

Global perspectives in Upper Secondary Schools in Iceland

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Abstract

The focus of this study was to find out what upper secondary school teachers in Iceland thought concerning global or cross-cultural education in their schools. The research is built on a qualitative methods approach. Eleven teachers in five different schools were interviewed using an interview guide.

The study revealed that none of the schools had cross-cultural perspectives or an introduction to other philosophical frameworks as a separate subject in the schools. Two subjects appeared to be most likely to mention the topic although there was a great variation in this respect between schools. One of the subjects was found to be Life skills, which is compulsory for all first year students in upper secondary schools, the other is a social science class for older students and intended only for certain study programs.

International relations and exposure to other cultures was found to focus mainly on Europe and European culture. The study also revealed that discussions concerned with other cultures were often built on comparisons that were heavily biased in favoring Iceland and Icelandic culture.

In all the interviews the topic of cross-cultural perspectives was soon turned into a discussion about tolerance. My interviewees described their thoughts about tolerance and prejudice, whether these issues were important, and how tolerance levels could be increased in their students.

The theoretical framework, that my study is built on is within the realm of globalization theory as interpreted by the “Transformationalists” and can be seen as a macro level background for my search. On the micro level, critical pedagogy was the guiding light for my analysis, when interpreting what my interviewees expressed concerning their classroom practices and what they found most important.

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Chapter 1

1.0 Introduction

The main reason that I set out on this research is my experience while I was working as a teacher in one of the upper secondary schools from 2006 to 2008. The Ministry of Education requested of the school that they add a special study program for immigrant students. This was due to the fact that there were an increasing number of immigrant students applying for studies at this school. This intrigued me and I did some brainstorming on my own, and talked to some of the other teachers. Then I sent a letter to each of the four main administrators in the school. The ideas that I presented all centered around emphasizing global perspectives in the school curriculum as well as suggesting a compulsory course for all students, in cross-cultural perspectives. This would make the school special and opened possibilities to take the lead in a new direction. I had ideas on how to incorporate global perspectives in different subjects, connecting them through this main theme. At the same time I made it clear how important I felt it was for teachers to be able to unitedly engage in and expand this new project ordained by the Ministry of Education. I saw it as a great opportunity for the school to stand out and create something unique and important and the teachers to work in close cooperation on an interdisciplinary basis.

The response that I got was a disappointment. I waited two weeks to hear from the Headmaster or any of the other administrators, but no response came until I asked what they had thought about my ideas, but was told that they were not really interested. This caused me some amazement as well as disappointment that the disinterest could be so deep that they opted to try and ignore my suggestions. In the following days and weeks I became aware of teachers that I had not spoken to before who now sought opportunities to engage in conversation with me and express what was clearly rooted in racial prejudice. I could not pursue the issue any further at the time, but my curiosity was aroused concerning teacher's views on global or cross-cultural perspectives.

My personal background serves perhaps as an explanation why I chose to look into these questions and why I have chosen this manner of investigation. First of all I am a teacher and I have experience teaching in Iceland, Denmark, Germany and in The United States. I have travelled from an early age and lived in many different places. Although born and brought up in Christian societies I spent 10 years of my life actively pursuing a Hindu lifestyle, later I turned

towards Buddhism. My approach is cross-cultural and humanistic, even relativistic in a post modernistic sense. It is important to clarify my perspectives as it is part of enhancing the trustworthiness of the study. As Michael Quinn Patton (2002) points out: “Neutrality and impartiality are expected when qualitative work is being judged by traditional scientific criteria”....”In contrast, constructivist analysts are expected to deal with these issues through conscious and committed reflexivity....reflecting on and analyzing how their perspective interacts with the perspectives they encounter” (p.570). The conceptual and methodological framework of constructivism will be discussed in chapter 2.1.

1.1 Background

Iceland has a population of around 320,000 and until in recent years Icelanders have conceptualized themselves as a uniform or mono-cultural population. The growing interdependence of nations worldwide, both economically and on the socio-cultural level has radically changed Icelandic society to such an extent that each new generation that reaches adulthood can be said to know a different reality from the previous generation. Not only is it possible to read about faraway lands and cultures, or see parts of them on a screen, today these cultures are here and existing side by side with the traditional Icelandic way of life. For a decade before 2008 there was plenty of work in the country and foreigners from different countries came in search of employment and the high standard of living enjoyed by most people.

Figures from the National Registry show that in 1996 immigrants were 1.9% of the population and in 2008 the number had risen to 8.6% (Hagtölur, 2010). Over half of the immigrant population in Iceland originates from Eastern Europe or 55%, and by far the most numerous group is from Poland or 38% of the entire immigrant population. Western European countries represent 23% of the immigrant population and from Asia 13% (4,5% from Philippines, 3% from Thailand and 1,7% from China).

The rapid changes in Icelandic society after independence in 1944 are partly traceable to the rapid growth of the national economy and increased international participation both in the private and government sector. People from Iceland are found to be tourists as well as students all over the world. Today in contrast to only two decades ago, people of various ethnic origins are seen on a daily basis and in all walks of life in Iceland, many of these are immigrants, but also tourism is a rapidly growing industry. This is similar to what has been happening for a much

longer time in all of Europe and has been categorized as part of the globalization process. In Iceland however, the manifest effects due to globalization are colored by the geographical isolation of the country, and the smallness of the population, which both have markedly affected the collective psychology, attitudes and national identity that prevail among the population today and in ages gone by. After gaining independence from Denmark in 1944, Danish culture ceased to be the strongest outside influence. Instead American cultural influence became more and more apparent through the entertainment industry. Consumerism and public spending has also risen to extreme heights, and until the bank “collapse” in 2008 Iceland was considered one of the richest countries in the world.

In these rapid changes, cultural identity has been radically challenged and today people are asking fundamental questions like who Icelanders are as a nation and what are the values worth holding on to and developing, personally and for the nation as a whole. Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir and Kristín Loftsdóttir (2009) discuss the changing image of Iceland and some of the implications of multiculturalism in the present day society. One of the questions they ask is whether the recent opening of the multiculturalism debate in Icelandic society may also be opening the way for neo-racism by emphasizing difference instead of a synthesis, through the “we - other” dialogue. The idea of cultural heritage and how culture is perceived plays an important part also in the way we think about people from other countries. Skaptadóttir and Loftsdóttir (2009) discuss the tendency to “objectify” culture in the multicultural discourse as if it were a uniform and static concept. The nature of any culture, they point out, is to be diverse and it inherently embodies elements from a variety of cultures. To ignore the fact that each culture is diverse, leads to stereotyping and prejudice.

1.2 Principle Objectives

Everywhere in the world today the need for global perspectives is being felt on the environmental, political, economic, ethical-spiritual and humanitarian levels. The role of the school culture and of the teachers in the way they educate young people is of extreme importance. There are 30.480 students registered students in upper secondary schools in Iceland (Hagtölur b, 2010). Teachers are required to follow The National Curriculum Guidelines, the particular school curriculum of each school where they work, as well as the accepted rules of conduct for teachers. This still allows for variety in teaching methods as well as in the choice of materials, which gives

teachers some amount of freedom in most cases. Many of the school curriculums mention as one of their goals to prepare the students to become responsible participants in a democratic society. Many of them mention the role of the school to prepare students for further studies or for the employment market. Abilities for critical thinking, creativity and being tolerant of others were traits often mentioned as well. But how well these goals are understood and interpreted depends not only on the written intentions of the school authorities. It depends also to a large extent on the teacher's frame of mind. The students may not always be required to interpret what they have learned to make it relevant for their current situation, as critical pedagogy postulates.

My research questions, that I set out to find answers to, were as follows:

1. What importance do teachers in upper secondary schools in Iceland place on global/cross-cultural perspectives and does it affect their teaching?
2. Do they include references to non-European cultures or different paradigms of thought in their teaching such as other religious views?
3. Is there a marked difference
 - a) depending on whether there are immigrant students in the school
 - b) depending on the type of studies that the school has to offer
 - c) depending on the teachers main subject

As information from far corners of the world becomes more and more accessible to more and more people, there is a growing sense of both interdependency and interrelatedness of all life on the planet. The sciences, politics, arts, and different paradigms of thought, all seem to be affected. It is my understanding that seldom if ever has there been such a need for educating for cross-cultural understanding and tolerance. The fact that this is becoming increasingly evident raises a number of questions for educators concerning for example teacher neutrality and how to address issues which may have political implications. This concern will be addressed through the lens of critical pedagogy in chapter 3 and views of the teachers in chapter 5.

1.3 Qualitative Design Strategy

Bryman (2008) asserts that “there is no reason why qualitative research cannot be employed in order to test theories that are specified in advance of data collection” (p.373). Indeed I entered into my research with the idea that upper secondary school teachers did not give global perspectives much attention in their teaching. This may be seen as a bias on my part but it is also a view that I developed from personal experience as a participant in the school cultures in four of the five schools that serve as case studies for my research. It is my experience that drove me to undertake this study and endeavor to gain a deeper insight into these cases.

The way Patton (2002) explains qualitative design strategy is that its essence is naturalistic because “research takes place in real world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (p.39). In my open-ended interviews with 11 upper-secondary school teachers, I used an interview guide to stay focused, but took care to allow each teacher’s views to be the top priority within the main theme of global perspectives. I did not have predetermined variables to measure the teacher’s views against, but rather allowed categories to emerge, which is part of the “discovery-oriented” design of a naturalistic inquiry. Regarding the question of subjectivity and bias, Patton (2002) discusses the pressure on social scientists to be ‘objective’ and explains that the “conventional means for...maintaining objectivity are the methods of quantitative social science” (p.574) by using experimental designs. And yet, he says, “the ways in which measures are constructed” for example in psychological tests and questionnaires, are “no less open to intrusion of biases than making observations in the field or asking questions in interviews” (p.574). The fact remains that someone or something defines what it is that is worth measuring and how it should be measured. There are always some ‘a priori’ given assumptions, as noted by Scriven (1972a cited in Patton, 2002:575) that rely on “a consensual validation of something by multiple observers” and may be confused with objectivity.

1.4 Relevance of the Study

Due to the significant historical transition that Iceland currently finds itself in, there is a good deal of self-reflection and search for accountability in process. The bank collapse witnessed in the fall of 2008 has also brought home, to the average citizen, the reality of interdependence within a global framework and that Iceland is, for better or worse, a part of the global society.

In teacher education multicultural studies are now being offered in a Bachelors program, but have not been included in the curriculum for all teacher candidates. The focus in schools so far has been on devising ways in which to integrate newcomers into Icelandic society. Academic studies, on the other hand, have increasingly shifted focus to building an inclusive society and increasing tolerance for diversity. Research projects and surveys commissioned by the Red Cross in Iceland, various academic dissertations and articles, projects sponsored by the International Culture House are currently the main platforms for the multi-cultural discourse. Papers issued from the Ministry for social affairs have published policies of the Icelandic government concerning education for immigrants and is mainly concerned with teaching Icelandic as a second language as is explained on the Ministry's homepage:

(The Icelandic language...) It is the shared property of the Icelandic nation and contains its history, culture and self-awareness. It is also a tool for social interaction and a key to participation in the nation's life. Powerful support of Icelandic language education for immigrants serves the dual purpose of speeding up their integration into society and strengthening the position of the Icelandic language. (Félagsmálaráðuneytið:2010)

The government papers have also been issued concerning the ways in which to accommodate newcomers. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has appointed specific schools, both primary and secondary level, to conduct special classes for immigrant children, where the main focus is on learning Icelandic as a second language.

Up until the recent economic collapse, when people's attention became focused on corruption and lobbyism, that had been tolerated, or gone largely unnoticed, the prevailing myth in the society was concerned with Iceland's greatness and superiority among nations. Nationalistic discourses have centered on having the most beautiful women and the strongest men. Several individual's business acumen and enterprising spirit even appeared to be conquering the world. The falseness of this image has come as a shock in the wake of the bank collapse in the fall of 2008 and is affecting the nation a multitude of ways when this is written.

The identity crisis and the need to re-evaluate fundamental values have been identified as a huge task of no less importance than tackling the financial deficit (Jakobsson, 2009; Þjóðfundur, 2009) . The two political parties that have come to power after the 2009

parliamentary elections, have different emphasis. The social democratic party has stressed the importance of joining the EU, thus reflecting a desire to become members of a larger international community and being regarded as equals among the other member states. The leftist green party is more concerned with building unity and strength from within the Icelandic nation itself. These different voices need to be consolidated among the nation in the effort to create a new self identity after “the collapse”. The crisis that has followed the bank collapse has shown itself to be not only of economic nature but no less a moral crisis that has given rise to many searching questions. Many have voiced their opinion that a similar collapse and crisis is due to occur in other countries belonging to the western cultural paradigm.

Times of great unrest and drastic changes have shown themselves to beget the most fertile ground for creativity. There is a felt need to deepen the understanding of other nations, to expand horizons while at the same time to safeguard what is unique in the home culture. Roland Robertson (2004) explains this as two sides of the same coin. According to him the growth of globalization and the need to emphasize the particular go hand in hand.

The views that teachers hold are a deciding factor in how cross-cultural perspectives are presented to students. In close proximity to Robertsons’ (2004) global/particular dichotomy many of the life skills teachers that I spoke to, believed that appreciating and giving recognition to “the other” was helpful in strengthening the sense of self and in creating a stronger self image. At the same time, they also said, paying closer attention to the self and learning to understand one’s reactions to the environment on an individual level helps in understanding “the other” as well.

1.5 Chapter Summary

In this first chapter the reasons for embarking on this research and writing this paper are discussed with references to both personal experiences and recent developments in Icelandic society due to growing global involvement and added exposure to influences from abroad. Since the qualitative research paradigm relies on the researcher as a research tool (Patton, 2002) I found it important to explain my background which inevitably affected both the research questions and the choice of research strategy. My background as a secondary school teacher, my experience from living in other countries, and involvement in other religious paradigms are undoubtedly motivating factors. The rapid changes witnessed in Iceland from being relatively isolated, to slowly realizing that interconnectivity is a real force to be reckoned with, makes fascinating study

material even if the influence and pressures being felt happen to be mostly from the US and the EU countries. One of my interests was the question of whether students are exposed to paradigms beyond our Western, Christian, developed and capitalist perspectives in the upper secondary schools. My research questions are concerned with global- or cross-cultural perspectives and the teacher's views on these. The research design is focused on interviews with eleven upper secondary teachers who all have the opportunities to discuss these issues in their classes.

I explain my ideological background, why I chose the methodology and research design that I did and why it helped to study official policy papers and curricula in the different schools alongside the interviews. Finally I discuss the relevance of this study in the light of global changes but with the focus particularly on Iceland.

Chapter 2

2.0 Research Strategy

In this chapter, I will outline the design of my research and the methodological framework that I have chosen for my study. Also issues and concerns relating to the study will be addressed here. In qualitative research design the balance between objectivity and subjectivity is especially important. In order to succeed in capturing and relating the story that emerges through the research this balance must always be considered. In Patton's words: "...*complete objectivity being impossible and pure subjectivity undermining credibility, the researcher's focus becomes balance-understanding and depicting the world authentically in all its complexity while being self-analytical, politically aware, and reflexive in consciousness*" (2002:41).

The open-ended interview typically turns out to be thick with information and the researcher inevitably chooses what to emphasize and what to leave out depending on what is perceived as important and relevant for the study. In my interviews I used an interview guide¹ to create a similar focus in the discussion in all of them. In the analysis process many themes surfaced and became main topics that I had not anticipated at the start, such as the emphasis that the teachers placed on tolerance in the cross-cultural discussion. The focus therefore shifted slightly from my expectation at the start of talking about cross-cultural understanding. An inductive research approach allows for this to happen and demands flexibility from the researcher and readiness to reevaluate the main focus of the study.

In my view there were specific issues that defined my inquiry from the outset. It is also important to define here the choice of method and the ideas that motivated the research, which was mentioned briefly in chapter 1 and will be discussed in more detail below. For this type of inquiry I relied heavily on first open and then closed coding involving the correlation of data and then finally drawing conclusions from the findings.

2.1 Strategic Ideals

My study is qualitative in nature and conducted from the interpretivist epistemological position which according to Bryman (2008) requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of

¹ See Appendix I for Interview guide

social action. Interpretivism allows the use of both the emic and etic perspectives in interpreting data that is both the insider (emic) and outsider (etic) perspective. Perceiving the insider's voice involves not only reporting accurately what the interviewee has said, but taking into account such things as cultural values and morals that govern or influence the emic voice. In the same way the perspective of the observer or etic voice needs to be self-critical and placed in context. (ibid.p.694).

My ontological perspective also affects my research and analysis. I cannot conceive of there being only one reality or "truth" in all social settings, so I have worked from the a priori assumption that there are many socially constructed realities in existence at the same time depending on context. Based on Patton's (2002) classification chart (pp.132-133) my inquiry is ethnographical since it focuses on the school culture within each school as well as the cultural paradigm that Iceland is situated within as a Christian, Western, industrialized nation. Bryman (2008:433) defines the ethnographer as being "typically a participant observer who also uses non-observational methods and sources such as interviewing and documents", all of which apply for my research. It is also auto-ethnographic in the sense that I have lived in Iceland for more than half my lifetime and in addition I have worked as an upper secondary school teacher in 3 of the 5 schools, and was a student in the fourth so I am familiar with the school culture from firsthand experience in 4 out of the 5 schools. Since I am also probing into the reported or perceived construction of reality in the 5 settings, with special focus on global perspectives, my research also falls into the category of constructivism. Guba and Lincoln (1989 cited in Patton, (2002:98) explain some of the main assumptions made within the constructivist framework e.g.: "Truth" is a matter of consensus among informed and sophisticated constructors, not of correspondence with objective reality". Constructivist inquiry gained recognition as a research method after Thomas Kuhn related it to scientific findings. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* he argues that scientific ideas are..."shaped by and dependent on paradigms of knowledge that were socially constructed and enforced through group consensus (ibid.p. 99). In my research context this implies that the teachers' views on global perspectives and cross-cultural education are products of the ruling paradigm. This is in part the Western culture, the Christian paradigm, the Icelandic cultural image or the school culture which is a product of all these.

2.2 Methodology

The ways to assess qualitative research are often connected to the method of data collection and analysis. In contrast to quantitative research the emphasis in qualitative inquiry is on in-depth case studies rather than seeking to generalize over a large population. Both the data collection and analysis are therefore typically of a different nature.

I chose to use semi-structured open-ended interviews, which calls for an inductive research design. Each interview was analyzed, first with open coding, followed by a cross-case analysis within each school, then between schools comparing the views and emphases of teachers who teach the same subject or hold administrative positions. To identify important issues within the global or cross-cultural discourse from the education authorities, it became necessary to search within the National Curriculum Guidelines. And since each school has its own school curriculum, written policy documents from the schools were also seen as important to throw light on the schools' published views and intentions. Multiple data sources and multiple methods are applied to increase the validity or trustworthiness of the findings.

The documents which were studied were analyzed through content analysis in search of references to cross-cultural or global education. The National Curriculum Guide for the upper secondary school level was accessed on the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture's homepage. These guidelines are issued by the Ministry in the same way as regulations. The current Guidelines, published 2004 with amendments to the older version from 1999, give descriptions of study programs at the upper secondary level. It also describes the framework created by laws and regulations that apply to upper secondary schools. From part 6 it says:

Article 22 of Act 80/1996 on Upper Secondary Schools stipulates that each school must publish a curriculum that is updated regularly. The curriculum is prepared by the school staff under the direction of the principal. It constitutes both a policy and a working plan for the school and school staff is obliged to follow it.... It also specifies that the school curriculum guide's role is to "execute in greater detail the various objectives of the National Curriculum Guide, as well as specifying the working regulations of the school. (Menntamálaráðuneytið:2004)

A comparison between school policy documents and the National Guidelines was made to gain a better understanding of the school culture in each school whereas the overall focus of the content analysis was to detect recurring themes that would help answer my research questions.

2.3 Data Collection

I used the same interview guide in all the interviews while simultaneously allowing the teachers to talk about what they felt was most important. In all the cases the data collection methods were the same. At first I sent letters requesting the interview but not all that I sent out letters to responded to my request. From one school there was no response and from two others I received answers from gatekeepers, but the teachers in question did not give positive responses to being interviewed. In the end I had 5 schools. In each school I interviewed two teachers, except in the largest one where I interviewed three teachers. This school happened to be the only one of the five that I was not familiar with from firsthand experience. The teacher participants were chosen with purposeful sampling so as to increase the relevance of the interviews.

According to Patton (2002:248) the “Ideal-typical qualitative methods strategy is made up of three parts: (1) qualitative data (2) a holistic-inductive design of naturalistic inquiry, and (3) content or case analysis. My data based on interviews is qualitative. The inquiry is naturalistic since all of the interviews took place in the workplace of the teachers and in that sense natural surroundings. It can also be classified as a holistic-inductive design in that I used open-ended questions in the interviews allowing each interviewee to express the aspect of global perspectives and cross-cultural education that they perceived as most important. And finally, after the interviews were recorded and transcribed each individual case was first analyzed with open coding then with selective coding across cases to focus the analysis and noting the emergent themes, I strove to identify both variations and similarities (Patton, 2002:56-58).

In studying the national curriculum and school policy documents I used content analysis searching in the guidelines for references to cross-cultural perspectives or indications that there was a will to develop an education leading to global consciousness. More accurately my research consisted of:

- 1) Content and narrative analysis of 11 open-ended, semi-structured interviews, using an interview guide. My interviewees were all upper secondary school teachers that were selected through purposive sampling. The teachers that I interviewed were identified and contacted

through gatekeepers, who were administrators in the same schools. I made clear that I wanted to talk to a teacher who was likely to include global or cross-cultural perspectives in their teaching. These turned out to be life skills teachers or social studies teachers in almost all cases. In the open-ended interviews my interviewees were able to express their views and talk about the aspect within the main topic which mattered most to them. In the analysis this allowed me to identify similarities and differences between teachers, between schools and subjects. In a small society such in Iceland anonymity may be more difficult to safeguard. Therefore I have opted to give all teachers female identities. Research aimed at studying possible differences depending on gender is not a part of this study.

The teachers came from 5 different schools that were also selected through purposive sampling in the Reykjavik area. The population in the area represented by the schools is close to half of the country's total population. The schools were chosen partly because I had some prior knowledge of the school culture from having taught in them and because of their different emphases in curriculum and composition of the student body. One of the schools is purely academic, four are comprehensive schools offering both academic studies as well as vocational training. Two schools have specific programs for immigrant students, the other three have no such programs and very few or no immigrant students, one of the schools is situated outside the Reykjavik city limits.

2) Document analysis of policy papers for each school as well as the National Curriculum Guidelines published by the Ministry of Education. This was done to give a clearer and more holistic picture of the schools and their policies regarding global perspectives. In reading these documents it soon became clear that both guidelines and policy papers allow for much interpretation and choice of emphasis since course descriptions are wide and cover vast amounts of topics. This was especially true of the guidelines for life skills class. Using document and content analysis helped to clarify what the Ministry of Education on the one hand and each individual school on the other regarded as optimal circumstances and authentic goals regarding cross-cultural or global perspectives. That these issues are sometimes missing in policy documents is also a statement in itself. Comparing these overall guidelines issued by the government and school curriculums then gave clear indications of what each school was emphasizing and what kind of school culture they wanted to create. The teachers' views on how to transmit global perspectives must be partly seen in context of the school culture in which they

work. Each teacher also had their own deeply felt priorities which I tried to place in context both with respect to their teaching position in the school and the school culture they worked in. In both types of inquiries I have sought to identify and balance the emic and etic perspectives, the insider's and the outsider's view.

2.4 Evaluation of Data

In the evaluation of qualitative research Patton (2002:51) describes the special contribution of this type of inquiry. It has already been mentioned that an objective view on reality goes contrary to the qualitative research paradigm, and as a consequence questions concerning neutrality may arise. Patton explains that there is a clear difference between neutrality and detachment, for while it is required of the researcher to “adopt a stance of neutrality”, it would be counter-productive to strive for detachment. “Qualitative inquiry depends on, uses and enhances the researcher's direct experiences in the world and insights about those experiences”. Two terms that he discusses that are specific for qualitative analysis, were of special interest for my study and how I approached the evaluation of data. I am referring to the terms “empathy” and “verstehen”. “Empathy” was introduced into social science research by Max Weber and is used to describe the emphasis on “the importance of comprehending the motives and feelings of people in a social-cultural context”. The term “verstehen” comes from German and means understanding (Patton, 2002:52-53). With this attitude as a guiding light in the research and analysis it became clear from all the interviewees that they were all sincerely trying to do a good job.

Regarding the research design of undertaking case studies and then expanding into cross-case analysis, Patton (2002:55) explains that “the evaluation needs to be attentive to and capture individual differences or unique variations...”. In this type of research Bryman (2008:60) uses the term multiple-case study and points out that this type of design often serves to improve theory building. In addition “the comparison may itself suggest concepts that are relevant to an emerging theory”. This has been true in my research findings. In the analysis of data through comparison of the cases I have striven to allow new concepts to emerge, that I had not anticipated in the beginning.

2.5 Limitations of the Study. Issues and Concerns: Trustworthiness

Bryman (2008) discusses the necessity of specifying ways of establishing and assessing the quality of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba claim that qualitative research cannot be judged by quantitative measures such as reliability and validity, due to the assumption in quantitative research of the existence of an objective and measurable reality. These assumptions serve no purpose in qualitative social research which is more concerned with gaining an in-depth understanding of one or more subjective realities. Furthermore they suggest the term trustworthiness which is broken down into four categories or criteria: *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability* (1994, cited in Bryman, 2008: 377-380).

In my research credibility is obtained by using a mixed method approach i.e. interviewing and document analysis. There is also an element of participant observation, due to my prior exposure to the school cultures in four of the schools. Transferability is an aspect that is enhanced through giving detailed accounts of the context that is being studied which is what I hope to do in gaining a clearer picture of the views of the teachers in the context of the school culture. On the criteria of dependability Bryman (2008) emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all records are kept and research procedures explained. Finally the criteria of confirmability is concerned with ascertaining that the researcher has not “overtly allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations manifestly to sway the conduct of the research and findings deriving from it” (ibid, p.379). In other words this entails being aware and self-critical as to biases that one might have. According to Bryman (2008:280) there are several ideas concerning the best quality criteria for qualitative research and many extensive checklists have been designed for the researcher. However, he adds, that while many qualitative researchers find these lists helpful as guidelines, they may not be useful as absolute requirements, applicable for all qualitative studies.

There are other concerns to be considered, or at least be aware of. Personal circumstances of the interviewees for example, have the potential to affect the mood and the openness of the interchange during the interview. Patton (2002) explains that the conventional view that interviewees are all cooperative and helpful may not be the whole truth. He quotes Jack Douglas in saying that the investigative paradigm itself is based on the assumption that social life is pervaded by conflicts of interest, values and feelings. In fact many of the people one talks with may not be straightforward and open about some aspect of the truth either consciously or otherwise. Some may even have reason to lie. Douglas goes on to state four main problems that

qualitative researchers are likely to be confronted with: 1. Misinformation, 2. Evasions, 3. Lies 4. Fronts. (1976, cited in Patton, 2002: 270) In my research I cannot entirely count out any of these problems, but on the other hand all of my interviewees volunteered their time and information freely and appeared exceedingly welcoming and friendly. None of them knew which other schools were involved in my study or how many I would be interviewing. There was however a strong sense of competing with the “others”, and a need to point out the uniqueness of their particular school or their way of teaching, which could have brought on any of the above-mentioned problems. It is also entirely possible that some of my interviewees wanted to impress me as a fellow teacher. And this may have caused them to talk more about what they conceived as positive aspects of their own teaching and attitudes more than the things they would like to change. None of the teachers were critical of their own school whereas several of the comprehensive/vocational schools mentioned the academically based school in the study as a negative and opposite example, namely of non-inclusiveness which was interpreted by them as intolerance.

Documents may also have their limitations as data. In the 5 schools there was a great variation in the written or website information regarding school policy matters. The school curriculum could be accessed for all the schools, but the available information was by no means equal in either quality or quantity. The information had also been updated at different times for the different schools. Several of the schools were working on a new school curriculum while others were planning to start the work.

It might also be seen as a limitation, that generalizability or representativeness could be called into question. The fact that the number of cases are few is one reason, another may be that the situation in Iceland is unique because of the small population and geographical remoteness. In answer to this I would argue that the chosen schools are representative for close to half the number of the entire student body in upper secondary schools in Iceland. And although the situation in Iceland is unique in some ways, the need for an expanded awareness of a global nature is universal.

2.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have discussed both the ideas that motivated my research and how I went about collecting information that was likely to throw light on the questions that I raised. I discussed my

research strategy as well as describing the research process. The definitions and views of noted researchers were weighted against my intentions and choice of methodology and data collection. I have also focused on some of the limitations to the study and qualitative research in general that has to do with personal interactions such as in the interview setting.

Chapter 3

3.0 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I will discuss key concepts that relate to my study within the contemporary discussion on globalization and critical pedagogy. I will discuss the need for a change of focus in education in the light of growing inter-connectiveness across the globe. I will also discuss aspects that relate more directly to teaching practices and theories, the perceived role of education is contextualized with respect to the globalization process. The education system and commonly understood goals of education are found to derive from, a culture which is based on fragmentation instead of being holistic. In the past schooling may have been defined as a preparation for attaining specific skills for the job market. In our information-rich and technologically advanced world today new competencies are required. These will be considered mainly through the lens of critical pedagogy.

3.1. Key Concepts and Categories included in Theories of Globalization

Globalization is a widely used term today that covers a range of different influences and understandings. The main focus of discussion is often on the globalization of economy, politics and culture. Luke Martell (2007) defines three waves, in the globalization discourse, represented by the globalists, the sceptics and the “transformationalists”. The first wave originated in the 1980’s and was a reaction to rapid changes that were seen to occur. When new technology made it possible to move capital across continents by merely pressing a button, international policies were being enacted across national borders and TV broadcasts became global, it gave rise to fears that the nation state was dying and cultural diversity would disappear. Both the left and the right in politics, Martell (2007) says, agree that the world is globalized, but do not agree whether it is a positive or negative development. It has been pointed out that culture is becoming homogenized, rather than maintaining specifics for each nation. Politically, international organizations are seen as having power that overrules that of the nation states, one example of this is the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has only recently come to play an important role in policy making in Iceland, while overtly staying in the background. The debate about EU membership and what it entails for Iceland is another example of the same.

Martell (2007) goes on to define the second wave, the sceptics. They see powerful nation states continuing to hold powerful positions, the core (North America, Europe) remaining strong and the periphery (most notably Africa) remaining in a peripheral position. They also point out that the effects of globalization are giving an extra impetus to fundamentalist movements based on nationalism, evident in the North as well as in the South. Economically, they point out, the global economy is far from being inclusive. In fact the richer countries through protectionism of their local markets are maintaining the age old imbalance. Even the so-called 'transnational bodies', such as the United Nations, the sceptics claim, are being used by powerful nations to implement their own agendas and has little to do with the proclaimed global governance like when The United States decided to withdraw funding and support to UNESCO in 1984. In a similar tone the world-systems theory does not recognize that globalization is new, but views it rather as a worldwide spreading of capitalism (Lechner, 2004).

Finally the third wave, the "transformationalists", are explained by Martell (2007) as having a good deal in common with both first and second wavers, first conceptualized according to Martell in 2000. They recognize that globalization is occurring, but very unevenly. The commonly used concept of core-periphery in power relations, they see as having shifted from meaning strictly North to South, and claim that the clear boundary lines in the geographical sense are starting to blur, the marginalized may well live alongside the elite. An important contribution of the "transformationalists" is that they do not see the future of globalization as predetermined and going one way or the other, but rather as being dependent on a variety of different factors. They see global influences changing local cultures as well as the local or national sometimes being strengthened through exposure to global influences. The direction that globalization will take depends according to them on "factors such as the choices of big corporations and governments or the influence of civil society and social movements" (Martell, 2007:18).

Globalization has a profound influence on the way we live and perceive the world and our lives in it. Anthony Giddens (1991,1999, 1999a), often considered a "transformationalist", calls it "a runaway world" since the forces at work seem to be out of control and impacting people in all four corners of the earth. A new divide within societies as well as between affluent and poorer nations is gaining impetus and is defined by global networking. Information technology plays a key role both in bringing the world together and in deepening the chasms already existing between the haves and have-nots in this world, since only a small portion of the worlds

inhabitants have internet access so far. Many fear North American political, cultural and economic dominance which is not without merit, since The United States is the sole superpower in the world today and in many countries, globalization looks very much like Americanization. In spite of this fact, it is Giddens' view that the effects of globalization are growing more and more decentered, since radical changes are occurring no less in the North than in the South (Giddens,1999:16). He also discusses different attitudes towards globalization, dividing the two extreme viewpoints into skeptics on the one hand and radicals on the other. The latter, he explains, believe that the sovereignty of the nation state has come to an end and that the national or local politicians have lost their power to international authority (Giddens,1999:8). Earlier, another scholar, Roland Robertson (1992) came up with the term "glocalization", which he uses to explain what he sees as the driving force behind the globalization process manifesting as a constant dialectics between the local and the global. Good examples are the global movements that have arisen among the First Nations², their global connectedness has helped them to define and name aspects of their shared cultural traditions. And Robertson points out that most of these indigenous movements are not in favor of isolating themselves or rejecting global influences, but rather seek to gain recognition in the global arena. If in fact the world is moving toward a closer synthesis in understanding regarding collective human issues, Robertson calls attention to some of the 'binary themes' that need to be addressed, e.g. "commonality/diversity; sameness/difference; homogeneity/heterogeneity; universality/particularity; global/local" (2004).

Noam Chomsky (2006) among others has claimed that everyone wants to see international integration happen, in relation to global peace and better understanding between the peoples of the world. But on the other hand, he explains, the economic aspects, have come to take up most of the implied meaning of 'globalization' which has negative connotations for most people. At the same time as web-based communications have opened new dimensions worldwide and broken down borders, Chomsky (2006) points out that this has indeed increased easy flow of capital, but has done little for opening national borders and allowed people to physically move with freedom, for example across the U.S. – Mexico border, which has been fully militarized, he says. The question, he points out is whether globalization will be for the people or merely be used for the accumulation of power. But if there are no borders in cyberspace a pertinent question may

² Indigenous cultures e.g. the Inuit that are spread across the northern most regions of North America and in Greenland.

be: what is the power behind the militarized border control, who is maintaining it and why? And one may even venture to ask in a strong participatory democracy, whether these questions could not only be asked but also *heard*.

The changes we associate with globalization are no less than a revolution, and Giddens (1999:19) insisted that there is far more to it than merely economic changes and that what is emerging is “something that has never existed before, a global cosmopolitan society” with the impact being on the political, technological and cultural levels as well as the economic. A common understanding Crossley and Watson (2003) point out, is that globalization often implies a future development of a global culture where societies will look very much the same, which can be said to be one of the other major fears related to ‘globalization’. Robertson (2004) argues that the ways and degrees to which “nation-states differentially adopt or reject features of other societies” will always vary and that foreign values or ideas must adapt to local circumstances or else they will not “stick”. Giddens (1999a) speaks of personal relations, values, and that our ontological, fundamental views are all changing due to the global exposure. To take an example, Iceland’s state religion is Christianity and the foundations of the society such as the constitution and legislature are built on Christian values. And yet in recent years there have been a growing number of people, who still consider themselves Christian, but are doing yoga every day, a tradition that originates from Hinduism. At a conference in Japan discussing global influences Nobutaka (2001) speaks of a “globalization of religion” that is directly traceable to the “information age”, allowing any religion to spread freely beyond national borders. Through the internet it is also possible to watch programs from other continents, which spread cultural influences. In his teenage years my son in Iceland watched Japanese animated films and ended up understanding quite a bit of the spoken language.

Giddens (1999a) goes so far as to refer to a “reverse colonization” occurring within the Western cultures. Whether or not one agrees with such a view, one thing can be verified through a historical glance is that culture is not static, but rather fluid and subject to changes which might at times appear as a dialectics between different paradigms. Giddens (1999:5) perceives “fundamentalism” and “cosmopolitan tolerance” as the battlefield for the future. The ‘Anti-Global’ movement in America is seen by many as a fundamentalist movement and Robertson (2004) claims that they regard it as a threat to stability and a corrupting influence to teach students about other cultural traditions than the professed white, upper-middle-class American

culture and especially there is a prevailing fear of other religions. Robert Chambers (1997) warns against the danger of fundamentalisms which basically define the world as 'either/or' fixed groups. In being conceived of as a fixed and unchangeable entity removes the element free will from people as individuals, he explains, and the world, may for example be seen as an unchangeable system driven primarily by greed. While Chambers (1997:13) realistically acknowledges the negative conditions in today's world, he insists that people can choose how to behave and what to do. Furthermore he states: *"The assumption of pervasive selfishness and greed in neo-liberal and male-dominated thought, policy and action supports a simplistic view of human nature. This overlooks or underestimates selflessness, generosity and commitment to others, and the fulfillment that these qualities bring"*.

External changes necessarily bring about changes in people's awareness and understanding, and this leads to a call for further external adjustments to be made. The 'run-away world' that Giddens (1999;1999a) describes, is undergoing changes that appear to be happening at such a rapid pace that it gives birth to fearful reactions yet at the same time are potent with promise. The possibility to communicate across countries and continents in real time, as well as the easy access to information for internet users, dramatically changes our lives. Inevitably with the overload of information available at least in many countries in the North, new types of problems arise. Giddens (1999:74) points out how people have become more critical about authority and especially many young people seem to distrust politicians "to be able to deal with the forces moving the world". More young people seem to be bored with their textbooks which they see as limited in comparison to what the internet has to offer. Indeed specialist knowledge is more freely accessible than ever before. Giddens (1999:75) also believes that people are more interested in politics than before, and that there is a need to deepen a participatory democracy that transcends national borders, because "old mechanisms of government don't work in a society where citizens live in the same information environment as those in power over them".

In World culture theory, which is defined as "a label for a particular interpretation of globalization that focuses on the way in which participants in the process become conscious of and give meaning to living in the world as a single place" (Lechner, 2004), it is explained that people will be increasingly faced with universal questions and that conflicts between different paradigms of thought, or philosophical frameworks, will demand to be resolved. In this setting, it is pointed out how religious traditions are especially well suited, and are easily mobilized to

justify one's view of the globe. A globalized world may thus be seen as integrated but not necessarily harmonious. Thus people in general may be required to increasingly strengthen certain abilities such as the effective use of critical thinking and creative problem solving abilities and centering them on dialogue.

The times they are a-changing sang Bob Dylan in the 1960s, but that was before both mobile phones and personal computers became common property. Change may have been in the air in the sixties, but we are now in the center of a storm of changes. The changes are occurring on many different levels, at a speed that is unprecedented and the entire globe is being affected. What, if anything, are we doing to prepare young people to exist in a totally different world from the one that we grew up in? What are the views of teachers concerning the role of education in a changing world? In seeking answers to these questions it is important to discuss ideas concerning the role of the teacher and the role of education in the view of influential, contemporary educationalists and critical thinkers.

3.2 Global Education

There are several ways to approach the issue of global education. It may bring to mind the fact that illiteracy is still a big problem especially among women. Most people will agree that it should be a basic human right to learn basic literacy skills as the Education for All millennium goals (The Dakar Framework for Action, 2000) bear witness to. But education is commonly defined as so much more than basic literacy. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26, the principles concerning education are defined. There it says:

2) Education shall be directed towards the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace....(UN Website)

Although this is an agreement for all the member states, the implementation of these guidelines has varied a great deal and possibly the very definitions of some of the key terms in the statement may be understood in many different ways. What is meant by human rights and fundamental freedoms for example? These issues are constantly causing clashes between nations and

internally within nation states as well, often leading to violence, which goes directly against the basic principles stated above. The promotion of “understanding, tolerance and friendship” is also being manifest in a variety of forms. Hopefully the views of some of the upper- secondary school teachers interviewed here will throw some light on the prevailing views and practices in Iceland in this respect.

Aside from the fact that there exists a tremendous inequality when it comes to educational opportunities around the globe, there is a new kind of education taking place outside the traditional schooling. There is an influential presence in the lives of many young people today that did not exist just a couple of decades ago and it is growing. In the global chat rooms and on-line games young people experience feelings of community that disregard any national borderlines, although whether the same holds true of cultural borders it is hard to say. The geographically defined limits that have defined different cultures appear to be breaking down, at least seen from cyper-space. This poses new challenges for the field of education as a whole, and dilemmas for teachers having to reorganize their teaching practices to stay in tune with these effects of globalization. With the easy access to information as well as the amount of data that is accessible it would seem that traditional teaching methods had to be revised. Keeping up-to-date technologically is costly, but even where lack of funding is not a hindrance, new methods and appropriate retraining for teachers and school administrators can stand in the way of development. But there are global websites to be found today both for teachers and students where they share lesson plans and build bridges of understanding between cultures around the world.

Ideally the need for a global education arises out of a philanthropic intent to deepen global understanding between cultures and to create genuine dialogue between them, in search of shared human values. In the words of the Buddhist teacher Daisaku Ikeda (2001:43): “Reality can be revealed only through genuine dialogue, where “self” and “other” transcend the narrow limits of ego and fully interact.” To interact through tolerance and understanding must be the way towards peace and should rightly be the main goal of all education. This could be called the ideal global education. Ikeda (2001) further explains that those engaging in this type of dialogue must be able to exercise freedom of thought, be unattached to vested interests and know that all participate on equal terms.

Others have called attention to the importance of dialogue and the importance to improve cross-cultural understanding, Crossley and Watson (2003:5) also warn against the “dilemmas generated by the increasingly rapid, and uncritical, transfer of educational theory, policy and practice from one context to another”. Although intended mainly to point out the different contexts in North-South relations, it is equally valid to apply this argument to the changing context within the Western cultures themselves resulting from globalization, the old must be replaced by the new, if only we knew what the new entailed. But in a ‘shrinking world’ it appears to be important to gain cross-cultural understanding and to be adroit at communicating through dialogue. Making the development of these skills a priority would, on the other hand, mean a revolutionary change in educational planning. Crossley and Watson (2003:28) further point out that externally the role of schools is still being defined as preparation for the job market and in socializing students into the accepted norms of society.

Critical pedagogy has attempted to reveal or demystify the role that modern schools play in helping to maintain the existing power structures in society. School systems have been described as repressive and wasteful for creative potential. Chambers (2003) admits that education has the potential to liberate, but asks whether this is in fact the case. He recognizes that in most schools Paulo Freire’s (1996) banking concept of education is still at work. Teachers often deliver monologues to the class as bearers of wisdom while students being objectified are conditioned to show obedience and fearfully to follow authority. Ivan Illich (1976:101) put it like this: “Schools indoctrinate the child into the acceptance of the political system his teachers represent, despite the claim that teaching is non-political”. And Chomsky (1991) quotes the Trilateral Commission in defining the purpose of education as being “to train people to be obedient, conformist and not think too much”. Students, he says, that are good at learning, without question what the school authorities have deemed worth learning, without questioning, are the most successful. The problem with this, Chomsky (1991) points out, is that you cannot have progress by just copying from someone else, for this creativity is required and the ability to think independently, what Freire (1970) described as rising above being a mere object acted upon and under the control of others. Critical pedagogy’s role is to reveal, what may go unnoticed by students, parents as well as teachers themselves, that schooling, education policies and teaching practices are not neutral, so to avoid indoctrination it is of utmost importance to develop creative abilities and critical thinking in the learner.

3.3 Critical Pedagogy

Many critical thinkers and educators such as Freire (1970), Macedo (1993,1995), Apple (2001), Keller (2008) and McLaren (2008) are calling on teachers to raise their awareness of the relationship between schooling and power and whether this relationship enhances or thwarts the development of critical thinking in the life of learners. Critical pedagogy calls for radical changes to the traditional approaches used in education to keep up with the revolutionary changes that are affecting people's lives. One of the central questions on the 21st century education website (<http://www.21stcenturyschools.com>) is whether schools, education systems and teachers are educating young people for the future or whether they are still working to fulfill the needs of a time gone by. The old ways that most teachers today were brought up with and are still being used in the classrooms, are in conflict with the reality that young people have embraced in modern life. This involves new ways of communicating across borders, race or nationality, something that has never been seen before in history. People across the world are breaking down borders. The paradigm shift that is underway through web communication and networking is however not occurring simultaneously across the globe, and the poorer countries are far behind the richer ones in the number of internet users per capita. To right this imbalance and build communication bridges across the entire globe is a great necessity and must be seen as an important step towards a future of peace and understanding.

Professor Michael Wesch's (2009) recent anthropological research, explains the effects of how the new media throws light on some of the ways that young people are in effect learning today. In Wesch's (2009) videos it becomes apparent, how a global culture is emerging through YouTube and people from the far corners of the world are collaborating, communicating and co-creating across borders and outside the corporate establishment. The implications are far-reaching. Since this new technology is more likely than not to continue spreading and thus bringing more people and cultures into close contact around the globe, this would seem to call for new emphases for learners. On the 21st century schools website, it is pointed out that: "Technically it is the 21st century, but our schools³ are not there, and our challenge now is to reinvent schools for the 21st century (<http://www.21stcenturyschools.com>). The fact that we are living in an increasingly multicultural and global society requires a new set of proficiencies and literacies. These competencies are based to a large extent on critical thinking and problem solving

³ The reference is to American schools, but is just as well applicable to other schools e.g. in Iceland

abilities, together with cross-cultural understanding, including skills such as oral and written communication, and knowing how to access and analyze information by contextualizing it. The need for multiple literacies grows exponentially larger as societies enter an increasingly multicultural and global phase. Some of these competencies that are suggested for the 21st century schools are: eco-literacy, political literacy, financial-, computer-, media-, emotional-, health- and multicultural literacies. Characteristically teenagers and young adults have many questions about the world they live in and the role of the teachers is to assist them in their search, not to subject them to indoctrination. This however, raises several questions concerning neutrality, whether it is attainable and how but also there is an issue of trusting the students to raise questions that matter to them and seeking answers that they find satisfactory. Assisting students in finding answers is quite different from presenting them with “facts”, which is what Freire (1970) termed the banking concept of education, filling up empty vessels, or depositing “accepted and prescribed knowledge” to be able to extract the same at the time of exams. In the dialogue between Macedo and Freire (1995:389), they make it clear that it is the role of the schools and the role of the educators to enable students to decode the myths that control their lives, which Freire refers to as the “veiled ideology” that “continually dehumanizes the oppressed”. And furthermore Freire states that the students must be allowed to situate themselves in an historical context, so they will be able to understand the contemporary myths and legends that control their lives and this must be the goal of education. Line Alice Ytrehus (2002:140) explains: “Each individual’s world-view, ... is a complex web of meanings, beliefs, experiences, myths and knowledge, pre-understanding and understanding.” A myth can thus be an implicit premise, or the hidden ideological message of a concept or theory, but it can also be an explicit part of a commonly accepted narrative...”. Part of developing towards becoming a fully conscious human being, able to act effectively on the world involves penetrating and decomposing the oppressive power of our myths and revealing our hidden ideology.

Douglas Keller (2008) discusses the need for multiple literacies in the 21st century and calls for a cooperative reevaluation of the education system by educators, students and citizens through a critical pedagogical approach. This involves empowering individuals Keller (2008) explains, to become consciously active participants in the democratic process. They must be awakened to a political and social awareness and gain some self-knowledge as well as an understanding of what lies behind thought processes and images that are commonly accepted

within the existing cultural paradigm. Education should be focused on developing individuals that are capable of making independent choices as well as cooperating with others and respecting differences. Modern education, Keller (2008) points out, was designed to serve an industrial era where a form of representative democracy appeared to suffice. In a global era, with easy access to information there is a demand for a broader participatory democracy. But Freire's (1970) 'banking concept' of education is still a common notion, where the teacher is the one holding all the knowledge and is meant to dutifully transfer it to the students, who are seen as mere passive receivers. Keller (2008:7) goes on to explain that since culture is represented to a large extent through the media it is vital to develop media literacy and sensitize both teachers and students to "the politics of representation" and negative stereotyping. Critical media literacy, he says is "tied to the project of radical democracy and concerned to develop skills that will enhance democratization and participation".

Michael Apple (2001) discusses the need to strengthen a bottom-up, inclusive and true democracy in the education system. Most teachers today, he claims, rely on textbooks for teaching and most textbooks are quite similar because issues that are potentially either politically or culturally critical are avoided since they might cause negative reactions from powerful groups. Instead he would like to connect the curriculum more tightly to local community problems, and make them more relevant for all concerned, learners as well as their teachers and the home environment. In seeking always to be politically correct or avoiding issues of conflict, the schools are functioning, Apple (1990:7) says, to "create a false sense of consensus". This "consensus ideology" bears little resemblance to the actual forces that are at work and govern people's lives

Education should be inclusive in reaching out beyond the school doors, and it should be for everyone. Furthermore Apple (2001) points out that it is important not to compartmentalize and build walls between learners whether it is based on abilities/disabilities, culture/race, economic standing or a number of other criteria. Learners will only stand to gain from interacting with a wide diversity of people and cultures.

Critical pedagogy is often seen as radical, even revolutionary, since, as Peter McLaren (2008) claims, it is consciousness-raising and enables individuals to take a stand against oppressive forces that stand in the way of freedom and active participatory democracy. Schooling is an inherent part of society and a product of the existing power structure, so it is not neutral or existing in an ideological vacuum. Given the fact that most schools are either run or subsidized

by governments McLaren (2008), addresses this problem by posing the question: "Can you imagine a government putting pedagogy as a priority, as part of ushering in the revolution?" Which burns down to the question of how radical can schools or teachers be when they are controlled by vested interests?

The goal of critical pedagogy is to constantly question and analyze to bring about constant change and renewal, empowering learners in discovering their creative potential, to be in charge and responsible for their own lives, in Freire's (1996) own words: 'becoming Subjects instead of objects for others to work on in the world'. Also, schooling that is based on competition instead of cooperation and sharing, that advocates a loser and winner mentality instead of enhancing common human values is not likely to bring this about with any success because only a few voices will be heard, and those voices will be the ones deemed the most acceptable by the ruling elite. That is why in Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* he advocates social, contextual understanding through dialogue. Discussions and personal narratives are also important means which can lead to empowerment and consciousness-raising, thereby fostering critical thinking. But at the same time Macedo (1995) and Freire discuss the dangerous tendency to regard critical thinking and discourse ability in isolation and divorced from social change. Then it becomes little more than an intellectual exercise, but ineffectual to bring about change. The relationship between inner realization and action in the world at large is a question of integrity they say, and once there is a clear understanding of one's "historical position" in the world and having identified what oppression consists of, it should be impossible to sit back and rest in the status quo. To take action and help others to help themselves, is part and parcel of the liberation process.

In Western countries the loss of ability for critical thinking is a type of illiteracy according to Macedo (1993) and has become widespread but hidden in 'developed' countries. In part this is due to the power of the media to select what is newsworthy, the power of subliminal advertising and indoctrination originating from many sources such as the entertainment industry, but it is no less a failure of the education system to focus on empowering young people instead of domesticating them, to train them in critical thinking as a means of helping them to throw light on the implications of their experiences. Freire (1970:71) explains how we are in a vicious cycle, having 'internalized the oppressor' through our training, we hold on to what we think we know and the patterns we are accustomed to, fearing freedom for ourselves and for others. But as he

further points out “Faith in people is an *a priori* requirement for dialogue”, so the teacher must have that faith in people as the base for the practice of teaching, allowing different voices to be heard.

For upper primary and secondary school learners it is important to apply the learning and put it into practice outside the classroom, connecting to the larger world, the individual to the collective, the particular to the universal. For web users being connected worldwide is a normal and every-day situation. In today’s world where there is an abundance of information available and exposure to different cultures, inner realizations must be tested against the outer reality. So as children become older and young adults, critical thinking and being able to universalize from their own experiences, as Maria Montessori (1972) proposed, becomes vitally important, both individually as a developmental stage and collectively for a democratic state to have any real meaning. Macedo (1995:381) describes this as “linking experiences to the politics of culture and critical democracy” in favor of “middle-class narcissism”.

3.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have discussed globalization theory from different viewpoints and the need to emphasize new competencies in education. The changes that are happening fast and spreading across the globe manifest in part through the new technology, open access to information and world-wide communication networking and is creating a new sense of reality and community feeling especially among young people in the West. New technology has the potential to connect people across the world breaking down barriers that are built by vested interests. Revolutionary changes are now possible on a global level. These new opportunities require changes in education practices and teacher training in order to empower learners in creative and critical thinking.

The goals of education have been set to meet the needs of the labor market or for political ends for example they may be solely focused on creating workers for specific jobs that the market needs or towards creating uniformity and stability of a certain social order. Critical pedagogy on the other hand relies on a faith in the learner’s ability to break through the oppressive images and stereotyping that stand in the way of cross-cultural dialogue leading to world peace. The need is for more tolerance and understanding of cultural diversity, and for that the students need to learn respect for self and respect for others. After learning to trust that their point of view has independent value, students can learn how to communicate it to others and weigh it in fair

dialogue against other viewpoints. (Montessori, 1972; Freire, 1970). It calls for broadmindedness and a high level of tolerance for different ways of knowing. In creating a peaceful world it no longer suffices to know about one's own home ground. And that applies both to North and South. Education needs to embody larger dimensions than before and the underlying forces that are at work globally need to be understood.

Chapter 4

“A national system of Education is a living thing, the outcome of forgotten struggles and difficulties, and ‘of battles long ago.’ It has in it some of the secret workings of national life. It reflects, while it seeks to remedy, the failings of the national character.” (Sir Michael Sadler, 1900)
(as cited in Kazamias, 2009:38)

4.0 The Icelandic Context

The discussion on multiculturalism in Iceland is a recent one, but grows more visible both in the media and among scholars, as the immigrant population also grows in number. In all likelihood the remoteness of the island has played a major role in the mono-cultural and mono-ethnic appearance that has characterized Iceland up until in recent times. During the Second World War when Iceland was occupied by the British and later the Americans took over, the number of soldiers reached close to being as many as half the population. Young women were seen to be at great risk and for a short period, a special school for city girls was run in the countryside to protect them from the foreign men. Those who socialized with the soldiers were often ostracized and regarded as traitors to their country and culture (Ísberg, 1993).

The consciousness of being a small nation and the fear of being swallowed by “the other” has at times manifested as a strong nationalistic sentiment, romanticizing the purity and greatness of the people and country. Many of the myths thus created have become long-lived and deep-rooted. Loftsdóttir (2009a:242) points out that the nationalistic discourse has often been characterized by the belief in the “hidden protective power” which is inherent in the sentiment itself. It follows that it is the duty of Icelanders to protect the purity of the race, culture and language from the corrupting foreign influences that would destroy this purity. People do not only have stereotypical images of other nations Loftsdóttir (2009) explains, but national imagery also exists in the collective consciousness of how the nation is and wants to be seen by outsiders. In Iceland’s case, the imagery of purity has played a major role in portraying the country’s image, and this applies to unspoiled nature, uncontaminated language as well as descent from an elevated version of the Vikings. In another study Loftsdóttir (2009) discusses the importance of

being able to critically analyze the historical context of the stereotypical images. The “fall of the banks” in 2008 has resulted in a reevaluation of values and images from a large part of the population, as can be seen in the media and discussion forums of different kinds.

During the economic boom period, leading up to the bank collapse, foreign nationals were increasingly interested in settling in Iceland and employment was not hard to find. Statistics from the National Registry (Hagtölur, 2010) show that in 2008 there were 5841 immigrants that became Icelandic citizens compared to 573 in 2000. The latest figures show that 6,8 % of the Icelandic population are originally other nationals. The rapid changes that are occurring in Icelandic society, both internally and in outer appearance, are resulting in many Icelanders feeling the need to reevaluate or reinvent some of the myths that were commonly accepted before the bank collapse in the fall of 2008. The massive disillusionment that many have been experiencing as a result calls for a search for a new and better identity and to learn from the past. Increased political activity through grassroots movements has resulted in large gatherings such as the so-called National Gathering in November 2009 (Þjóðfundur, 2009). “The Anthill” (Maurapúfan), master-minded and organized the event calling on randomly chosen representatives from the entire population, to discuss values they thought should be emphasized, and broadly what actions should be taken in the wake of the economic and moral crisis that had befallen the nation. The gathering found that integrity was the most important value that needed to be upheld, and that an education system where each and every individual could thrive was to be prioritized. At an extended National Gathering held later, focusing entirely on education, the gathering agreed that creativity, critical thinking, tolerance and communication skills were most important to enhance in the education system. It was pointed out after the gathering that often the things people were calling for the loudest, were those they perceived to be lacking.

4.1 Curricular Traditions

In Iceland, The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issues a Centralized National Curriculum Guidelines. All the schools in Iceland follow these guidelines but are allowed to interpret them to best suit the special emphases of each school. The current guidelines are based on The Upper Secondary School Act No. 92, from 2008. In Article 2 the general objectives are prescribed:

The objective of the upper secondary school is to encourage the overall development of all pupils and encourage their active participation in democratic society by offering studies suitable to the needs of each pupil. The upper secondary school prepares pupils for employment and further studies. It shall strive to strengthen its pupils' skills in the Icelandic language, both spoken and written, develop moral values, sense of responsibility, broadmindedness, initiative, self-confidence and tolerance in its pupils, train them to apply disciplined, autonomous working methods and critical thought, teach them to appreciate cultural values and encourage them to seek further knowledge. The upper secondary school shall strive to communicate knowledge and train pupils in a way that provides them with skills to carry out specialized work and with solid foundations to pursue further education (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 2008).

The role of the National Curriculum Guidelines is to formulate objectives and the organization of school activities at upper secondary level. It is divided into two parts, a general part and a descriptive part for study programs. In addition each upper secondary school is required to issue a school curriculum guide. The school curriculum guide is also divided into two parts, a general part and descriptions of study programs that the school offers. In the general part most schools take up the same or similar wording as the general part issued by the Ministry, but with slight variations of emphasis. Descriptions of study programs in upper secondary schools must be submitted to the Minister of Education for approval. In a few of the elective subjects within natural science, economics and history the need for global understanding is implied rather than specifically noted. It is on the other hand often specified that the focus should be on Icelandic circumstances. But each school has a free hand in how to interpret the guidelines e.g. in the choice of books and teaching methods. The course description for ENS 503 for example in the National Curriculum says that the emphasis should be on writing skills and the varieties of English in different parts of the world. Yet a look at the school curriculums shows that the literature chosen for this course is in most schools by British and American writers. In Great Britain and The United States there exist a number of different dialects and various pronunciations of the English language, but there seems to be no representation from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa for example. Advanced courses both in history and social sciences include international affairs as a part of the study program, but these are all elective courses and their main focus was found to be on the Western tradition. The subject of Life skills on the other hand is compulsory for all secondary school students. Each school decides whether

to teach one 3 unit course or divide it into three single unit courses that are spread over a longer period. The National Curriculum Guidelines provide a description for both these options.

In these guidelines the main focus is on getting to know the ins and outs of the school as well as training the students in communication skills, and character building. If Life skills is taken over a longer period it appears that a broader field of topics are meant to be discussed, such as religion, politics, gender issues, environmental issues and many more. After contacting key persons in the schools for my research and explaining what I was interested in, most of them pointed me to the Life skills teachers, since they would be the most likely to discuss global perspectives, also some recommended social science teachers, history teachers or even geography teachers. But out of these only the Life skills class is compulsory for all students. In the last of the three one-credit courses the goals are described in the Guidelines: „The student should develop a global consciousness and sense of responsibility towards coming generations regarding the utilization of collective resources”(Menntamálaráðuneytið, 2004a).

Ingólfur Ásgeir Jóhannesson (2007) analyzes the guidelines for Life skills class and finds that there are a lot of issues intended to be discussed that are potentially controversial, and call forth potentially conflicting views. There are however, he remarks, no guidelines to be found as to how best to deal with these “hot” issues, the main focus being to allow the students to express themselves and develop communication skills, but not to delve deeply into political issues. In fact he finds that most schools have a policy of avoiding political and religious matters in class discussions. On questions concerning multicultural/cross-cultural issues, Jóhannesson (2007) claims that the Ministry of Education concentrates largely on the matter of teaching the newcomers Icelandic with no emphasis on dealing with situations that may arise in a multicultural society. Especially, he notes there is no mention in official documents concerning the politics of religion and how they are to be dealt with. Jóhannesson (2007) concludes that the dominating view is to separate religion and religious matters from those dealing with culture as a whole, as it is regarded too controversial to be taken up for discussion. This was validated in this study. It is however interesting to note that the Christian worldview and value system is implicitly present both in the school system and the society at large, and must be evident to those who come from a non-Christian background. There is no subject in upper secondary schools devoted to religious studies or even philosophy except a few schools that offer an optional course of this type towards the end of the study period. Several of the interviewees in this study regarded

religious studies as a subject belonging to the primary school level and controversially to be too sensitive to discuss with beginners in upper secondary school. In recent years there has been a growing debate in Icelandic society concerning the compulsory subject in primary school that used to be referred to as Christian studies, but has undergone a name change to Christianity, Ethics and Religious Studies. Loftsdóttir (2009) calls attention to the fact that in spite of this name change it is also stated in the Curriculum Guidelines that Christianity and Christian values are fundamental to the Icelandic society. Thus it would seem that a deeper analysis of the subject and how it is taught may be needed, especially if the Icelandic society is to be recognized as multi-cultural. The debate, however, as Loftsdóttir (2009) has pointed out, revolves around whether or not the subject should be taught at all, instead of discussing an alternative way to teach it with the focus on a multicultural context and calling attention to different paradigms or philosophical frameworks.

Regarding the subject of Life skills, Jóhannesson's (2007) analysis of official documents and the Curriculum Guidelines show that the goals of Life skills class are mainly focusing on the psychological development of individuals, rather than the social side. Getting into discussions and social analysis is reserved for the advanced social science classes and are often optional courses. Like the topic of religion, a critical look at society and allowing learners to critically analyze their position in the world, are regarded as too sensitive or politically loaded issues. This type of teaching practice Macedo (1995) says that it merely leads to conversation as opposed to dialogue and learning, and without the chance to exercise critical thinking students merely accept the received knowledge handed to them in a top-down fashion.

4.2 Multiculturalism and Cross-Cultural Education

In the National Curriculum Guidelines it is clearly stated that schools should be inclusive, that they should be for everyone without discriminating against learners based on their different origins, religious differences etc. But as Icelandic society has become more multicultural in appearance many teachers are confronted with the dilemma of staying focused on teaching and working within the Icelandic cultural traditions i.e. maintaining high standards in Icelandic, but at the same time finding ways to deal with the reality of multiculturalism in the schools and in society. This has called for a broad discussion about multiculturalism and what it means to be

multicultural. Culture is by definition a mixture of many different influences that originate in a variety of places and times, and is constantly changing. It follows that each and every culture can be said to be multicultural. In Iceland the prevailing image of the national culture has been that of a mono-cultural society. The term multicultural has, Loftsdóttir (2009) points out, been used primarily to define the culture of the “other”, thus instead of actually supporting inclusiveness and tolerance for diversity and viewing the whole society as multi-cultural it has called attention to and further sharpened the line between ”us” and the “other”. In a study of the primary school level Loftsdóttir (2009) calls attention to the National Curriculum Guidelines for primary schools in the section for social sciences.

It is stated that students should get to know “new Icelanders” (nýbúa), where they come from and a few reasons why they moved here.” “Interestingly, this is placed under the heading “the world”(heimsbyggð) but not under “Country and Nation” (land og þjóð), implying that these individuals are a part of the wider world but not a part of the Icelandic nation (Loftsdóttir, 2009:246).

In the National Curriculum Guidelines for secondary schools, the emphasis is on integrating the “new Icelanders” into the dominating culture and this is primarily done through teaching them Icelandic. Those schools that have special programs for the newcomers usually offer other separate classes to them as well.

In the fall of 2002 the School of Education, University of Iceland first offered an optional course in multicultural studies and two years later it expanded into an optional M.Ed. program. Today (2010) there are also foundational multicultural courses included in the college. As a result, much is being written on these issues by scholars and laymen alike, and there is a broad agreement that the schools and teachers in particular have a great responsibility and transformational power in how Icelandic multicultural society will develop. Only a few of the upper-secondary schools in Iceland have been assigned the duty by the Ministry to set up special programs for immigrant students, two of these are represented in this study. Due to the overall emphasis placed on teaching newcomers Icelandic Ragnarsdóttir (2007) has found that immigrant students in Iceland are often marginalized and maladjusted mainly because they are not integrated well enough into their peer group among Icelandic youngsters. Other researchers have found that

racism is increasing in secondary schools and notably among boys who are themselves socially on the margins (Ragnarsdóttir, 2007; Jóhannesson, 2007) among others have suggested that the national curriculum be radically revised to place multicultural literacy skills as the main focus and incorporate them into all subjects.

4.3 Chapter summary

The way that multiculturalism is addressed in Icelandic secondary schools and reflected through the curriculum guidelines is primarily through an integration policy that involves teaching the newcomers Icelandic and about Icelandic society. The need for a broad cross-cultural education for all students in secondary schools is not specifically stated in the National Curriculum Guidelines or the school curriculums in the five schools included in this study. This implies that in the schools all students are required to adjust to the dominant Icelandic culture.

Global perspectives are most notable in the curriculum guidelines when addressing insights into the interconnectedness of natural resources on a planetary basis. Research shows that there appears to be a prevailing reluctance to address controversial issues in the schools, such as those concerning religion or those which might have political undertones. It is hard to see how these issues can be side-stepped though if the schools are to follow inclusiveness policies and if they are to develop in the students a capacity for critical thinking like the curricular guidelines prescribe, since the avoidance of these issues necessarily means that only the dominant opinions are heard and unquestioningly accepted.

Chapter 5

5.0 The research Findings

5.1 The Schools

As stated previously, the research includes five different schools, two are in the center of Reykjavik (S5 and S3), two are in suburbs and one is outside the city limits (S1). Four (S1, S2, S3, S4) are comprehensive schools, which means that they offer vocational training as well as academic programs, one (S5) is purely academically based and the most most exclusive of the five. While the Upper Secondary School Act and the associated National Curriculum Guidelines are legally binding for all upper secondary schools in the country, each school can interpret the guidelines to fit their special emphases. Each school creates school curriculum guidelines, which have to be accepted by the Ministry of Education. Two of the schools have a special program for immigrant students (S2, S3) and all four comprehensive schools (S1, S2, S3, S4) have special programs for disabled students. Table 1 below portrays the main similarities and differences between the five schools.

Schools	Place	Type	Immigrants	Disabled
S1	rural	comprehensive	no	yes
S2	suburb	comprehensive	yes	yes
S3	urban	comprehensive	yes	yes
S4	suburb	comprehensive	no	yes
S5	urban	academic	no	no

Table 1. Overview of the Schools

In each of the schools' curriculum guidelines there are different aspects that are highlighted which reflects the image of the school or the main aims and goals that have been accepted as policy to work by. Here follows a short overview of the main points that each school makes in their published school curriculums in the general part. The general part has to do with the visions and goals that the school has set for itself and the references here are those most likely to have relevance to this study. Some of the schools have published detailed material of this kind, while others have given it less priority.

5.1.1 In S1

The school's vision entails that everyone should be seen as having value. Everyone should have respect, for themselves, for others, and for the environment. The school's main goals are to offer a variety of effective means of study with an emphasis on professionalism, creativity and ambitious developmental initiatives. And the main role of the school it is stated is to prepare students for further studies, to offer students occupational studies that are well connected to employment opportunities and to prepare students to live in a democratic society. This school was one of the forerunners of establishing Life skills as a compulsory subject in Iceland. Jófríður explained that the administrators of the school have always been supportive of the work that was done on developing the subject and recognized the importance of it. The school has also promoted the view that using the new technology is a step forward, but according to Jófríður, the potential that is inherent in young people's computer skills is not being utilized. Under the heading "International affairs", the school claims to have as one of its goals to offer as many students as possible the opportunity to get to know other cultures or students from other countries. There have been a few exchange students in the school and Icelandic speaking students of other ethnic backgrounds, but otherwise the student population is essentially mono-ethnic in appearance.

5.1.2 In S2

The school's curriculum stresses the fact that the school works according to the National Curriculum Guidelines, but also the fact that they offer a variety of educational programs to fulfill different needs. S2 has both academic and vocational training programs with long and/or short term courses. The multitude of opportunities that the school professes to offer is presented

as a special asset of the school. The special program for disabled students, and several other programs offered by the school are frequently mentioned on their homepage.

Yet the fact that there is an immigrant program in the school was hard to find anywhere, except on a special page that gave a list of all the school's educational programs. Áslaug, who is charge of the immigrant program knows the students personally as well as their home and family situation. She organized the special program after visiting other schools with immigrant student's programs, but said that there is no direct cooperation between these schools. The immigrant program in S2 is planned for two years and offers an orientation class, Icelandic as a second language, special Life skills classes, computer skills and various kinds of special support that Áslaug arranges.

It was noticeable that on the photos portrayed on the website of showing various school events, both classroom and extra-curricular, there were no pictures of students of different ethnic origins.

In the general part of the school curriculum a description of its goals says among other things that the school wants to prepare students for further studies, and challenging jobs in the workplace, and furthermore enhance the students' independent, critical and creative thinking. Also the school strives to encourage students to become active participants in a democratic society, and to gain an understanding and appreciation of national and cultural treasures. Finally it claims to develop the will among the students to engage in positive interactions with others and to show them consideration and tolerance.

5.1.3 In S3

The school curriculum for this school does not describe any particular vision or goals of the school, beyond stating that the school follows the National Curriculum Guidelines. There is a page devoted to the history of the school and another to describe the different programs that the school has to offer. The school has an independently administered department consisting of two programs. One is for disabled students and the other for immigrant students or newcomers to the country. The program for the newcomers lasts two years and focuses mainly on teaching Icelandic as a second language, but teaches other subjects as well. It also provides assistance to

individual students with their studies and if needed they also provide interpreters for shorter periods.

Several photos can be viewed on their homepage that show the variety of educational programs and the multicultural appearance of the school. Neither Fríða nor Geirlaug, both teachers at school S3, thought it necessary for the school to put into writing any specific vision or goals that the school aims for. Even the multicultural appearance that all three interviewees at this school took great pride in telling about, was nowhere mentioned in the introduction to the school. The emphasis on the history of the school can also partly serve to explain the atmosphere of tolerance that the teachers claimed was so characteristic of the school. In the early days of the school Geirlaug explained, there had been discontent among the staff when a reading class had been started for students with poor literacy skills and some had felt the school would lose credibility as a result. The same type of conflict had arisen when the school had first started offering classes to foreign students. Geirlaug thought that the discontent had come from a group of teachers, or type of people, who would always try to see the world as homogenous with a clear boundary between *us* and *them* and had a strong tendency to oppose all sorts of changes. But, she said, today these voices were no longer heard and attributed it to the way the entire society was changing. Also the school authorities are making it clear that the school policy is for everyone to show each other respect, irrespective of age, class, profession, gender or ethnic origin.

In the early days of the school Geirlaug explained, there had been a few influential teachers working in the school who were all members of the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) and she thought that the tolerance policy in the school may have started with them. They had been kindhearted and felt strongly about helping all who were considered less fortunate. She stressed the fact that they had never been preaching their religion and she regarded their belief system on the one hand, which was a private matter, and on the other hand their attitude towards their fellow man, which was reflected through their work, as separate issues.

5.1.4 In S4

This school has put a lot of work into their school curriculum guidelines and have a lot of information about the visions and goals of the school, the general part alone is five pages long. The school claims to encourage the all round development of its students, to prepare them for active participation in a modern society, for full employment and further studies. The school also

professes to meet the different needs and interests of its students, to expand their horizon, strengthen their abilities for critical thinking and creativity, to increase their personal development and morality, enhance human understanding, tolerance and respect for both people and the environment. The key words that are meant to be guidelines for both teachers as well as students in this school are: *self-discipline, equality and charity towards your neighbor*. While the motto of the school is stated to be: *discipline, respect, high expectations*. One of the aims of the school is to strengthen interdisciplinary cooperation between subjects, which calls for a closer cooperation between subject teachers. The school supports a self-sustainability environmental policy and healthy lifestyles, which are factors that Guðríður emphasizes in particular in her Life skills teaching. Both the teachers that were interviewed in S4 felt that the school administration was very supportive of the further development of Life skills and the interdisciplinary teaching methods that it entails

School four has a special chapter on international relations on their information site. There it is stated that there have been a number of projects that both students and teachers have taken part in. They have been on study tours abroad and partners from other schools have come to visit the school. All of these projects have been European. There is one project though that will be mentioned later which the school participated in indirectly, that is a school project in India.

The school curriculum guidelines also include a special equal rights statement which focuses on gender equality.

5.1.5 In S5

Like the other urban or city school, S5 is an old school and the homepage devotes due space to the history of the school and its traditions. In the school curriculum guidelines for S5 the school's main emphases are described in a few words, as well as the school's vision and perceived role. The main goal is stated to provide students with a solid base in academic studies so that they become well prepared to pursue further studies at university level either in Iceland or abroad. The school promises to help develop abilities of discernment and critical thinking, social competencies and personal development aimed at making the students capable of active participation in a democratic society. Initiative, responsibility, tolerance and open-mindedness are also traits mentioned that are highly regarded and aimed at in this school.

In the class-based system, they say, lies the opportunity to develop social skills such as being capable of taking on responsibility and working in a group setting. The form of instruction is mainly in the form of lectures by the teachers, but the various extra-curricular student activities are meant to benefit the students and develop their social skills. Both of the teachers interviewed in S5 claimed that the school emphasized the natural sciences and mathematics, and that the students were exceptionally bright and ambitious.

In summary all the specific educational goals that the schools mention are taken from the National Curriculum Guidelines. Critical thinking, creativity, tolerance and the abilities that are needed to become responsible participants in a democratic society are the most commonly mentioned. Cross-cultural perspectives on the other hand are hard to find in any of the schools' curriculum guidelines and it varies a great deal whether time is given for any global discussion in the compulsory courses. In schools S2, S3, and S4 the Life skills classes are 3 credits and a great number of topics to discuss. In S1 where the Life skills class is 6 credits several weeks are dedicated to learning about various aspects of foreign cultures. In S5 the Life skills class has a different function, but there is a compulsory social science class for first year students that includes some exposure to global and cross-cultural issues.

5.2 The interviewees

The teachers that I interviewed teach different subjects, but what they have in common is that they may be discussing global or cross-cultural perspectives in their classes. It was found that in most cases these discussions were limited to the psychological sphere and focused on recognizing common stereotypes. And the purpose was to develop a more tolerant attitude towards diversity in appearance and race.

Out of the eleven teachers that were interviewed seven of them teach Life skills class. Five were language teachers and four others had a social science background. One teacher had a natural science background and both the teachers who held administrative positions in the immigrant student programs also had experience teaching disabled or handicapped students. The subject of Life skills is not taught as a specialty at the University of Iceland, School of Education and all those who teach the subject at the upper secondary school level are trained to teach other subjects and teach Life skills in addition to their main subject. Nonetheless all except one of the

Life skills teachers expressed a high level of job satisfaction in teaching this subject, and were enthusiastic about participating in developing it further. One Life skills teacher, Jófríður in S5, found much more job satisfaction in teaching “her own subject”, which involved language teaching. Different from the other Life skills teachers, she had little decisive influence on how or what to teach in this class.

Table 2 provides an overview of the teachers interviewed in this study and their relevant teaching subjects

	Teachers	Subjects
S1	Bjarnlaug	Life skills and other
	Jódís	Life skills and other
S2	Svandís	Social sciences
	Áslaug	Immigrant students and handicapped (special ed.)
S3	Fríða	Immigrant students and handicapped (special ed.)
	Geirlaug	Life skills and social sciences
	Sigríður	Life skills and other
S4	Guðríður	Life skills and other
	Hjördís	Life skills and social science
S5	Jófríður	Life skills and other
	Þuríður	Social sciences

Table 2. Teachers and Teaching Subjects

Bearing in mind the differences between the Life skills teaching and social science teaching in these schools I have chosen to discuss them as separate groups. The most important differences are that Life skills is a compulsory subject for all first year students, whereas the social science courses are optional and only available to students in specific educational programs. This means that the students attending social science classes have chosen this line of study, and they may be one or two years older than the students in the Life skills classes. School 5 is an exception since they have a compulsory social science course for all the first year students as well as a Life skills course. I will first give an overview of how the Life skills teachers approach the topic of global/cross-cultural perspectives followed by the approaches of the social science teachers.

5.3 Life skills Teachers

5.3.1 In S1

The administration in this school has given added importance to Life skills in the curriculum and classified it as a 6 credit course, which means that there are twice as many hours spent on teaching the subject as in the 3 credit courses in the other comprehensive schools. Both Bjarnlaug and Jódís enjoyed teaching the subject and found that it was the close cooperation, co-teaching and inter-disciplinary nature of Life skills that made it so enjoyable. They also mentioned the freedom from a fixed curriculum and time to engage in discussions with the class. The main emphasis Bjarnlaug claimed for the Life skills program was to focus on self-image and stereotyping. It was equally important for the students to learn how to express themselves and their feelings. The foundation was to build a strong individual base and issues that were discussed were arranged in a sequence from the personal, to the family, to the community and in the end the focus was placed on the wider world including international organizations such as The United Nations, the Red Cross, Amnesty International etc. The subject is arranged with the focus on the individual and slowly expanding to the collective and universal. In their discussion on the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights they are provided with opportunities to discuss the equal rights of all human beings in the world and then take a closer look to see if it is really so. They

explore the lifestyles of their peers in other countries and compare e.g. education and employment opportunities in the two countries.

Concerning the question of discussing different religions or different philosophical frameworks Bjarnlaug said it was not taken up and that all religious instruction belonged to the primary school level. Jódís on the other hand thought that the first year students were too immature to participate in those kinds of discussions. If Life skills classes were to be continued with older students on the other hand, there would be opportunities to discuss religion, politics and philosophical questions which she was very much in favor of. But at the same time Jódís thought it was doubtful in the near future, due to increased financial cut-backs.

The last part of the Life skills program in S1 is devoted to learning about a foreign country in groups and giving a presentation about it. Bjarnlaug expressed her concerns about how little the students knew about the geography and history of other countries. This project required the students to seek and find relevant information through the internet and they were encouraged to use chat rooms, download local music or other cultural material from their country of choice.

The teachers both thought that the students were very prejudiced and racist and that it was important to teach them to be more tolerant. Jódís informed that the intension behind the class discussions about sense of self, images and stereotyping was to help students to better understand their prejudices and that they are often labeling entire groups due to only one or a few individuals. In the same way whole nations may be labeled due to a few groups within them. On the other hand they both expressed doubts that the class was in fact bringing about a change in the students' views, but they hoped that it would contribute to a change in their attitudes at a later time.

Both Bjarnlaug and Jódís agreed that the school community would benefit from having foreign students in the school. Jódís thought that it was the entire school culture that had to change and that there needed to be much more cooperation between all the teachers on the one hand and the teachers and administration on the other. As it is she explained, each teacher is busy attending only to their own subject and has little awareness of what the other teachers are doing. She felt that having foreign students in the school would open up great learning opportunities for the Icelandic students and for teachers as well. She complained that there seemed to be little awareness or interest in utilizing these opportunities. In reality, there had been a strong tendency for the foreign students, even if they were so few, to become isolated, in fact she said it was quite

visible in the school that there was a clear division between the main student body on the one hand, and the handicapped and foreign students on the other. In this setting, chances to learn tolerance and gain in cross-cultural understanding were lost.

Jódís had participated in several experimental teaching projects, and one of these she said was to teach exchange students and students from immigrant families in a separate Life skills class. She had found this unpleasant and was herself in favor of an inclusive policy. The initial language barrier she felt would not be a hindrance among peers if they were together on an equality basis.

5.3.2 What is most important?

Bjarnlaug and Jódís both thought it was very important that the students learn to understand their own society better, but a prerequisite they felt was to understand themselves and their judgmental attitudes. They also agreed that visitors from foreign countries and narratives from and about their peers, were effective ways to influence and expand the students' horizons. Jódís commented that this was an undervalued method in teaching. Bjarnlaug also felt that there needed to be more contemporary history and world geography in the compulsory classes.

In the comparisons that the students were asked to make of another culture Jódís admitted that there was a clear tendency to focus on those things that were deemed by our culture to be worse in some way, to focus on the negative traits rather than positive ones. But on the other hand she said that the teachers were well aware that they should not speak in a derogatory way about other cultures, and that they often called attention to fantastic architecture, strong leaders and culture. Perhaps she wanted to throw a softer light on the teachers by this comment.

One of the goals of the Life skills class she explained was to open the student's eyes to see their lives in a larger perspective and that their conditions are actually very good compared with the conditions that many of their peers live under in different parts of the world. She felt it was important also that they learn to appreciate their roots in Iceland, and that not too long ago there was great poverty in the country when most of the population lived in turf houses.

Jódís was the only teacher in all the schools who expressed concern regarding the tendency to encourage nationalistic sentiments. But on the other hand both teachers mentioned the ability to empathize with the "other" as important and Jódís said she got them to imagine themselves or other Icelanders in a similar situation as the immigrants may find themselves in.

She would ask questions like: “What are Icelandic people like when they are traveling abroad? What are they like when they move to another country? Are they easily integrated into the new society? Do they immediately adopt all the customs of the new country and forget the ones from Iceland? Why are Icelandic people so proud of the ‘West-Icelanders’ in Canada?” These questions and other similar ones often facilitate a new understanding and expose the underlying nationalistic thought patterns that Icelanders have a strong tendency to fall into, she explained.

5.3.3 In S4

There were many similarities in the approach to Life skills in this school and the one just mentioned. The teachers also expressed a high level of job satisfaction and were enthusiastic about the development of the subject. They both felt that they were doing pioneer work and that their contribution was important. Guðríður and Hjördís both felt that there needed to be more training available for Life skills teachers and the requirements made more explicit. Hjördís said that life skills teachers have to have a developed emotional intelligence as well as a keen social awareness. Because the curriculum guidelines for this subject are so broad, the teachers in S4 had been chosen due to their different backgrounds and were often co-teaching the classes. Like the teachers in S1 both Guðríður and Hjördís thought it was a great benefit for both teachers and students that the teachers worked in such close cooperation and recommended a more interdisciplinary approach not only in Life skills teaching but for all subjects.

Guðríður felt that Lifeskills class should first and foremost teach the students about culture and communication skills as well as how to respect themselves and others, physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. Developing healthy patterns of communication Guðríður explained, depended on healthy lifestyles and on gaining a solid foundation in the understanding of oneself. Therefore she said, the Lifeskills class starts with focusing on the individual and gradually expanded out into the larger world. The class dedicates one week each semester to social service projects in the vicinity of the school. This is thought to make the students more tolerant, build their self-esteem and enhance the positive image of the school in the near environment.

Hjördís agreed that the starting point always had to be the individual person and the focus had to be on strengthening each student’s individuality and positive self-image. There is little

time given to a 3 credit course and what the teachers spend most time on may vary. But in general there is no time to discuss global or cross-cultural perspectives in this class, except relating to self-sustainability and environmental issues.

Global perspectives or different philosophical frameworks are only discussed in connection with equal rights and prejudice discussions or environmental issues. But since the curriculum guidelines were so overloaded with topics it was impossible to do them all justice. Both teachers felt that all the topics were very important and should be included, so they were hoping that Life skills would be increased from a 3 credit course to 9 credits and spread over the entire study period. They both felt that global or cross-cultural perspectives belonged in classes with older students. Guðríður said the first year students were too immature for discussions that called for deeply analyzing the subject, while Hjördís agreed with this she added that the size of the classes and short amount of time that she had with the first year students was detrimental to deep and meaningful discussions.

Both teachers remarked that the students were very prejudiced against foreign nationals especially Poles, who represent the largest number of foreign nationals in Iceland. They described the ways they thought best to deal with these attitudes and how they conducted their lessons. The main importance in both teachers' view was to enable the students to experience as directly as possible what it was like to be in the "other's" shoes. Storytelling, role-playing and listening to peers was seen to be effective, also taking a closer look and analyzing the nature of stereotypes and preconceived ideas about the 'other'. Both teachers however voiced their doubts that the attitudes of the students changed after going through the course. They both felt it was extremely important to educate the students to be more tolerant and that there was a real need in Icelandic society to root out racial prejudice.

Those references that are made to other countries and different cultures that the teachers mentioned are almost all made to call attention to extreme and negative factors and this is partly to help them to appreciate their own culture more. The topics could include environmental issues, human rights and inequality. The only time that the "third world" is mentioned Guðríður said it is when she talks about sustainable development or forced labor. She admitted that she saw nothing wrong with encouraging the students to boycott certain products that were known to be produced through forced labor. The positive aspects of other cultures were sometimes touched on in the form of the influence of their food and music and how it has enriched Icelandic culture.

On the topic of a collective human culture in which everyone shares a responsibility for the common good Guðríður remarked that this concept seemed to be more readily accepted by the girls than the boys. She said that she did not have scientific research to back this up but that there was a very noticeable gender difference in this respect and the reason she thought could be traced to the powerful negative male stereotyping that boys became victims to. But in a very practical way the school had proven how they could take a collective responsibility for those less fortunate Guðríður explained with some enthusiasm.

One of the teachers in the school had been connected to a Christian school in Pakistan and had been able to arouse general sympathy for the cause among the school staff. Many of the teachers as well as some students, became adoptive, distant parents of children attending this school by supporting them with monthly donations throughout their school years. The school also sponsored several fundraising projects for this school. This was several years ago and new students in the school are mostly unaware of this project. The possible political or religious implications of running or supporting a Christian school, in a Muslim country were however never addressed. To the question of whether other religions were discussed, Guðríður replied that in the past there had been time set aside for discussions on religion and the local priest had been asked to give the class. But Guðríður had found that especially those students who did not belong to the Lutheran state church felt vulnerable during these discussions and that this was a sensitive issue for them. So instead she has included a similar discussion in an experimental special Life skills class for older students and there this discussion is also conducted by a priest.

5.3.4 What is most important?

Morality and moral issues appear to be given some importance in this school. Helping others less fortunate is discussed and put into practice. Guðríður felt strongly about environmental issues and public health whereas Hjördís felt women's rights and human rights for all were the most important issues. She spoke of our moral duties to those less fortunate and that a society built on each person only thinking of him/herself was not a place where most people wanted to live. She also claimed that she promoted a relativistic view on other cultures and paradigms of thought, but at the same time she was firmly rooted in her own perspectives and judgments. She condemned what she saw as breaches of human rights and gender inequality. What she classified as

belonging to these categories she regarded and presented as being beyond dispute. When questioned about different value systems and conflicting views she explained that even though it was right to have a relativistic attitude regarding different cultures, there were some things that should not be classified in this manner especially regarding the gender related oppression and inequality.

In spite of the fact that some of the issues concerned could be defined as politically controversial, she had no doubt about the importance and validity of these discussions and said that her co-teachers and school administrators stood united behind her. Hjördís used the Life skills classes as much as time would allow for these issues but her optional social studies classes she found much more fruitful and world politics were reserved for advanced social science classes. She hoped that the new school curriculum would place much more emphasis on Life skills for all age groups which would allow all students to develop better cross-cultural understanding, by establishing friendships between cultures and working on comparative studies of, for example, family relations across cultures.

5.3.5 In S3

As with the Life skills teachers in the previous two schools Sigríður in S3 was enthusiastic about the subject and she too felt that it allowed for a lot of freedom and creativity as a teacher. She too complained about the limited time that was given and the large number of topics that Life skills class was intended to cover. Like the other four teachers she mentioned how satisfying it was to work as a team with the other Life skills teachers. Sigríður believed that her school was very ambitious regarding this subject and was hopeful that it would be given more time and extra credits in the new curriculum. Similar to the other two schools already mentioned the Life skills teachers here also had different backgrounds and rotated in teaching all the Life skills classes.

Her fellow teachers Fríða and Geirlaug were of the opposite opinion and thought that Life skills might be reduced in the near future because many of the head teachers did not understand its importance. Sigríður said that many of the topics in their course book for Life skills are potential platforms for global and cross-cultural discussions. None of the chapters however are specifically defined for this purpose. In this context she named the topics: human rights, culture and the media as well as environmental issues. In this school they used the same approach as the

others i.e. they started by focusing on the individual, family, school, Icelandic society and then eventually the larger world.

Sigríður felt it was important to make a connection between what was going on in the classroom discussion and to the society outside, so each week she had a visitor come to the class or the class went for a visit. They had been to the Amnesty International Center in Reykjavik and the UNICEF office etc. S3's main focus is on vocational training that will often provide the students with international certificates; therefore Sigríður felt that it would help to prepare students to live and function abroad by broadening their vision and understanding of other cultures. The best way to capture the students' interest and attention Sigríður felt was through personal narrative from their peers. The stories from young people who had lived abroad or who for some reason had adopted a different perspective was, she said a great benefit for the class to hear. There had been guest speakers to visit the class who had been working as volunteers in far away and different places to share their experiences. Sigríður said that the students were very interested in these talks. On the other hand the school did not sponsor any specific functions to connect the foreign students from the immigrant student program who were within the very same building, with the Icelandic students. Any attempts to bridge the gap between these student groups belonged in the realm of extra-curricular activities organized by the student federation.

Sigríður had found that her students were full of prejudice and stereotypical images of other nationals, and this was especially true of those who had not traveled abroad. The older students were often more prejudiced than the younger ones she said. Sigríður and Geirlaug thought it was important to get the students to empathize and put themselves in the "others" shoes, for example Sigríður said by picturing Icelanders as foreigners in other countries and what it would be like.

5.3.6 What is most important?

Sigríður felt that it was most important to convince the education authorities of how important Lifeskills class really is and to allow more time for the subject with classes for different age groups and deeper discussions. Unfortunately however many of the students do not feel at ease to express themselves freely in class until towards the end of the term period she said and there is not much time to teach them skills in either active listening or to participate in dialogue. But

Sigríður said that there was a little time allowed to teach them „conversation technique“. They discuss the power that words can have and how easily they can cause misunderstandings. In this part of the course they also discuss different etiquette in cultures and how important it is to respect the variety of cultural understandings. The best way to learn, she said is to go and experience the foreign culture yourself but the next best is by listening to personal narratives of peers telling about their experiences of other cultures. Sigríður thought it was very important for the students to learn to function in other cultures and understand different perspectives, while Geirlaug pointed out that within every culture there is a multitude of cultures and that it was most important to realize this and learn to live at peace in such an environment.

5.3.7 In S5

The emphasis in Life skills class in this school was quite different from the three schools discussed above. The school itself was also different in a number of ways and some of the emphases are clearly related to the all-round internal structure of the establishment. This was the only one of the five for instance that has a compulsory social science class for first year students and that could partly explain the different emphasis that there is on the Life skills class in this school.

Some of the Life skills teachers in the other schools had pointed out that they were aware that many schools were using the compulsory Life skills class to provide teachers with less than full time teaching in their specialized subject extra working hours. When this is the case they said, it often goes hand in hand with a lack of ambition to promote and positively develop this important subject. This may or may not have been the case for S5, but the school is a small one and the teacher that was interviewed was first and foremost a teacher of another subject and had not taken any courses in teaching Life skills. There was one head teacher of Life skills who provided the others with the instruction materials, consisting mainly of photo copies and power point instructions for each day's lesson, as well as quizzes. All four of the Life skills teachers in the school got the same teaching material handed to them from the head teacher. Jófríður had difficulties explaining specific lessons or their purpose as she did not have the notes in front of her she said. This seemed in a striking contrast to the close cooperation and creative flow that the other Life skills teachers had described with enthusiasm. Sometimes there were guest lecturers in the Life skills class, Jófríður said and mentioned a policeman who had come to speak about

alcohol and drug abuse and a priest to speak about loss and sorrow, which also had to do with friendship and tolerance she added. In this school there was a quiz after each new topic had been presented, and while Life skills is a compulsory subject for all upper secondary schools, S5 did not have a final exam or final grade in the subject. Jófríður found that an estimated 30% of her students did not take this class seriously or made fun of the class material. She thought that many students had negative feelings about going to Life skills class and they felt it was a repetition from what they had already done in primary school.

Regarding problem solving skills and working in groups Jófríður mentioned a project they had in the Life skills class. The students were asked to go on an imaginary camping trip where they had to solve conflicts that they were presented with. These were concerned with someone in the group breaking rules, like smoking inside the tent or drinking alcohol. The purpose of the exercise Jófríður explained was to realize the importance of having rules and punishments for those who break them.

In the Lifeskills class there is no discussion on global or international organizations such as the Red Cross or Amnesty International she informed. On the whole she said the Lifeskills class has an underlying focus on tolerance and character-building but not on the global level.

Jófríður felt that she was addressing the global/cross-cultural issues more in other classes that she taught, where she also had the freedom to teach the way she wanted to and thought best. She exposed her students to the multicultural diversity and tolerance for different appearances found in Europe, but she did not mention any cultures outside those of Central Europe. She thought that the mono-cultural appearance of the Icelandic population caused people to be less tolerant than in Europe. She expected many of her students to go abroad to universities and that it was important for them to learn to become tolerant regarding the different ways people looked and behaved.

Jófríður said that although she had strong political convictions herself, she would not state her views openly in class since she thought it went against the teachers' code of conduct. She said that a teacher is not allowed to express her political views, but admitted that her views may be clearly visible to the students through her teaching. But she added, she felt that it was her duty to be objective and thought that she was.

Since this school is exclusively academically based there are no students in the school who are not fluent in Icelandic and therefore there have been very few of foreign decent. Jófríður

mentioned one student that she remembered who spoke Icelandic fluently but had a Chinese appearance. She said that she had been worried at first that he was being bullied by the other students, but then she had realized that he himself had been making fun of himself all the time and had proven to be a great humorist. On the rare occasions when there had been foreign students attending the school she had not noticed any change in either the instruction or the curriculum.

5.3.8 What is most important?

Jófríður felt that in the Life skills class it was most important to teach the students to adopt positive attitudes, to be tolerant of other peoples' views, to become independent learners and learn certain ways of interacting. She named the example of being able to sit nicely at their desk and listen, show their teacher and other students respect, and not to give negative or cynical comments in class. This attitude she explained was closely related to being tolerant, that is, to be able to keep your opinion to yourself. She said that sometimes people were prejudiced against someone else and could not help it, and then it was important to be able to resist expressing it, and to realize that there may be different opinions. The worst form of intolerance becomes manifest in bullying and there had been instances of this in the school, and in that case a student councilor had come and spoken to the class, but she had not been present.

5.3.9 In S2

In this school the Lifeskills class had also been given a different function than in the first three mentioned above. Each school is free to interpret the National Guidelines rather freely as already noted, since the volume of topics that are mentioned for this subject, are impossible to cover in a 3 unit course. The Life skills course is used here as an orientation class to introduce the new students to the school and the various study programs that are offered there. Also there is a discussion on the problems of alcohol and drug abuse. None of the compulsory courses in this school were said to have references to cross-cultural or global perspectives, besides the foreign

language courses, which are all focused on a few countries in Europe, except in English which also links to North America.

5.4 Social Science Teachers

5.4.1 In S2

The teacher Svandís, focuses mainly on international conflicts in the class that we discussed on contemporary history and is intended only for students pursuing studies in the social science program. She teaches her students about Afganistan and the Talibans, as well as Iran and the nuclear weapons issue. She sometimes uses newscasts from Reuters or other news agencies in class. The students have several writing assignments and are asked to write about events from various different places, all depending on what has been occurring most recently. The examples that she named were House-arrest in Myanmar, Women in Afganistan, One-child policy in China, and more. In the case of the Israeli - Palestinian conflict she said that the roots of their problem were to be found deep in the history and culture of each and that this was explained carefully to the students. She calls attention to how public opinion has changed from being sympathetic with the Israelis to condemning them for their use of violence against the Palestinian people. But she stressed the fact that she was merely presenting facts and that she did not portray any personal political leanings at all. The aim of the course was to create an understanding in the student's mind why things are as they are and why some things are not likely to change while others have the possibility to do so.

The discussions about different religions are restricted to clashes between these. She mentioned the Talibans in particular but also India and Pakistan. She also discusses Myanmar and explains why Aung San Suu Kyi has been under house arrest for many years. A persistent question that came to my mind was how she explained all these situations with causes and effects as if these were quite obvious facts, and she seemed to have no doubts regarding her own objectivity. It also struck me that all the issues that the class was presented with from outside Iceland were centered on negative aspects like wars or other types of conflict and breaches of human rights.

On the question of whether there were any discussions on Africa, she replied that there was currently a lot of attention paid to Africa because of the HIV epidemic. Also she said they talk a lot about Icelandic development programs and Icelandic aid to Africa. This was emphasized in the course and how Iceland has financed and initiated projects in Sub-Saharan African countries. In this discussion there has been very little or no mentioning of the role of the World Bank or the IMF in Africa she said, but on the other hand the teachers discuss the corruption in development aid programs in African states prior to the millennium goals set by the UN. in 2000.

We talked about how she presented different viewpoints when discussing these different conflicts around the world. She said that she allows the class to discuss these issues and then she herself represents the perspective that she feels is missing in the class's discussion. She does not avoid controversial issues, she says, and is often very direct in her comments in the hope of provoking some reactions. It was most important she felt that *all* viewpoints were represented, so she would represent views of the right, the left or center, the majority opinion or that of the minority. She directs the course of the discussion in the classroom, but in the name of neutrality and to look at all perspectives involved. The aim of the class is to train the students in formulating their opinions and taking a stand rather than to resolve these controversial issues. Students today she says are much more passive, than in the past and far less politically active. On the other hand she said that they often got carried away in discussions, especially about matters like abortion rights, women's rights and rape issues. These matters she said were "emotional issues", not essentially political in nature and tended to raise heated discussions, especially in mixed gender groups. When such "sensitive" issues come up she said she had the tendency to not interfere and just sit back quietly until and if it "got out of hand", then she put a stop to the discussion.

On the question of foreign students or immigrants attending the course, she informed that they could not reach this level if they were not fluent in Icelandic. But she added that there were many who had a different mother tongue and had mastered Icelandic and were taking the exact same courses in the school as any other Icelander. Svandís went on to explain that there were many adopted children from Asia and colored children who were Icelandic. She said that there are frequent references in these classes to aspects of racism. In these discussions she says that she is very conscious of trying not to step on anyone's toes. She explains to the students with foreign

backgrounds that she regards them as full-blown Icelanders and that if they feel uncomfortable when the discussion centers on discrimination and their skin color, they should come and talk to her about it. In spite of the fact that she insisted that she regarded these students as “Icelanders”, she readily admitted that her teaching and mannerism gets altered when they are present in the classroom. This is even so with students who are brought up in Iceland and are native in their mental make-up but have the “*baggage*” of being “*purebred*” foreign when both parents are from somewhere else. I was curious to know if she thought the students appeared to make these types of distinctions among themselves. To this she remarked that there were no visible distinctions being made if the “foreign” student could speak fluent Icelandic and was known to the group, perhaps from the primary school. To state an example of the opposite, Svandís pointed to the special study program for immigrant students in this school. These students she said tended to keep to themselves and even though they came from different parts of the world, they formed a separate group that socialized together. These students had little or no experience of the Icelandic primary school, which is based on a class system and the students get to know each other on a daily basis.

The question of how Iceland is portrayed in the global landscape Svandís explained that when discussing global matters she always tried to link the discussion to Iceland in some way, e.g. in discussing The United Nations, Iceland’s application to the Security Council was highlighted as well as the development aid.

When questioned if there was any mention of peace fighters from around the world, she said that some of them were mentioned. She was very fond of the film about Gandhi and had often asked students to view it and write a paper on it. Martin Luther King and Mandela she said are mentioned as heirs to the tradition that Gandhi started but there is not much time reserved for this side of globalization. The Dalai Lama she did not include in any discussion since she felt he should be classified differently, as a religious and national leader, but a peace fighter in a different way than the others.

5.4.2 What is most important?

Svandís said she would like to see more history and social studies for all students, but that the younger and less experienced students would probably not be as engaged in a class on

contemporary history and would probably only reflect their parent's views in the discussions, she thought.

And if she could initiate some changes, she would like to see an advanced course where the students reflect on how the society is built up, their present situation and where they are heading. She would also like to include more discussions based on contemporary cultural trends within the theater, music and films industry with less about politics and conflict situations, but at the same time she sees this as a utopian dream.

5.4.3 In S3

Geirlaug taught both social science classes and Life skills, two subjects that have much in common she thought. She was also involved with curriculum development in the school. She said that the Life skills class was the only compulsory course in this school that would mention any global issues. Optional courses like advanced history and social sciences are only available for students in certain study programs. In the Arts and Design courses for example the focus is solely on Western traditions. The same is true for history and social science courses, the focus is first and foremost on the Western cultures and very little reference is made to other parts of the globe Geirlaug informed. Even when using the term 'world history' it will usually mean 'Western history' she said, because there was almost no place in the world where Western thought and especially the effects of capitalism had not been a major influence. And when discussing other continents, she said that it was normal that we see these through the eyes of Western man and pointed out that most of the information we get comes through the Western media.

Geirlaug explained, that the question of whether the students learned to see themselves as being part of a larger whole and to see their lives in context with what is taking place in other parts of the world is nowhere to be found in any of the school policy documents, or the curriculum guidelines. But she added that the school encouraged both students and teachers to take part in exchange programs. It was her opinion that different cultures and ways of thinking had to be experienced in the countries themselves to gain the proper insight. These exchange programs however were mostly in Scandinavia or other European countries and only very few of the students would be able to participate in them for several reasons.

In this school both Geirlaug and Frida thought that prejudice was mostly a thing of the past. Prejudice, Geirlaug said, always stems from the same roots, it was a way of thinking, that

everything could be divided into black or white, either-or, us-they. It was important she felt that the students adopt the relativist frame of mind, and be able to respect others on their own terms. And this could be best done by being in a school with a multicultural image which would teach them naturally to put themselves in other people's shoes and be more tolerant. She felt that it was more effective this way than if the students would have to read about issues relating to tolerance and intolerance, or about other philosophical frameworks. Students of different agegroups and of different nationalities can be seen in the hallways of the school, Geirlaug said, and at lunchtime. She felt that it was natural for the students to socialize with those who spoke their own language and that in the hallways in the school this could be easily seen, the Polish students were together, the Spanish in another place talking together etc. Also it was normal she said that there was a dominant culture in the school, which was the culture of those that rule, the ruling majority. This was accepted by everyone and minority groups were not forced to be separate and they did not show any signs of feeling oppressed by the majority. When the foreign students had learned sufficient Icelandic, she added, they could also join their Icelandic peers in the same classes.

The culture of the school as Geirlaug described it had a multicultural appearance, and rather than promoting unity it was characterized by a peaceful tolerance. It was natural, she said, for the dominating culture to be Western with Western values. This she claimed was something that everyone knew and accepted. And while there is no specific class or any forum in the school for students from different parts of the world to engage in any kind of dialogue, she thought that young people realized anyway very quickly that they were fundamentally the same but had different „*baggage*“ due to their different backgrounds.

About her optional and advanced social science class Geirlaug said that it was important for the students to learn about Icelandic culture and about cultural influences that have affected it in time and space. She mentions The United Nations in this class and The Declaration on Human Rights, but focuses mainly on aspects that involve Iceland in some way. And in the human rights discussion she refers mainly to the Icelandic constitution.

Concerning political issues and matters where conflicting views may come up, Geirlaug said that she tried to stay on neutral ground and not go beyond broad definitions of left, central and right in defining political views. Above all she said it was important that the discussion did not become emotional and personal as this would lead to irrationality and she wanted the students to be more analytical in their approach. Also regarding a possible forum to introduce religious

differences (or similarities) it was her opinion that it would belong in the Lifeskills class if it were not generally regarded as too sensitive to be discussed. And in any case expanding the student's awareness as global citizens was not a direct goal of the school except in relation to the possibility of functioning on the jobmarket abroad.

5.4.4 What is most important?

Geirlaug felt that developing tolerance for diversity was important for the students and that the environment should reflect this diversity rather than having it stated somewhere in writing. In her opinion it was less important to learn about global issues than to learn how to function properly in the world at large and ideally she thought teachers should teach by their own example.

5.4.5 In S4

Hjördís teaches Life skills and social science classes. In the Lifeskills class she said she does not get the chance to discuss world politics or the power imbalance that exists on a global level, but that in an optional social science class, she discusses it extensively and focuses on the developing nations. There Hjördís says, she starts by distinguishing between third world nations, which in the minds of her students tend to be put under one hat. She discusses the commonly held stereotypes for people from different parts of the world, and the power of the Western media is discussed. She appears to have no qualms about presenting before the students her own political interpretation of events and how power is distributed along the North-South divide. On the question of being judgmental when it came to other cultures she said that of course we could not measure us against them and that it was important to maintain a relativistic attitude. But when it came to human rights and women's rights as well as each individual's right to happiness and freedom, then it was wrong to be relativistic. These were absolutes and applicable to all human beings. She did not think it was her duty to appear neutral when it was a clear case of right or wrong, she said.

5.4.6 What is most important?

For Hjördís the transformational effect on the students was what seemed to matter the most. She believed that her direct and personal approach would bring about changes in her students. She

claims that she can see how they change and that she is not afraid to push them to make them understand. She has them write a diary in her class where they note down their feelings and impressions, she also expects them to be active in discussing these in the class. Her field of interest is first and foremost equal rights, human rights and to uproot all kinds of prejudice. She makes an effort to make them understand that we are all responsible for each other and for the earth as a whole. Hjördís said that she tells stories and gives examples to make them visualize situations. She would sometimes even talk of shocking issues to get them interested and engaged for example genital mutilation and Hindu widows being burnt on their husbands funeral pyres. The point in that example she claimed was to call attention to how far ahead Iceland is in the equal rights campaign compared with the Hindus for example. She thought it was often helpful to look at other cultures in order to better understand our own culture in comparison. And on the positive side, she said that immigrant populations had enriched our culture in many ways e.g. the food culture. Regarding the issue of global or cross-cultural perspectives, Hjördís said she felt it was extremely important and that she thought that it was probably mostly lacking in the Icelandic population.

5.4.7 In S5

The social science teacher Þuríður taught social science classes on various levels and one of the classes in this school was elementary and compulsory for all the first year students. In this class Þuríður says that she focuses partly on the global and not just Icelandic circumstances, but the purpose was to see Iceland in a global context. One of the advanced classes is concerned with the sociology of developing countries and focuses on North-South relations.

In the advanced classes there are often few students and Þuríður says that she gets to know them on a personal level. She believes that they learn more and better when she as a teacher can connect with them on a more close and personal level. In some cases she had even become their confidante. She said that many of her students majoring in the natural sciences need the personal guidance she offers, since they have no prior experience focusing on personal issues in their studies as is often required in the social sciences. She thought that most of these students had little difficulties in acquiring the necessary skills to grasp the social science methodology though. She knew of a few exceptions and gave an example of a straight A's student majoring in

natural science who had found it hard to deal with, that there were some questions that did not have simple yes or no answers.

In the social sciences Þuríður says it is easy to include global or cross-cultural perspectives and claims that she does so whenever possible. She uses every opportunity to call attention to the fact that there exist many different philosophical frameworks and many value systems, and when she is talking about Iceland or Western Europe she calls the students' attention to the fact that she is not talking about the whole world. In spite of the fact that this school was so mono-cultural, Þuríður believed that the students had a good grasp on different paradigms and ways of thinking in different parts of the world. It was she said because of their intelligence and that they read a lot, and because they are well informed when it comes to news in different parts of the world. Their attitudes are intelligent and rational according to Þuríður, but in real life situations they often proved to be full of prejudice. Their feelings are those of a typical 16 year old but they are quite often very good at thinking their way through an ill-founded conception and Þuríður believes this is thanks to their reading skills and practice in using mathematics.

Þuríður uses statistics in global comparisons to help her students gain a better understanding. Tables and charts on the U.N. website are often used she said and she expects her students to draw conclusions from them and explain what they think the statistics mean for example concerning standards of living. Also she felt it important to use facts and figures and comparison charts to place Iceland in a global context.

5.4.8 What is most important?

The most important skills for these students to learn in Þuríður's opinion is to be able to form an objective opinion and move away from the tradition of using empty rhetoric about issues that they knew very little about. Þuríður felt that it was part of the problem that led to the fall of the banks in Iceland, that there was no strong tradition to objectively reach independent decisions. She realized she said that it was not the most popular view in these postmodern times, but that she felt certain that things are often quite clearly one way or the other, all is not a matter of opinion or relative.

These students are above average in intelligence she said and the school was known for emphasizing the natural sciences. It was her opinion that those with mathematically, and scientifically trained minds become more independent thinkers and less easy to manipulate.

If she could teach the first year students more than the basic introductory course, she would like to develop a tradition of discussion groups that was based on problem solving skills and cooperation. The way the teaching was organized today she said was in the form of lectures and the students play a passive role in the classroom. But she added that it was not a typical student body in this school and perhaps there were different criteria for these students than students in other schools.

5.5 Administrators

In the two schools S2 and S3 that have special immigrant programs the administrators of these programs were interviewed. Both of these teachers had previous experience teaching disabled students and in S3 Fríða administered both the special programs, for disabled students and for immigrants. In both schools, S2 and S3 the main emphasis was on teaching Icelandic to the newcomers and to integrate them as far as possible into Icelandic society. In S3 immigrant students had several subjects besides Icelandic together in a class-based system and joined other classes after two years or earlier if they felt they were ready. In S2 the immigrant classes had Icelandic, a special orientation class and Life skills together. In other subjects they joined Icelandic students in special classes that were designed for students who had not met the minimum requirement grades on entering upper secondary school. This was irrespective of how well they knew the subject as long as they had not acquired a proficiency in Icelandic.

Both Áslaug and Fríða realized that the foreign students were having problems getting to know the Icelanders and thought that it was because the immigrant students themselves were not trying hard enough.

5.5.1 In S2

Áslaug teaches the orientation class and plays the role of being key person in the foreign students' support system and their confidante. This support system she says is no less important

than teaching. They are offered assistance teaching and on occasions a mentor is provided for individual students. The Icelandic students entering the assistance program as helpers can get extra credits for their work. Áslaug also related that she had organized a cultural program with the immigrant class, a kind of „show and tell“ from their home land and they were asked to invite other students to come. None of the students had invited an Icelandic student but other foreign students had been invited to the class. Áslaug had herself then gone out into the hallway and found a few Icelandic students and invited them in.

Trying to socially integrate the immigrant students through extra curricular activities is problematic Áslaug explains. The student council has been approached and asked to give an introduction to student activities in the school, and this was done in Life skills class. There are however great barriers in some cases when ideas of “having fun” are different. The Icelandic students often associate it with staying out late and drinking. Muslims among the students and many other students from Asia for example, do not drink and may not be allowed to stay out late. Áslaug says that she encourages the immigrant students that she teaches to get involved and try to get elected on the student council, and if the traditions and types of entertainment that they are sponsoring there are inappropriate, they should change it from the inside to suit themselves. She often spoke of “them” as a uniform group with similar needs in spite of the many nationalities.

Regarding religious differences and whether there was any discussion on this, she gave a quick answer, that there was no talk of religion and that it was a private matter. She further informed that religious education belonged to the primary level and ended there, also for students coming from abroad. Áslaug believed that there was nothing mentioned in the curriculum in any of the compulsory subjects, that addressed the fact that there could be different ways of understanding, among different peoples. But she added that she did not know what other teachers were doing in their classes, and that no doubt the compulsory history and social science classes discussed other paradigms in today’s world. This however is not the case, since those courses are at an advanced level and are optional and only for students who are in the social science program.

She has contact to international or global organizations only when needed for the special immigrant program and she said that she is glad that they are not more visible in the school society in general. Surprisingly she even expressed animosity towards UNICEF which she said was everywhere with their propaganda and she felt that it did not belong within the school walls.

On the other hand she said that there was an increased interest within the school in environmental issues, but thought that the global aspect should be discussed in biology class.

Finally on the topic of prejudice in the school, Áslaug said that she was not aware of any racial prejudice or intolerance among students in the school, but that the Polish students had occasionally complained of this. Some of the ethnic groups in Iceland have developed small but strong communities, she explains, and the students often socialize and receive support within these communities. These people are peace loving and very happy to be in Iceland and never complain, not even about the weather she says. Actually, Áslaug adds, all of the immigrants here appear to really like living in Iceland. And due to the multicultural appearance of the school, not only with the special programs for immigrant students and the handicapped, but also due to the many older students and great variety of study programs, Áslaug believes that there is more tolerance for diversity in this school, than in other schools that are academically based and more mono-cultural in appearance.

5.5.2 In S3

Friða has a leading position in the administration of the „special programs“. In her view the most important thing for the students to learn, is a positive attitude towards life in general and the society they live in. She also felt it important that they learn to become independent learners. She thought that most teachers were working towards these goals even though they were not specifically mentioned in the curriculum guidelines. On the other hand she thought that global awareness was not understood by teachers as a priority in their teaching.

She felt strongly that the school should be a place for all who wanted to learn, irrespective of gender, color, race, nationality or level of competency. There had been some conflicting views in the school in the past, both concerning the disabled students, and more recently, the foreign students. Not all the teachers agreed that it should be the role of the school to teach these students. But she believed that there were not many voices of discontent heard today. The school has a multicultural image, but this did not effect the way the curriculum was set up she said. I was interested to know in what way the foreign students influenced the school culture. Friða explained that the foreign students were very visible in the school, mostly in the corridors, but that during the two days each year that the school dedicated to all sorts of alternative activities for the students, those who were from other cultural backgrounds opened an international café in the

hallways of the school. This she said was very popular among both teachers and students. The students from the immigrant classes would bring ethnic food and sell for a small price during these days. She felt that the school could take pride in showing off these students and making them even more visible among the student population.

Friða thought that many of the foreign students communicated and interacted with Icelandic students, but that there were also many that kept to themselves and interacted mainly with others of foreign decent. Some of them had complained that it was hard to get to know any Icelanders and she thought this might be partly because they lacked the courage and were afraid they would not be accepted into the groups of Icelanders. The school itself does not instruct the Icelandic students specifically about befriending or socializing with students of foreign decent.

On certain occasions the school had resorted to using a kind of Mentor program for a few chosen students. In such cases an Icelandic student is asked to help the immigrant student to adjust and be their „guide“. Also the school has recruited help from outside, for example from the Refugee help and Red Cross. The average student she said has had no formal introduction to these organizations in the school beyond those who have sought help from them.

On the question of whether there is much prejudice in the school and among the students, she said that it was not the case. She ascribed this to the fact that the school had this multicultural appearance which she said prevented prejudiced and intolerant views to thrive. She also claimed that the school's foundation was built on a tradition of tolerance. Admittedly though there had been some incidents of bullying in the past, which could be seen as deriving from a form of intolerance, but not necessarily racial or ethnic.

Work on the new curriculum guidelines for the school she said has already been done, and there were no major changes in the policies regarding the work with immigrant students. The emphasis is on teaching Icelandic and preparing them for working and living in Icelandic society.

Asked whether there were any discussions about different religions, Friða said that this was not so. The students had many different religious leanings and that it was often a sensitive issue. She thought that it was discussed a bit in Lifeskills class and in one of the Icelandic courses in the immigrant program, but first and foremost it belonged in the Lifeskills class, she felt.

The courses that have to do with other cultures or philosophical frameworks would be in history, social studies or art history class, besides the Lifeskills class she said. Of these only Lifeskills class is meant for all students, the others are optional at advanced levels. But she

added, due to the nature of the school and its focus on employment in the industrial and service sectors, these types of subjects were not being prioritized and it was rather the sciences and technology that were seen as important. Overall Friða emphasized the importance of the image that the school had of exhibiting multi-culturalism and a high level of tolerance.

5.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have given an overview of the information that I found most important and relevant to my study from the eleven teachers that were interviewed. There is also stated the main emphases of each school and how they exhibit their main goals in their respective school curriculums. The implications of these findings will be discussed in the next chapter in the light of globalization theory and critical pedagogy as portrayed in chapters three and four.

Chapter 6

6.0 Summary and Discussion

In the beginning of this thesis I called attention to a personal teaching experience where I found the need for global/cross-cultural perspectives, greatly undervalued. This led me to undertake this study, in the hope of gaining a clearer picture of cross-cultural education in upper secondary schools in Iceland.

In this chapter I will discuss what are the most relevant research findings presented in the previous chapters. I will connect the discussion to the theoretical framework presented in chapters three and four, and attempt to give answers to my research questions.

6.1 Connecting to Key Concepts

The underlying thread that my interview guide was based on was spun out of the discourses on globalization and those of the so-called “transformationalists” in particular. One of their fundamental arguments is described by the term “glocalization” (Robertson 1992), the global and the local united in one term. There has been much debate about the effects of globalization and the changes that are being seen in countries all across the globe. The “transformationalists” place the focus on the dialectics between the global and the local ascertaining that there is in fact a mutual relationship of give and take that is being manifest. With the added impact of global influences, the local culture is strengthened as a natural response. The “strengthening” may manifest in a number of ways and degrees, from certain aspects causing the enrichment of already existing local traditions, to the extremes of nationalism. How a culture changes and a nation reacts to the growing impact of globalization the “transformationalists” see as rooted in the nature of the local culture (Giddens, 1999; Robertson, 1992).

In this research the “local” is defined as the dominant culture characteristic for Iceland but at the same time each school has created a certain school culture through their educational policy documents and stated goals and aims. The overall perceived role of education varies slightly between schools and in the approaches of the individual teachers. This is partly visible through the goals and visions that the schools have published in their school curriculums, but also in what

the teachers value in their work and their visions for potential improvements, thus these have also played a role in my final analysis.

My questions of the teachers were aimed at capturing their perspectives regarding the global-local interplay in their work and with this as a background, or macro setting, I searched for the ways that these perspectives came into play on the micro level using critical pedagogy as a framework. In critical pedagogy the main importance lies in the process of becoming aware of the social context which controls the individual's circumstances as well as perspectives. Many of the schools emphasized the importance of developing strong individuals, most notably in Life skills classes, but often failed to contextualize or ground the discussions through a critical social analysis.

None of the schools had as one of its goals to increase the students' global awareness or cross-cultural perspectives. This does not however exclude the possibility that some teachers who are aware of this need may in fact be working towards this end in the way they teach. All of the teachers stressed the importance of tolerance in the phase of growing global influences, and this became a key term in deciphering my findings.

6.2 The need for Cross-Cultural Perspectives

In *Global Perspectives for Educators* (1999), a collection of studies connected to cross-cultural education there are several findings that support my study. In the Introduction attention is called to how traditional education has tended to “de-emphasize or ignore the roles of non-dominant groups in its society” (1999:5). In the same way knowledge that originates from Latin America, Africa and Asia is found to be largely omitted from the curriculum. The reason is said to be that the “role and interests of the dominant group have been defined in the curriculum as synonymous with the national interest” (1999:6). In school S3 Geirlaug's views seem to accurately echo this perspective when she states that it is a natural state of affairs for the school culture to be that of the dominant Western paradigm and equally natural for those living in Western societies to see the rest of the world through “Western glasses”. In such a setting diverse voices are not likely to be heard. Both the schools that had immigrant programs offered the “newcomers” help to adjust to the dominant culture and they were said to be not just content, but happy with the arrangements. Whether it is true or not for all the immigrant students, these views imply that the mainstream, dominant culture is fixed and not open to changes. In the dialectics between global and local therefore the part played by the global is limited.

The fear of multicultural and global literacy being promoted in the schools and the thought that it may destroy national solidarity and pride in the cultural heritage, may be more pronounced in a small nation such as Iceland. In any case it was noticeable in all the schools in my research that the discussions about foreign cultures, are always set in a comparison to Iceland and in almost all the cases the comparisons were meant to throw a favorable light on Iceland and Icelandic culture. Cole (1984) asserts that there are no research findings to back up these types of fears, which he traces to the either/or logic so often found in Western thought and is directly contrary to the meaning of the glocalization concept previously mentioned. Moreover, according to Cole (1984), to include the perspectives of others, even if they may seem very foreign, will serve to raise the level of critical thinking in the students, thus strengthening their self image and not destroying it, which harmonizes with Robertsons (1992) explanation that globalization has the potential to strengthen the local through the dialectical interchange. Without the opportunity to critically analyze the global influences and local context however, and reducing or avoiding controversial topics students will lose the chance to develop their critical thinking (Cole, 1984).

While the Life skills teachers saw it as one of their main goals to strengthen the self image of their students, the tolerance for diversity seemed also to play an important role. By looking closely at common stereotypes the preconceived ideas that the students have about the “other”, some of their ill-founded prejudices are being confronted. These confrontations however did not seem to reach beyond the psychological level and the reasons appear to be of two kinds. One that is already mentioned is the lack of importance that is placed on the cross-cultural education in general, in these upper-secondary schools, but no less the common reluctance to take up discussions in the classrooms that are seen as politically or, in a religious sense, sensitive issues. The fact that most of the teachers were enthusiastic about this subject and yet admitted that the prejudiced views of their students were not altered as a result of their efforts could be an indication that something might be missing.

Almost all the Life skills teachers found it important to enable the students to put themselves in another’s shoes and empathize with their situation, and this was best done they said, through connecting with their peers in other countries or listening to personal narratives. In the light of this information it is interesting to note that none of the schools seem to make use of the opportunities presented by the presence of foreign students in their schools, as Jódís pointed out. It was also noted that the foreign students tended to be isolated from their Icelandic peers

both inside and outside the classroom and none of the schools listed it among their goals to develop cross-cultural or global perspectives classes for the Icelandic students to help them to understand non-Icelandic students.

Besides the development of critical thinking Cole (1984) mentions four other reasons for including cross-cultural education in the school curriculum: 1. to help in understanding the “other”, 2. to learn to appreciate foreign cultures, 3. to develop skills in living with diversity, and 4. “to foster the understanding of interrelatedness and interdependence” (1984:153). According to my interviewees the issue of interrelatedness on a global level is addressed primarily in relation to environmental issues, whereas the other three are mentioned to varying degrees in the discourses on tolerance.

6.3 Discourses on Tolerance

When I asked questions about global/cross-cultural perspectives the teachers all responded with thoughts concerning prejudice and tolerance. This turned out to be a central issue in the study. All of the teachers thought that the students were very prejudiced, except for the two administrators who work with the immigrant students. Neither one of them thought that there were any prejudices in their schools. In fact they also both thought that the immigrant students were isolated from the Icelandic students because they were not exerting themselves enough to join in and socialize or because it was their choice to be separate. All the teachers, except these two expressed the need for Icelandic students to expand their horizon and increase their level of tolerance.

The ideas associated with the term tolerance were not uniform among the teachers but generally they seemed to be expressive of a Christian and Western modernistic approach. The superiority of the local culture is rarely put to question and comparisons with other cultures appeared often not to be made on an equality basis. The examples drawn upon were frequently of poverty, sickness and breaches of human rights. An exception to this was in S5 in Þuríður’s social science classes where she encouraged the students to make use of statistical data with the intention, she said, to show Iceland in a global context.

Tolerance in the sense *to tolerate* differences seemed the common understanding. In one case at least, tolerance was associated with tolerating diversity in appearances such as in dress codes or hair styles, but in most cases it was understood to imply more than merely the outer

appearance. The discourse on cross-cultural understanding often unleashed tales of good deeds that Icelanders had done abroad in helping those who were considered less fortunate, such as supporting the school in Pakistan and developmental aid programs in African countries. This type of tolerance assumes a superior status and appears to have little to do with cross-cultural perspectives, at least not as in a dialogue between cultures.

6.4 Sensitive Issues, Neutrality and Objectivity

In all the schools this was discussed or referred to. The social science teachers all claimed to take a relativistic stand when it came to other cultures, implying that they judged them on their premises. Geirlaug admitted to seeing the world through “Western glasses” and saw nothing wrong with this so long as there was a mutual and peaceful respect for differences. Svandís went a step further and claimed to be neutral and that in her presentations she did not reveal any preferential political leanings. In S4 the two teachers appeared to be less hesitant to voice their political views and openly place moral judgments on issues (gender issues, human rights, encourage to boycott certain goods etc). The social science teacher Hjördís claims to respect other cultures on their own grounds, but at the same time she admitted to having strong convictions which she presented to her students with a missionary zeal. Her views were shared by Þuríður that the students would gain by learning how to express their feelings and understand their inner nature, but at the same time she was a strong spokesperson for training the students in a scientific, objective and analytical way of thinking. Most of the teachers thought that at least the first year students, were too immature to engage in a discussion concerned with deep and sensitive matters such as religion and politics.

It may easily be argued that to ignore or avoid the questions of how politics and religion are infused into the school system and the traditional curriculum, is directly the opposite of a critical pedagogy. And it appeared that it was a common understanding among the teachers that the curriculum was free of politics and the school policies and cultures free of religious implications.

6.5 Summary of Findings

6.5.1 The Life skills Teachers

The curriculum guidelines for this subject are vast and gave the teachers a lot to choose from. In short the task involved creating a strong individual who has understood his mental and emotional make-up, can grasp the importance of a healthy lifestyle, a good family life and what it means to be a responsible member of society. Then they are to learn about Iceland's role in the international community and about international organizations. This has all been placed in a three unit course, which normally means one class per week lasting for one semester.

Five out of the six Life skills teachers that were interviewed (in S1, S3, and S4) had a similar agenda and appeared to be like-minded regarding the importance and the goals of the subject. They also had the same approach to start the course by focusing on the individual. They all agreed that in order for the students to be able to understand their environment, the society they lived in and eventually global perspectives, they needed first to have gained some insight into and strengthened their own individuality. They spoke of their own job satisfaction which they traced to the interdisciplinary methods and close cooperation between teachers of the Life skills classes. They all included discussions on human rights, culture and environment. They also agreed that personal narratives, from peers were an undervalued and effective way for students to learn.

All six of the teachers mentioned the importance of improving the student's communication skills. Increasing their level of tolerance for diversity by calling attention to prejudices and the influence of stereotyping was also shared by all the teachers. Five of the six teachers said this was one of their main goals. None of the teachers saw global/cross-cultural perspectives as a priority in this class and while they all thought it was important, they agreed that it belonged with older or advanced level students. Two of the schools (S4 and S5) had offered classes with priests from the State Lutheran Church, one to talk directly about religion, the other about loss and sorrow, which led into a discussion about tolerance among other things.

6.5.2 The Social Science Teachers

All of the four social science teachers (from S2, S3, S4 and S5) addressed global issues in their classes, but S5 is the only school that has compulsory social science class for all first year students. A comparison of these interviews showed that they all had different emphases and approaches.

In the discussions all four teachers mentioned the importance of objectivity, neutrality or relativism, but had different ways of explaining these terms and did not appear to practice what they preached all the time. In F2 Svandís claimed to present all perspectives in the discussions on various conflict situations. She also claimed to be neutral and present only facts, however she is the one who chooses what to present and what to leave out and it is hard to imagine that everything can be accounted for. In S3 Geirlaug thought it was important to keep a relativist attitude and that the students learn to empathize with and respect the “other”, but at the same time acknowledged “Western thought” as the dominant culture. Hjördís in S4 spoke of the importance of adopting a relativist attitude to other cultures but she did not pretend to be neutral. The most important part of her teaching she thought was transforming the student’s minds and opening them to new vistas. She endeavored to get the students emotionally engaged and used a direct and personal approach which she said worked the best. Þuríður in S5 emphasized the importance of being able to take an objective stance and her understanding of objectivity appeared to be the ability to engage the scientific, analytical mind.

6.5.3 The Administrators

Both the teachers who hold administrative positions in immigrant programs in the two schools S2 and S3 are experienced in teaching handicapped students, this can hardly be a coincidence and may even lead to the conclusion that individuals who are not fluent in Icelandic are being regarded the same as the handicapped.

Both schools place the main focus on teaching the newcomers Icelandic as a second language and fully integrating them into Icelandic society, but this is not surprising since the National Curriculum Guidelines describe these priorities. Both Friða and Áslaug thought that it was mostly up to the newcomers to step out of their comfort zone and get involved with the Icelandic students on a social basis. And neither one considered it a priority to educate the Icelandic students so that they could include the newcomers more readily into their social circle.

They both also thought that the multicultural appearance of the school was sufficient to breed cross-cultural understanding and prevent intolerance.

Chapter 7

7.0 Conclusion

None of the school curriculums mention global/cross-cultural perspectives as one of their goals or as part of a focus for study. That leaves the teachers with limited scope for placing this in a priority position. The stated goals of the schools were generally oriented towards attaining skills for the job market or for the pursuit of further studies and on the personal level for students to be well adjusted to the society they live in. Five of the Life skills teachers (in S1, S3 and S4) thought it was important to include cross-cultural perspectives in the education of upper-secondary school students and they were the same ones who were enthusiastic about developing the subject of Life skills and to include discussions on different philosophical frameworks. It appears to be the best way to include cross-cultural education if the Life skills course were to be extended. In general the teachers in Life skills chose to spend much of the time focusing on the individual and near environment, which leaves little time to devote to the larger world. The limited time that is given to this subject may in some cases be a reflection of the lack of importance ascribed to it by policy makers. The current curriculum guidelines however, are so expansive for this course that it is hard to see how their goals can be fulfilled in a satisfactory manner without allowing more time for the class. There seems to be a strong will and need to establish classes for older students, built on an interdisciplinary basis and discussion platform similar to the Life skills classes in many of the schools. This type of class if allowed the freedom to discuss “sensitive” issues has the potential to develop critical thinking abilities in the students through actively engaging in discourse. It could also be a way to fulfill one of the goals found in all the school curriculums, to prepare students to participate in a democratic society.

The form of the course and the freedom that it allows, as well as the interdisciplinary cooperation between the teachers, makes it different from the methods normally practiced in the schools. The teachers who experienced working this way expressed a high level of job satisfaction and wished for the entire establishment to adopt the method. It allows the teachers to get to know the students through open discussions in the classroom, which seems often to be lacking in traditional teaching. A different example is the Life skills class in S5 where the teacher expressed her own and the students’ discontent with the course where there seemed to be a rigid form to the teaching method and little freedom of expression or creativity involved.

One of the obstacles often mentioned was the perceived immaturity of the students upon entering upper secondary school and their lack of communication skills which led to a reduced capacity to reap the benefits from the discussions in class. The 16-17 year old students were considered by many of the teachers to be too young to discuss serious matters related to politics or religion because they would only reflect their parents' views, it was said. In addition, religious views were understood by all the teachers to mean something personal and too private or sensitive to be discussed. It also appeared to be seen as a separate issue unrelated to the way the society is constructed and therefore apolitical. The presumed immaturity of the students in forming opinions and discussing them entails within it also the view that they cannot be trusted to take responsibility for their education. Directly leading from that is the assumption that the school authorities and teachers are entitled to choose what knowledge bank is to be appropriate for the students who rightly are citizens and heirs of the future. But if taken into consideration the vast amount of knowledge that most of these students have access to through the internet this assumption may seem outdated.

The thoughts of the eleven teachers that were interviewed concerning global and cross-cultural perspectives varied a great deal and this influenced their teaching. The two who hold administrative posts are content with the multicultural appearances of their schools. There is noticeably less interest in cross-cultural education in these schools than in the others. If the interviews with the two social science teachers in these schools (S2 and S3) and the administrators are seen together, but leaving out the Life skills teacher, there seems to be an overall difference in these schools' approaches to cross-cultural education compared with the other schools where there are no immigrant students. Whether the difference is directly linked to the presence of the immigrant student population cannot be said for certain, but given the possibility of an underlying fear of a diminishing sense of national identity as discussed by Cole (1984), then it would seem likely that the presence of these students in the school environment could bring about such a reaction, whether conscious or not.

There was only one purely academic school included in this study. The social science teacher there claimed to make use of whatever opportunities there were in the compulsory social science class to place Iceland in a global context. Both the teachers there stressed the importance of the students' capacities as learners. They felt certain that they had the intelligence to understand abstract concept and that it did not matter that they went to a mono-cultural school.

Teachers from all the other schools criticized this type of environment and were equally convinced that their multi-cultural type of environment made an important impact on the students, whether it was immigrant students or disabled ones. In comparing the two types of schools it would seem the obvious result to find more biases in the mono-cultural school, but on reflection this cannot be confirmed with any certainty.

In the discussions concerned with culture and prejudice the teachers were often concerned with their objectivity or in appearing neutral, without political leanings or opinions. The Western scientific outlook and Christian views on morality both seemed to be dominating in all the schools, and like one of the social science teachers pointed out this is natural, since the school reflects the larger society. It only becomes problematic when it goes unnoticed and there is a lack of recognition of what the dominant culture entails. This seemed to be the case more often than not. The faith in objectivity and absolute truths built on scientific facts or moral judgments that are beyond dispute would appear to bar any comparisons or critical observations from being made.

In the “glocalization” discourse as previously mentioned, it is postulated that exposure to the global and foreign ways of thinking often sharpen and deepen the understanding of the local and has the potential to bring about a new and critical view of previously accepted premises.

The interviews revealed that there were little or no references being made to non-European cultures and the philosophical frameworks supporting these cultures like Asian or African traditions for example were not taken up, even the world history class was focused on conflict situations. There was only one of the teachers that warned against nationalistic tendencies that the teachers might be unwittingly promoting, the other interviewees seemed not aware of this tendency.

There appears to be a cultural blindness inherent in the claim to neutrality, when ignoring the underlying politics or religious implications in the local culture and at the same time pointing a finger at the affairs of foreign cultures. Avoiding political issues and maintaining a neutral stance concerning the local environment appeared not to apply in equal measures to affairs of faraway places. Based on these findings one may claim that there is a need for increased critical awareness of the accepted doctrines of learning, and this may be attained by gaining a better understanding of different paradigms of thought or in cross-cultural understanding.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

Personal information:

1. Name, age, subjects, teaching experience
2. Main interests e.g. politics, culture, travel, religion
3. What is most important in the education of young people?
4. What is the future of Iceland in a global context?
5. Do you believe in the oneness of humanity?

About teaching:

1. Do you mention the culture of other countries?
 - what countries
 - why these
 - what part of the culture
2. Do you see any point in talking about countries like India, Japan, S-Africa or Greenland?
3. Have you talked about other religions
 - why those
4. How do students think about other countries/continents?
5. Do you discuss stereotyping?
 - prejudice
 - inclusiveness
6. Have you talked about power relations on a global level?
7. Have you taught foreign students or students of different ethnic backgrounds?
 - did it affect your teaching
 - did it affect the other students
8. What do you think about collective responsibility on a global level?
9. Is there any global/cross-cultural education in the school?
10. Do you talk about: UN, Amnesty, Red Cross/Red Crescent, IMF

Appendix B

TEACHERS' CODE OF ETHICS 1

The Icelandic Teachers' Union

Teachers' Code of Ethics

A code of ethics for teachers has been developed in order to promote professionalism and strengthen teachers' awareness of themselves as a distinct occupational group. The code serves teachers as a guide in their work.

1. Teachers work to educate students and promote their general development through teaching, nurturing and training.
2. Teachers respect students' rights, safeguard their interests, strengthen their self-image and demonstrate respect, interest, and concern for every individual student.
3. Teachers uphold the equal rights of all students in their work in the educational system. Teachers endeavour to counteract prejudice and do not discriminate against students on any grounds, such as gender, nationality or religion.
4. Teachers endeavor to create a positive working atmosphere, establish fair rules for work and personal conduct, and promote a stimulating learning environment.
5. Teachers endeavor to instill respect for the environment and cultural values in their students.
6. Teachers make every effort to maintain and strengthen their professional competence and keep abreast innovations and improvements in education.
7. Teachers cooperate with parents and legal guardians when needed and always ensure that the information given to guardians is correct and reliable.
8. Teachers respect the rights of guardians to take decisions on behalf of students who have not reached the age of majority, and teachers will not discuss a student's personal affairs with professionals outside the school unless such action is unavoidable in order to safeguard the welfare and legal rights of the child involved
9. Teachers cultivate a relationship of trust with students.

10. Teachers maintain the confidentiality of a student's private affairs and those of his guardians when teachers acquire knowledge of such matters in the course of their work.

11. Teachers uphold the honor and interests of the teaching profession.

12. Teachers work together in a professional manner, participate in policy-making and take an active role in the day-to-day operation of schools.

13. Teachers demonstrate full respect for each other as individuals in their written and spoken utterances, and in their personal conduct toward their colleagues.

This code of ethics is subject to review at regular intervals.

TEACHERS' CODE OF ETHICS 2

Development of the Code of Ethics for Teachers

The work of formulating a code of ethics for teachers was initiated in 1991 by the Educational Affairs Council of the old Icelandic Teachers' Union (KÍ). From 1993-1999, professional committees appointed by the predecessors of this union, KÍ and HÍK, cooperated to produce a draft version of a code of ethics for teachers.

In 1989, the executive board of the Association of Teachers in Preschools (FL) decided that it should have a code of ethics, and the union board appointed the first ethics committee, which has been active ever since. In 1991, the preschool teachers' union formulated a code of ethics for their members, which was revised in 1993, 1995 and 1999.

In 2001, the steering committee of the KÍ (the new Teachers' Union founded in 2000) Educational Affairs Council decided that it was time to present a draft of the code of ethics to the KÍ national congress in March 2002 for approval or rejection. When FL joined the Icelandic Teachers' Union in 2001, a new draft version of the code was produced, which was based on the FL code and a draft version of a code for KÍ (the old organisation) and HÍK formulated in 1999. The educational affairs committee, the executive boards of all KI member organisations and the FL ethics committee produced this new draft of the code of ethics. At the annual meeting of the KÍ Educational Affairs Council in November 2001, a draft version of the code of ethics for teachers was discussed and criticism and comments presented on various aspects of it. This was followed by discussion of these suggestions, and advice was also sought from the Ethics Institute of the University of Iceland.

In 2000, there was a poll of members of the primary and secondary teachers' unions, in which members were asked to state whether or not teachers should adopt a code of ethics. There was a large majority in favour of teachers adopting such a code: 86% of primary teachers, and 80% of secondary teachers. Only 6% of secondary teachers and 3% of primary teachers opposed having a code of ethics.