Icelandic merchant class developed only slowly in the latter half of the 19th century. Except for a few who went to commercial schools in Denmark and England the staff was usually trained at work. By the end of the 19th century employers and employees working in the field of commerce had established their corporative unions, and here steps to enhance the professional status of this group were considered. Probably the most important result was the establishing of a commercial school in Reykjavik in 1905 (Jón Gíslason (ed), 1955). The aim of the school was to educate both employees and future employers in the business world. In addition to the school curriculum, a proper leisure and social life was considered important, and for that purpose the school assisted pupils to find proper lodgings and helped in establishing their social lives.

All these above mentioned initiatives were taken by groups of tradesman or professionals. They all sought public support but insisted that the educational institutions they initiated should be run by the trade or the profession, as all these initiatives belonged to the sphere of private business. Other principles were adapted in professions that belonged to the public sphere. Education of teachers, nurses and midwives was initiated by groups of professionals but they mostly relied on public authorities to establish, finance and set up the administration of the adequate institutions. After some voluntary and private initiatives a public school for teacher education was established in Reykjavik in 1908, and courses for nurses and midwives were established in steps in the following quarter of a century.

The concepts of social and cultural capital are clearly adequate to explain central mechanisms of these initiatives, but have to be supported by other concepts. Tendentially the Grammar School of Reykjavik and the University of Iceland monopolized cultural capital in Iceland, and the growing social groups of professionals and trades had to initiate institutions to reproduce and expand their particular forms of cultural capital that was excluded from the “Bildung Monopoly”. To do so, they had to strengthen the social ties within each trade or profession, to establish bridging social capital to other trades/professions and to field-external agents such as politi-

cians and leading persons and networks in adjacent businesses. Such endeavours were a key element in the preparation of the schools for farmers, the development of women's schools towards vocational school for farmers' wives, The Vocational School in Reykjavik, the School for Captains, The School for mechanists and the School of Commerce and they can be characterised as the building of social capital as the means to create/consolidate field-specific cultural capital for each trade or profession.

However, not all fields could be united in these efforts to build social and cultural capital. Different schools for farmers and for farmers' wives could engage in peaceful competition, while the establishment of the Cooperative School in 1918 meant a cleavage in commerce education between the cooperative movement and the predominantly liberal School of Commerce.

These processes of building social capital and cultural capital were remarkably swift, as these schools were as a rule established after only few years of preparation and they managed to consolidate themselves in a few years too. This swiftness was facilitated by the fact that the schools were mostly based on educational traditions from other countries, predominantly Denmark, although the Cooperative School was rather based on the practice of Ruskin College in Oxford, England (Guðjón Friðriksson, 1991-93)

The establishment of vocational and professional education in Iceland from around 1880 and until World War I did not involve a huge number of people, as classes were small. Only a few hundred students were enrolled at these schools each year. However, this humble beginning signified a qualitative revolution. The building of social and cultural capital around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century produced the educational basis for new or redefined fractions of middle class in Iceland, fractions that became important, even necessary, for the industrial and general societal development that would change Iceland from an agricultural and poor society and into an industrial and affluent society in only few decades.

The building of the different branches of upper secondary education was in all cases far more than the establishment of a school and hiring of teachers. Both in the "Bildung Monopoly" and in the vocational schools the building of institutions was supported by social networks and aimed at building socially recognised cultural capital. School life was not limited to the hours of teaching and preparation but more or less dominated the social life of the students, who not only trained certain competences but acquired broader cultural and social capital and embodied this capital in their habitus, which in the case of the "Bildung Monopoly" had mostly been founded in upper class families, but in the cases of vocational education was rather the ha-

bitus of farmers and fishermen. This broader socialisation of the upper class and the new middle classes of Iceland would characterise both the schools and the social life of these population segments for decades to come.

### **Reproduction and changes from the 1920s to the 1970s**

The new vocational and professional education tracks that were established between 1880-1920 gradually educated more young people than the established track of the "Bildung monopoly". Although the second grammar school came into being in Akureyri in 1927, slightly more democratic in terms of recruitment than the Reykjavik school, these schools continued to educate less than 5% of each cohort while the vocational and professional tracks expanded to recruit more than double of this.

Here it must be noted that fully reliable data on the size of the new vocational and professional tracks are not available. The existence of the "monopoly of Bildung" is confirmed by the fact that the only fully reliable public statistics of graduation from upper secondary education during more than the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century consist in the numbers of graduates from the Grammar School. Reasonably reliable data about graduated journeymen were produced at the same time but were not gathered and published by Iceland Statistics until recently. Still data on graduates from other schools have not been scrutinised by Iceland statistics and remain unsecure.

The new tracks did not only grow but the social recognition of the field-specific cultural capital of trades and professions was furthermore consolidated as they spearheaded the industrialisation of Iceland and the growing professionalisation. This generalisation can be illustrated by the fact that educational reforms at the beginning of the century were designed by intellectuals educated at universities abroad, but new reforms of the 1930 were planned and carried out by members of the teacher profession (Loftur Guttormsson (ed), 2008).

The UK and later US occupation of Iceland during WWII was an immense infusion into Icelandic economy. Airports, roads and other constructions were built by Icelandic work force, Icelanders catered for soldiers, and the demand for and the price of Icelandic fish grew considerably. Totally, the national product and the buying power of Icelanders was about doubled during the war years. This released huge social changes. Urbanisation went on faster than ever, more and more segments of society could purchase own flats or houses – and a hidden demand for education was released. During the first war years this was not so visible as young people were rather welcoming the favourable employment situation and working hard, but in the

first years after the war, young Icelanders would increasingly convert their new prosperity into solid goods. Not only flats and houses but also education.

The growth in vocational education became explosive during the last years of WWII and continued into the first afterwar years. This growth took mainly place in trades of construction, metal work and mechanics, i.e. within industry. There were unprecedented openings for new apprentices in the trades and these graduated during the first after war years, making the largest boom in the production of journeymen in the history of Iceland. During 1945-50 graduates from technical schools were 10-15% of young people around 20, while the grammar schools only graduated 5% (Gestur Gudmundsson, 1981).

Furthermore, new schools and programmes of vocational and professional education were established and other expanded and/or were redefined. Thus a school for pre-school teachers was established in 1946, initiated by a voluntary organisation in a similar way as the reforms at the beginning of the century (Jóhanna Einarsdóttir, 2004). Same year a reform of general education made the access to both grammar schools and vocational and professional school more open; in the beginning it mainly affected the access to vocational and professional schools, but later to grammar schools.

During WWII a new household school was established in Reykjavik and gradually it influenced other household schools with a new emphasis. While the old household schools had their roots in rural society, this new school was moulded by ideas fostered in industrial societies. The aim was no longer to educate women to lead a big household with considerable production, but to take efficient care of the household in a nuclear family, often alongside with her own job and aided by tools, machines and a growing supply of more fabricated food than before. Some teachers in these two new schools for women were inspired by ideas of social reformers like Alva Myrdal in Sweden (Eyrún Ingadóttir, 1992; Jóhanna Einarsdóttir, 2004). Myrdal advised young women to see their life span as three main stages: first they should get a short or middle-sized education, then they should concentrate for a period on the birth and care of children, and in the third phase they were to combine a job, child-raising and efficient work as a housewife. Traditional division of labour between men and women was not questioned in these ideas.

There was an important gender division in the educational boom of the late 1940s and 1950s. The explosive growth in industrial vocational trades was solely within exclusively male trades, while women had to seek elsewhere for educational paths. They would flock to the so-called general vocational education (icel.: "Gagnfræðanám"), which expanded strongly after the reform of 1946 and was more

general than vocational. Some would go on to semi-skilled occupations, as shop assistants, office clerks etc., and others would go to the professional schools for pre-school teachers, primary school teachers, nurses and mid-wives, as well as business schools. Not least women would increasingly go to the grammar schools, where the main growth in the 1950s was produced by female students.

At first glance the growth of vocational education from the 1940s seemed to strengthen its position, as it became the largest branch of upper secondary education. In this situation the mechanisms of social and cultural capital established at the beginning of the century seemed, at first sight, to have been appropriate. The small tracks of trades and professions, which had carefully trained small groups of devoted "tribesmen" of each track, were able to train double as many. A closer look reveals that this growth did not imply a strengthening of the cultural and social capital that was embedded in this education, it rather implied a mass production of industrial workers who did not relate as strongly to the standards and values of the trades as the generations before them. The "ethos" of the small sub-fields with their own specific social and cultural capital was gradually evaporating or at least becoming weaker under the pressure of new developments.

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century vocational and professional schools in upper secondary generation formed important alternatives to the cultural and social capital of the elite that was educated at the grammar school of Reykjavik. Fifty years later the picture was on the one hand more pluralistic, as the grammar school of Reykjavik had lost its monopoly on recruiting for university education, which also had become much broader, and as the vocational and professional upper secondary schools had become more diversified. The field-specific cultural and social capitals that had been produced in relation to these schools had been rooted in the rigid social structures of early modernisation, and in many ways they reproduced the social structure of agricultural society. As on the farm, the workshops in the trades were under the rule of a patriarch who per definition had the supreme knowledge, skills and power and who took care of journeymen and apprentices in a similar way as the farmer had been responsible for his farm-hands. Such models were losing ground with the advent of high modernity into the life of a growing part of the young Icelandic generation. Judged from journals published by the apprentices (Iðnneminn 1945-1960) there were some signs in the late 1940s and the early 1950s of a modernisation of the old models, as young, radical journeymen and apprentices questioned the authority of the masters of trade and had a more democratic vision of the development of the cultural capital of the trade, but this wave vanished in the 1950s and left no track of changes in the old structures.



At the same time a slow but transforming change was taking place in the field of general education. The “bildung monopoly” at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was based on a narrow recruitment to public offices. Only a few individuals went on for science education abroad and graduates were not encouraged to seek this way. Thus one of Iceland’s most renowned engineers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century recalled that when he graduated from the Grammar school of Reykjavik in 1916 and wanted to study engineering, his teachers warned him to do so and said that all positions for engineers in Iceland were filled by young men and there would not be any new openings for decades (Sigurður Thoroddsen, 1984). However, during the next decades graduates from Grammar school would increasingly seek education in natural sciences and economy and enter the spheres of industry and commerce, and furthermore public offices were becoming a broader and less exclusive segment of the labour market. During the 1930s there were some slight reforms of Grammar School education, but in the general social and cultural release (Thomas Ziehe, 1982) in Iceland during the 1940s the function of academic education was gradually transformed from a narrow road to exclusive public office to a gateway to a whole range of opportunities (while the education as such did not change much). As mentioned, the growth in general upper secondary education in the 1950s was mostly produced by women, and this was probably also the case in the growth of education to professions like teachers, pre-school teachers and nurses (no exact data available).

During the 1940s and 1950s the education of these professions moved closer to the track of general education, as bridges were built from the teacher education and the commerce school to the university entrance examinations.

After the upheaval of Icelandic war economy, the economic situation was unstable in the late 1940s and the 1950s. At the same time a demographic explosion was taking place as childbirths per year doubled from the 1930s to the late 1940s. More women were having children, they were having more children and the age of having first child fell from the 1930s and into the beginning of the 1960s. Schools were over-filled in the 1950s and 1960s and there was a growing pressure on secondary education. Through the fifties and into the sixties boys continued to be divided in similar proportions as in the late 1940s between the paths of vocational education, shorter professional education and academic studies. As mentioned, girls had very limited options within vocational education and were increasingly heading for participation in the labour market and even some career, so their proportion was growing fast in professional schools and grammar schools. Moreover, bridges were built between these two paths that had been separated.

In the 1950s bridges were developed for graduates from business schools and teachers’ college to examinations for university matriculation, and in the late 1960s paths were opened from general secondary education to further education. These paths were intended as preparation for the professional schools but a growing number of students from these paths sought entrance into the grammar schools and were accepted. The system of secondary education had been designed to select the academically able at the age of 15 and about two years later the not-able were divided between professional schools, vocational education and the labour market for unskilled labour. Around 1970 these demarcation lines had become very blurred and a growing proportion of young people was taking various byways into the academic tracks by the end of their teens and beginning of their twenties.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s governmental educational reforms were for the first time in Iceland aimed strongly at secondary and tertiary education. (*Um nýskipan verk- og tæknimenntunar á Íslandi*, 1970). They were informed by the Human Capital theory and the efforts of international agencies such as OECD to stimulate educational reforms in their member states. Their aim was especially to raise the level of vocational, technical and natural science skills.

In the mid-sixties OECD experts advised Icelandic government to change their vocational education, especially by moving the basic vocational training from the workplaces to vocational schools (Kvikstad and Löken, 1963). The aim was both to improve the basic education and to make it easier for employers to take more apprentices later on. This reform helped to stop the beginning of decline in the admission to vocational school, but in the long run aspirations for vocational education had stagnated. Instead the growth driven by demographic changes, prosperity and greater educational aspirations took place in the academic tracks.

Human Capital theory and the widespread belief in education as *primus motor* in economic progress fuelled a wave of educational reforms in Iceland, as elsewhere in Western Europe and North America during the 1960s and early 1970s. Iceland had the same minister of education, Gylfi P. Gíslason, 1956-71; he was also minister of trade and often preoccupied with economic questions, but he hired two young educationalists, who had received their university education in France and Germany, as chief counsellors of educational reforms, and was furthermore aided by other reform-oriented educationalists and economists (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson, 2004). Thus a university reform was initiated by a committee report in 1969 (*Skýrsla háskólaneíndar*, 1969) that emphasised that university education should not be guided by governmental planning, based on estimates of societal needs for certain academic degrees, but by public demand. In the realm of upper secondary education a new

reform agenda was presented in a remarkable report produced on behalf of the municipality of Reykjavik in 1971 (*Sameinaður framhaldsskóli*, 1971). Three experts had investigated new reforms in Sweden, UK and other countries and took a stand for the more radical parts of these reforms – a comprehensive system of upper secondary education where vocational and academic education should be integrated on equal terms.

The outset of the report was the growing demand for upper secondary education, described above, a demand that utilised different opportunities to proceed in the educational system. The aim of the report was to ensure that this demand would have the possibilities to use various channels and that no channel should be a dead end street, as each of them should include possibilities for admission into tertiary education. Academic and vocational tracks should be equal and vocational tracks should be evaluated as just as good preparation for tertiary education as the academic tracks.

The report reflected a vision of education, that “does not consist in a nexus of specific knowledge bits but should be seen as all upbringing to knowledge and skills that enable each individual to utilise his/her capabilities to optimal degree” (p. 20). This vision was partially based on the ideas of human capital, but no less on the assumption that Icelandic history had certainly been characterised by primitive and one-sided economy but also by a strong popular culture, far less class-divided than had been the case in greater populations in Europe and America. This assumption was not clearly research-based but it was quite common among intellectuals of the 1960s and 1970s (Sigfús Daðason, 1960 & 1963 I-II; Jónas Pálsson, 1978). This notion of egalitarian cultural heritage had strong consonance in all political parties in Iceland and could therefore serve as an ideological flag of educational reforms.

The ideas of this report are not least interesting in the light of the terms of social and cultural capital, as they insist on a conception of cultural capital as not only academic competencies but also vocational and not only high art but broader cultural competencies. These ideas were not put forward as isolated intellectual standpoint but as a conception firmly embedded in the best features of Icelandic cultural history. On the other hand, the necessary social capital was lacking. These ideas could (should?) have been embraced by the spokesmen of vocational education, they could have been a lifeline to integrate the field-specific cultural capitals of vocational and professional education into a democratic conception of cultural capital. The “high priests” of vocational education did not grab this lifeline but largely regarded the proposals as idealistic intellectual ideas. The three intellectuals behind the report were visionary but they did not possess social capital that tied them to the

spokesmen of vocational education, who chose to defend their field-specific cultural capital (Iðnfræðslulaganefnd, 1975). The defensive strategy of the trades can be seen as one of the major explanations of the numerical stagnation of vocational education (Jón Torfi Jónasson, 1998).

The ministry of education set out to realise the visions of this report, but gradually they met obstacles from the spokesmen of the academic tracks. The first drafts for the new comprehensive upper secondary education, in October 1973, implied that students in vocational education would have to study one additional term to gain admission to tertiary education, but strong reactions led to a change, so the next version of the reform, presented only two months later, implied that vocational students would have to study academic subjects for three additional terms in order to obtain admission. Under these conditions the first comprehensive upper secondary school was established in 1975 and during the next years this school type became prevalent, although separate vocational schools survived for the next decades and separate grammar schools are still existing in 2011 and are not on their way out.

The change from one additional term to three shows that the ideology of egalitarian heritage did not gather sufficient support in the practical reform struggles, but the development shows that another ally turned out to be useful – the ally of technocratic reason.

In the early 1970s a new reform-oriented grammar school developed a new systematic course system, which soon was applied by the promoters of the comprehensive upper secondary school. In this system all subjects had standardised basic courses which meant that basic courses, mainly in Icelandic, English and mathematics, were the core of general education both in academic and vocational tracks. By applying this principle as widely as possible, it now became possible to establish upper secondary schools with several vocational and academic tracks even in areas with only few hundreds of young people in the eligible age.

The reforms were a central part of a certain generalisation of cultural capital. Gradually a certain general education capital became a central part of all educational paths, although to different degrees. This capital was based on the heritage of the grammar schools but was a democratised version compared with the educational capital that had been the core of the monopolised access to higher education. The universalization of this general educational capital implied a devaluation of other kinds of capital that had been a part of upper secondary education. The new general educational capital included far larger group than earlier but other groups were still excluded. Technical competences and sensibility were not a part of the general educational capital and at the same time as vocational education was in many ways

more integrated in upper secondary education as a whole, its social and cultural capital not only remained field-specific but became more marginalised.

The reforms of the 1970s were not put into practice through a governmental strategy but in the interaction of various agents, especially municipalities and educationalists, and local business leaders and labour leaders played an important part in some places, especially in the countryside. In these cases mobilisation of social capital was a crucial means to secure access of rural youth to the general or vocational upper secondary education; in some cases this mobilisation was primarily build on alliances between educationalists, employers and unions, in other cases it was consisted primarily in political alliances (Gestur Gudmundsson, 1993).

### **The dialectics of universalization and particularisation. Some traits of the recent development of upper secondary education in Iceland**

The development of education, cultural capital and social capital in Iceland during the last few decades illustrates clearly a central quality that makes the capital concept adequate not only to analyse economic life but also social life and education. While Coleman's capital concept is within the tradition of Human Capital Theories and Putnam's concept rather draws attention to the pooling and building of social resources in communities, Bourdieu's capital concept has learned more from classic economy and Karl Marx. Bourdieu insists on power relations as central to his capital concept, and by choosing this concept he indicates that the social formation of social and cultural resources in capitalistic societies is increasingly shaped by the mechanisms of economy. Just as economic resources, social and cultural resources must be accumulated and invested and can be converted into other types of resources. At the same time by using the adjectives cultural and social he also indicates that these resources remain qualitatively different from the economic.

The development of economic capital is characterised by the dialectics of universalization and particularisation. Mankind has moved from the currency of pearls and shells to gold, dollar, euro and yen. With every decade economic capital seems less bound to specific material forms, but moves from one currency to another, from stocks to bonds and so on – a movement that a few years ago went totally of control and resulted in the financial crises. There we were reminded that economic capital always has to have a material base, although the links from stock markets to production of goods and services are often many and hidden. The dialectics are expressed in the fact that at the same time as capital becomes more universal, the importance of brands and other particularities of a market has increased.

Similar in educational capital (and other forms of cultural capital). In Iceland the tendency towards universalization is expressed in the fact that the percentage of a cohort, who finishes the general University Entrance Examination that gives access to all Icelandic universities, has grown from around 5% to almost 60% since World War II, while at the same time the particular tracks of vocational education have been stagnant in numerical terms since around 1960. We will later have a look at new forms of particularity that have emerged.

Social capital does not allow for universalization to the same extent, but still the tendency is there. While educational innovations and reforms in Iceland of most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were moulded in small circles of colleagues, they have in later years rather depended on the skills of the initiators to negotiate with different professions, regional agents, representatives of industry and unions and so on. While social capital used to be based on stable social ties, now it increasingly consists in the skills of individuals to navigate in different settings and the capacity to build alliances and adopt to changed situation.

Within the field of upper secondary education social capital has in recent years been most visible within certain trades that have managed to modernise the traditional mechanisms of bonding social capital. The trades of electricity and metal work are the most obvious examples. Both trades have managed to keep control over education, although practical training has mostly been moved from the old apprenticeships to a combination of school training and short training contracts with companies under the supervision of masters. This control is secured by trade-dominated continuing vocational education and training and by the leading role of the trades in deciding about the curriculum. In fact, legislation secures such a leading role for all trades, but these two (and a few smaller trades) have been more effective than for instance the trades of construction to perform that leadership, not least because of their well-developed continuing vocational education and training which secures a steady inflow of new knowledge. However, these trades are also examples of the limitation of such bonding social capital as they are not expanding but are rather isolated islands in the broader landscape of upper secondary education (Gestur Gudmundsson, 2011).

However, it would be wrong to characterize the development of vocational education as isolation, as the bridges from VOTEC to general education have been made more accessible and have ensured that a considerable proportion of journeymen have completed a special VOTEC version of the university entrance examination. It remains to be seen whether these bridges will add to the quality of vocational education or be routes from it to traditional university education.

Since the financial crisis that almost destroyed the Icelandic economy in the fall of 2008, the measures against youth unemployment have (re-)activated mechanisms of social capital that are especially linked to the realm of vocational education. By the end of 2009 a joint initiative of the ministries of education and social affairs launched an ambitious program (Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security, 2009) and called for suggestions of programs to activate young people. Within few weeks dozens of suggestions were sent to the ministries and some of the most promising ideas were designed within the mechanisms of social capital. For instance a former leader of a vocational school gathered captains and employers in the fishing industry of his region and they could promise 30 training places for young unemployed. This small example shows that the mechanisms of social capital are still important for new initiatives in education.

However, it must be borne in mind that these are exceptions. In the bulk of upper secondary education social capital is not working for innovation but rather for the reproduction of inequalities. Families with well-educated parents and/or links to cultural capital provide their children with educational advantages, and probably families with little economic but more cultural capital have managed during the last decades to secure their children participation in the social mobility, so it can be seen as a qualified guess that social cleavages are becoming more robust than the case was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

How does this dystopia fit to the fact that the majority of Icelandic youth are now completing the university entrance examination (UEE) and have the right to start at almost all tracks of tertiary education? Well, firstly this places the minority in a more vulnerable position than their parents and grandparents who in most cases belonged to a majority of the population that had no upper secondary education. Secondly, although UEE seemingly gives the same rights to all, in reality the schools providing UEE are increasingly being placed in a hierarchy. Thus, the old school of the “Bildung Monopoly”, Reykjavik Grammar School has been taking a position as the school that prepares people better than other schools to the prestigious tracks of medicine and natural science. The “alternative grammar school” of the 1970s (Hamrahlid Grammar School) is seen as the school that grooms future stars of the cultural life – and both these schools are renowned for their ability to prepare students for law studies. The comprehensive schools that were the fruit of 1970s reforms are placed at different levels of this hierarchy, and university entrance examination from vocational schools seems most often to be placed at the bottom level. Often only the top graduates from the bottom level dare to apply for prestigious tracks at the university (University of Iceland, 2008)

Thus the universalization of cultural capital is expressed in the growth of UEE examination, while one aspect of the particularization is the growing hierarchisation of these examinations.

## Summary of part II

Two distinct social worlds emerge from the summary of these considerations. Taking into account historical conditioning, social capital and its ties with education, we may say that in case of Iceland we deal with a history of building social capital stimulated by a necessity to adjust the society to changeable economic and political reality, where a part was played by education and its informal equivalent. In case of Poland, from a historical perspective, we may notice a gradation of social bonds, especially when they are associated with authority. Formal education in Poland was not created from its very bottom – it was not a response to the economic need of local communities. It has always been an element of authority’s apparatus, which came from the outside with its specific logic, attempting, by its actions, to *adjust the citizens to itself*.

The current educational expansion, embroiled in certain political context, is not the cause (not always) tightening the bonds and bridging (using Putnam’s language). Though it may perform a bond-creating function. Partially we have shown that in the case study related to the social effects caused by small nursery schools in rural environment. That is the way in which education is leveraged in Iceland, where educational actions are a part in the struggle against the effects of economic crisis.



## **Part III**

### **Practical applications – social capital concept utility in educational and social policy**

## Introduction

The elaborations carried out so far were of theoretical and diagnostic character. We aimed at presenting the logic of educational changes in two, as it may seem, totally distinct, social environments and relations of these changes with widely perceived social capital. Two conclusions were reached. Firstly, despite cultural and historical discrepancies, in both countries we deal with similar mechanisms of educational expansion and patterns of creating social inequalities on the field of education and by means of education. Secondly – resources of social capital in both countries are distinct and derive from different social history. As we have already outlined, in case of Iceland we deal with a history of creating social capital as a response to social needs whereas in Poland, from a historical perspective, we have noticed a degradation of social capital and excavation of social void.

These elaborations were accompanied by pure theoretical analyses presenting dynamic and multidimensional nature of social capital. It is a factor, characteristic of social structure and, at the same time, a resource of individuals competing for various rewards on socially organised fields of interaction.

The aim of this project is not only to describe reality. We would also like to make an attempt to indicate applicable actions, the outcome of which should result in improving the quality of education and the standard of living in our countries (Poland and Iceland). That is the reason why the latter part of our report appeals to potential practical applications. Is educational policy with the use of social capital possible? Is the policy of social capital possible with the use of education?

## Is social capital policy through education possible?

Piotr Mikiewicz, Jon Torfi-Jonasson

When talking about education and social capital, we present, maybe a bit artificially, two independent interacting spheres. I think that it is worth seeing it in such a dual way which will let us indicate guidelines to implement activities aimed at raising the efficiency of education and reinforcing social resources. Thus we can assume the following point of view:

1. How to create social capital for education?
2. How to create education for social capital?

Starting with the first train of thought, we will first point to general conditions of social capital creation. On the grounds of the discussions so far, we can assume that the best way to create favourable social surrounding for education is just to build strong social bonds in the local environment. Social capital means, most of all, a developed culture of participation in social life stemming from rich knowledge on functioning of democratic society mechanisms and from awareness of the necessity of joint participation in work for our community. We can attempt to indicate a certain ideal vision of functioning of a civil society – a society rich in social capital resources:

- Great sensitivity to social problems
- Vast knowledge on functioning of state, regional and local institutions
- Trust in state institutions
- Harmony between bonding and bridging capital
- Big trust between people at work and in private life
- Inclination to associate – participation culture, strong NGO sector
- Strong involvement in local political life

In our vision of ideal social capital mechanism citizens have a solid feeling of being in charge – they believe that their actions make sense, their involvement can change the status quo. That means disappearance of the first factor limiting “filling in the social vacuum” diagnosed by Stefan Nowak (1979), i.e. a feeling of uselessness of taking up any action because decisions are made “somewhere else”. Lack of the sense of being in charge is built naturally based on people’s experience of futility of action. It is at the same time the first reason for abandoning action. If everybody believes that nothing can be done, then such belief becomes a fact.

To be able to effectively participate in our reality transformation processes, it is necessary to have wide-spread knowledge about functioning of local and central authorities, rules for taking and implementing decisions at the level of a city, district, county, province and central administration.

Knowledge of formal principles of a democratic state organization is supported by knowledge of specific people fulfilling specific functions, e.g. knowing the persons who fulfil the functions of councillors, town or city mayor, or province marshal. It is also knowledge on how to get in touch with such people and how to communicate one's needs to them. And this is not about creating a network of nepotistic connections to build "access" to officials and public officers but about having knowledge of official mechanisms and principles of communication and trust in its efficiency.

This type of contacts and communication practices which turn out to be effective make residents trust the authorities and perceive state institutions as tools which can and should be used to solve problems and boost prosperity of the entire community, and not as people's enemy or opponent.

The ability to communicate with various institutions using different procedures and language (different ways of functioning of local, regional and central institutions) is important. In our vision residents have competence to build a network of social connections which shape the bridging nature of social capital. This is made possible through the development of NGOs which, on one hand stimulate the development of civic attitude, and on the other hand, become an access tool for various financial, cultural and political resources. These NGOs are both welfare organizations supporting those most in need, as well as all kinds of associations and organizations for workers and employers who can cooperate with each other for the common benefit. In this way, harmony between bridging and bonding social capital is created.

The ideal society is a group of people trusting and supporting each other and able to organize mass undertakings without any difficulties. It can be observed both in daily and social life practices when people frequently visit each other and meet in public places through their activities for the local community ranging from initiatives aimed at supporting a local school to political initiatives. Residents create a community of participating, involved citizens who can cooperate for their own benefit as well as for the local community and the region. These resources are very skilfully used by local politicians and institutions. Local authorities are a culmination of the social capital creation system – on one hand, they rely on the community of values and strong bonds (also regional identity) of residents - thus on bonding social capital; on the other hand, they are responsible for creating conditions for development of interregional connections nationwide, within Europe and worldwide to provide the

region with access to resources (investments, cultural exchange, etc.) which in turn stimulate the use of local human and physical potential.

Referring to the other side of the problems discussed here, namely the question about education for social capital, it seems that it is worth noticing two aspects here. First of all, building essential knowledge on society functioning, thanks to which residents can get competence to participate in public life. Secondly, creating education initiatives which are open to the community – making school a space for social events which facilitates, as shown in earlier examples, building social bonds between parents and other people involved in education-related processes.

Based on the logic presented here, a certain model of activities supporting regional policy as regards activating young people in public sphere<sup>18</sup>. The conclusions contained there can be presented, with slight alterations, as follows:

1. First of all, a **comprehensive education campaign** is needed, meaning a large-scale programme of education on civic knowledge, self-government, NGOs, and agency. The programme should cover the entire education system (schools, kindergartens, including community and private ones, youth community centres, extracurricular classes, Voluntary Labour Corps, Job Information Centre, etc.). It is important to note that the introduction of compulsory education in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century was motivated inter alia by kinds of social capital arguments; it was to create social cohesion and social compliance, but also driven by Lutheran religious values. Gradually, under the influence of the Enlightenment, information and understanding gained influence, gradually overtaken by the human capital notion (long before it was explicitly stated), but of course especially at the higher levels of education. What we are seeing now is that the cultural and social pillars of education have been pushed aside, neglecting cultural and social cohesion and ambition (such as the social elements discussed in the list presented on page 1 above. It might be suggested that the educational edifice needs to be totally remoulded, e.g. to attend to social capital of a nation. We must remember that the educational discourse in most countries is driven by amateurs in the area; mostly both ambitious and well meaning.
2. **School itself can be the source of social capital** – through internship, training, student exchange programmes, etc. creates an opportunity to observe various forms of social and professional activity, exchange of cultural knowledge (e.g. during international student exchange programmes). In this way, students not

<sup>18</sup> The social capital activities model presented below was adopted from the compiled study *Propozycje uzupełnień strategii rozwoju województwa dolnośląskiego do roku 2020 o tematykę związaną z młodzieżą (Proposals for Supplementing the Strategy for the Lower Silesia Province Development with Young People Related Topics by 2020)*, Paweł Dębek, Piotr Mikiewicz, Kazimierz Szepiela, Tomasz Wysoczański, Lower Silesia Marshal's Office, October 2010

only acquire knowledge, i.e. create their human capital, but also learn to make contacts and acquire valuable social resources which they can use in their educational and professional career.

3. We cannot forget in this context that in accordance with Bourdieu’s concept, the **quality of social capital depends to a large extent on the quality of cultural capital**, or communication and cultural competence of individuals. It is important for two reasons: firstly, cultural competence makes it possible to get in touch with people from various social groups; secondly, the higher people’s cultural capital, the richer social capital of individuals connected to them through the networks of interdependencies. Thus **investments in improvement of human capital quality**, discussed in the previous section of this study, **are at the same time investments in social capital**. On the other hand, social capital is a necessary element for creation and accumulation of human capital.

It might be suggest that the third venue, i.e. the design of education to attend to the intricacies of social and cultural capital might be suggested. First it has been suggested that the drive to accumulate cultural capital, defined with reference to educational credentials, may depend heavily on social settings and social capital, as discussed by Bourdieu. This might be attended to in some detail when considering the spectrum of educational options open to young people in different social environments (e.g. with vastly different industrial environment and levels of employment). Thus the educational options would be determined by what appeals to the young people in the respective environment, and not by some external needs analysis, however appealing that sounds to politicians driven by efficiency considerations. Thus it would also be accepted that a venue thus constructed would not be the shortest route conceivable through a school system, but a route that in the long run is most likely to lead to an educationally motivated population. Second, in line with arguments presented under rubric two above, it should be considered to develop a culture of adult education, emphasising social and cultural capital not less than the more traditional human capital. This would be done for two reasons. The first would be to strengthen the community

4. It is essential to **create local environment leaders** who would initiate activities stimulating residents’ activity and participation in joint enterprises being part of a wider **promotional strategy for the third sector activity**. In our opinion there is a need for a media campaign which would make people believe in a sense of associating and taking up joint undertakings. People should be made aware that grassroots initiative is often a better mean to meet the needs of the local com-

munity, such as road construction, maintenance of a village school, changing the way of public facility management, rather than waiting for “central” solutions.

Such means of perceiving mutual relations between social capital and education have been reflected in the project: **The Strategy of Social Capital Development for Poland until year 2000**, prepared by the Government of the Republic of Poland.

It has been assumed that Social Capital – *is the resulting, from trust and operational norms and patterns of conduct, ability of citizens to mobilize and link the resources, that fosters creativity and enhances the will of cooperation and agreement.*

Furthermore it has been assumed, that for the creation of social capital in Poland, it is essential to act on four fundamental thematic fields:

- Attitudes and social competence
- Social cooperation and participation
- Social communication
- Culture and creativity

Basing on such assumption strategic actions have been suggested. We present them in the following table:

In the field of attitudes and social competence
1. Creating conditions for modern methods of teaching to develop through:
• Popularising, in the system of education, methods of teaching which promote the construction of cooperation attitudes, creativity and communication.
• Education of teachers to develop social competences among pupils and students.
• Reinforcing civic, media and cultural education in the processes of education.
2. Providing support to other forms of education than formal, oriented towards cooperation, creativity and communication.
• Developing civic competences in other form of education than formal one;
• Developing media competences in learning processes other than formal ones, especially among people over 50;
• Developing cultural competences in learning processes other than formal and various forms of participation in culture;
• Developing social competences of leaders and animators



In the field of social cooperation and participation
1. Reinforcing mechanisms of cooperation of public institutions with citizens.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforcing the mechanism of civic dialogue</li> <li>• Reinforcing the development of partnership and other forms of cooperation serving as a means of transfer of public task fulfilment to citizens.</li> <li>• Increasing the use of local public institutions resources to improve civic activity</li> </ul>
2. Developing and reinforcing organised forms of civic activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitating the actions of civic organisations</li> <li>• Developing individual and corporate philanthropy and volunteer work</li> </ul>
3. Fostering the integration and social solidarity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforcing the development of social economy and other forms of preventing social and employment exclusion</li> <li>• Reinforcing legal and civic counselling</li> </ul>
In the field of social communication
1. Increasing information accessibility and improvement of the quality of communication in public sphere.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing accessibility of educational content enabling exploitation of the content within the frame of acceptable use in accordance with the law</li> <li>• Protecting intellectual property and providing conditions enabling exploitation of content within the frame of acceptable use in accordance with the law</li> <li>• Reinforcing the mechanisms of auto regulation and co-regulation in social communication</li> </ul>
2. Reinforcing media in shaping social bonds and democracy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting high standards of public media content</li> <li>• Reinforcing social participation in creating and popularising polish content in social and commercial media as well as on the internet</li> <li>• Enhancing independence and pluralism of the media and reinforcing local and regional media</li> <li>• Providing open access to media services</li> </ul>
In the field of culture and creativity
1. Enhancing the role of heritage in the construction of social cohesion;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating conditions to foster identity and popularise cultural output on local, regional and state level.</li> <li>• Protecting and saving cultural heritage as well as cultural and natural landscape.</li> <li>• Digitalisation, digital reconstruction and popularisation of cultural heritage.</li> </ul>
2. Enhancing the importance of culture in socio-economic development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving participation of cultural subjects in socio-economic life.</li> <li>• Developing cultural infrastructure and improving the effectiveness of cultural institutions performance.</li> <li>• Developing support system for the creative sector and facilitating economy in culture.</li> <li>• Developing artistic education and the system of talent support</li> <li>• Fostering the promotion of polish culture abroad..</li> </ul>

As we may notice, it is a vast collection of actions, which are planned to be taken. From the perspective of the conducted analyses the first two venues seem to be of major importance. Duties of school and informal and beyond formal education to create social capital are directly indicated there. School is supposed to be a place where suitable competences among students are created, preparing them for full awareness of the process of social participation. Furthermore it has to exceed its walls, becoming the centre of social development for the whole local community.

School (directly and indirectly) becomes the major institution responsible for the shape of social capital. This is undoubtedly a significant challenge and requires years to prepare suitable tools and staff to put such social policy into practice.

There is a doubt though coming out of our theoretical elaborations. Is it possible to consciously create social capital? It is possible to create the resource directly by the state? Consequently the social change is animated in Poland “from the top” – by indicating strategic frameworks in general state policy. As research and theories have revealed, social capital (at least in Coleman’s and Putnam’s optics) is merely a resource appearing as an additional value, when people cooperate with one another in order to achieve a common goal – road construction, education of children, carrying out economic interests. Is – paradoxically – the greatest threat for the creation of social capital... the attempt to create it?

## FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Piotr Mikiwicz, Gestur Gudmundsson

In our report, we have made an effort to acknowledge the complex relation between education and social capital in two countries characterised by distinct culture and history. Looking at the processes related to educational expansion at one hand, and the mechanisms of functioning of social ties on the other, we have done our best to try and understand to what extent it is possible to plan the actions in order to create social capital for education and by means of education.

The historical accounts of the founding of vocational and professional schools in Iceland around 1900 show strong mechanisms of social capital at work. They developed within few decades, sometimes even within few years, in new occupational groups which also built bridges towards each other, towards influential employers, politicians, educationalists and towards the general population. These efforts were an important part of the industrialisation and professionalization of Icelandic society. Such social capital is not built out of nothing but has probably historical roots, and some of them can be detected here:

The harsh climate of Iceland and insecure living conditions had for centuries required cooperation between farmers and fishermen. On the other side social ties in Iceland had been embedded in tight social control, where the single farmer was king at his farm and landlords reigned over tenants. Cooperation between farmers was based on the premise that the whole population of Iceland should be a part of this system, and there are several examples of petitions from farmers in certain regions, asking the authorities to strengthen their disciplinary measures against people living outside this system – to prohibit poor people to marry and/or to establish a household on their own (Guðmundur Hálfánarson, 2001).

In the latter half of the nineteenth century population growth laid a pressure on the social structure, and after trade was given free in 1857 export of fish and animals it helped employing the surplus population in villages at the coast. Vital aspects of modernisation – wage labour, urbanisation and secularisation – started to change the Icelandic society and led to widespread belief in economic growth, industrialisation and individual rights. As a part of these changes social capital became not only means of reproduction of social structure but also means of social change. Certainly, the social capital mechanisms of the trades and professions were patriarchal but in ways that respected individual rights much more than the old patriarchy.

As indicated in the historical analysis of the last century the trades and professions in Iceland have repeatedly shown tendencies of closure, but there are also clear examples of the opposite – when these occupational groups and their educational institutions have been agents of expansion, innovation and democratisation. This is clearly to be seen in periods of economic expansion, such as the 1940s and 1970s, but also in time of crises such as has been the case since 2008. On the other hand, much more radical changes have characterised the general upper secondary education, which from the 1940s and until the 1970s and onward went from the earlier “Bildung Monopoly” to a more democratic pathway to tertiary education, which has been differentiated to an amazing degree, hereby a growing number of professional paths, including paths that used to belong to upper secondary education.

The Icelandic chapter has emphasized how mechanisms of social capital have played a part in reforms and democratization and ensured that civic society has played an important role in the rapid development of education in Iceland. However, this picture should not be drawn without shades, and social capital is a part of the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities in Iceland as elsewhere. Social capital is no longer embedded in oppressing social control, as until the late 19th century, and the elements of patriarchy have been considerably weakened. On the other side, social capital works increasingly in more subtle ways where its elements of inequality are misrecognized, as Bourdieu would say. The inequality is not as tied up with social positions as earlier, it is rather the resources of families – some very visible but others more hidden – that give the right support and secure the right connections as well as the transformation of cultural capital to each new generation. In Iceland these mechanisms have not been analysed from a Bourdieuan perspective but seem not least at play in the selection of primary and secondary schools, but also in the selection of leisure activities, vacation venues and general cultural activity of the family and its networks.

Thus, the Bourdieuan perspective of fairly hidden inequalities is valid in the Icelandic context, and so are the perspectives of Coleman and Putnam that emphasise the synergy effects of social capital in the creation of conditions for social actions, not least in the field of education.

Not least, the Icelandic historical case reveals that social capital can enable strong social forces to emerge in periods when new possibilities are opened (Iceland around 1900, during the 1940s and during the 1970s) and when crisis challenges the social structure and cohesion (2008-).

European Social Surveys (see Polish Chapter) place Poland at the bottom as regards the indicators for social capital, while the Nordic countries are at the top. As Iceland

is not an EU-member it is not included, but based on other European and Nordic comparisons it is fair to assume that Iceland has been firmly placed among its Nordic neighbours – at least up to the crisis of 2008. Research that has been done since the fatal collapse of the Icelandic banking system in the fall 2008 (Félagsvísindastofnun, 2010) indicates that the trust of Icelanders in their government, parliament, public administration, banking system and courts fell dramatically after the crisis, while the trust in policy grew, primarily due to its exemplary performance during mass demonstrations in 2008-2009. However, this falling trust in authorities should not be misinterpreted as a fall in social capital. Social capital works mainly at the intermediary level between the state and the primary groups as families, and a falling trust in the state puts social capital under strong pressure. This pressure can just as well increase the importance of social capital as undermine it. Both tendencies seem at work. The rise in some acts of crime seems to indicate a certain weakening of social capital, while the mentioned examples from youth unemployment measures indicate the opposite tendency, and so do many of the new networks that demonstrate, distribute food or organize events whose primary function is to enhance social solidarity. The Icelandic crisis cannot be called “a good thing” but it is interesting to examine reactions to it as a social laboratory that might produce new constellations of social capital – both in the Putnam/Coleman sense and in the Bourdieu sense.

World crisis has not affected Poland to the same extent as other countries of Europe (including Iceland). Unfortunately we are unable to state that the reason for that has been the social capital of the Poles. As economists underline, Poland has left the crisis untouched mainly due to the so called underdevelopment pension – economic system was developed enough to be touched by perturbations of financial markets. Paradoxically, world crisis, skilfully “played on” by polish authorities may become a chance to regain trust that the authorities have once lost. History has taught Poles the lack of trust towards public institutions and themselves. As we have presented in the chapter on historical conditioning of social capital in Poland, a coincidence of factors resulted in a situation in which the Poles can suffer beautifully but cannot cooperate. Meanwhile, after the years of political perturbation, Poland has accessed the path of “regular development”. It can be seen in the ratios related to education. The Poles have to learn how to “live normally”, cope with economic adversities, not only and continuously “fight for freedom”.

Such assignment requires specific pedagogy. The concept of social capital, the career of which may be perceived in terms of specific nostalgia for the lost community in a world of individualised societies of the West, today is also becoming a new political ideology. It is reflected in strategic documentation of governments

and supranational institutions (World Bank, EU). Politicians seem to understand the necessity of new social policy appropriately. It has to be based on solid local community and the ability to use the cooperation for the sake of individuals as well as the whole society. From the perspective of a polish reader, the amount of information on the topic of importance of social capital in the educational development in Iceland should be a lesson of skilful adaptation to harsh conditions (also geographic) by means of cooperation and trust between one another – despite the lack of trust for public institutions.

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