

Developments: Heightened focus on workplace learning

In the past year the situation of adult education in Iceland has slightly deteriorated, mainly because the government cut funding of the adult education sector. The situation of EAEAs member Association for Adult Learning in Iceland (Leikn) has slightly deteriorated and they lost some of their funding. The emergence of the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic also had an impact on the adult education sector in Iceland. The work of Leikn, however, was not severely affected by the pandemic.

In the past years the Icelandic government has analysed the correlation between skills and jobs, creating job profiles that connect specific and general skills to particular jobs. In 2019 Iceland continued this by executing pilot projects in real-competence evaluation. Real competency is the total competency that the individual has acquired by various means, for example, through work experience and informal learning. Validation of real competencies is based on the idea that education takes place in all kinds of circumstances and contexts. The program had a focus on low skilled jobs and people with little formal education. While the initiative has benefited several learners across the country, it also heightened the focus on workplace learning instead of lifelong learning.

Upskilling Pathways was further implemented in Iceland and the government launched an initiative to enhance literacy and numeracy among the population. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are integrated into state policies, but Leikn is not aware of any new policies on implementing SDGs in adult education.

Leikn continues to advocate for informal adult education against the increasing formalisation of the sector in Iceland. The importance of educating adults for a just and

social future has resurfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic and should, according to Leikn, be a government priority.

Challenges: Formalisation as a threat to adult education

According to Leikn one of the main challenges in Iceland is the formalisation of adult education. The government is taking an instrumental approach to education, prioritizing employability and adapting the education system to serve the needs of the working life.

Meanwhile, the adult education sector continues to advocate for the importance of informal and non-formal learning. In their work, Leikn draws particular attention to the relevance of civic education and the overall recognition of adult learning and education for change. In 2019 they translated and published EAEAs Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century: The Power and Joy of Learning.

As civil society is only partially included in the implementation of adult education policies, Leikns mission is to continue advocacy work around informal education and civic education. Drafting a recommendation to the Icelandic government, Leikn would like the government to recognize the importance of informal adult education and rethink the allocation of resources in the post covid era.
