

Iceland



Bjorn Bjarnason

Minister of Education, Culture and Science

Born in 1944, Mr. Björn Bjarnason was Cand. Juris at the University of Iceland. He was Vice Chairman of the Students' Council of the University of Iceland (1966-1967), and Chairman of the said Council (1967-1968). He worked as a Publishing Manager and as a News Director. He was also Head of Division of the Prime Ministry, and Dept. Secretary-General. From 1979-1984 he worked as a journalist for the Morgunbladid daily and was Deputy Editor 1984-1991. Since 1991 he has been a Member of Parliament in the Reykjavik constituency. In 1995, he was appointed Minister of Culture and Education. He has been

a member of a great number of committees and councils, particularly in the field of foreign and international politics, but also of history, ethics, and environmental affairs. He has published a number of books and articles, mainly on security policy.

New vision - new ways

The Ministry of Culture, Science and Education's Project Plan in Electronic Education 2001-2003 entails that information technology be utilised for the benefit of education and culture to create a head start for the Icelandic nation in the economy of the future. The concept of distributed education, entails an entirely new vision of study and teaching.

Instruction in the field of informational technology is intended to meet the technological advances and the computer revolution of the modern world. Teaching includes computer use, informational technology, innovation, and technical education. Computer skills can now be considered prerequisites for a favourable outcome in taking a course of study or acceptable functioning on a job. For this reason the educational system will meet pupil needs in this respect during the years of compulsory schooling so as to insure that all pupils are given the opportunity to obtain the minimum skills needed for the use and handling of computers, data acquisition, and processing and presenting information, as well as practice in various job skill requirements that the modern job market requires, such as typing and word processing.

As an extension of the Ministry of Culture, Science and Education's policy on information technology, efforts have been devoted to strengthening the premises for using the technology in schooling. Now, the Web educational gateway menntagatt.is has been opened, with information on the points of focus in education and information technology that the Ministry of Culture, Science and Education will work on over the next two years. The guideline for this work will be that Iceland continue to be in the forefront in the utilisation of new technology in schooling and providing students with a head start in the knowledge society of the future.

The Ministry of Culture, Science and Education's future vision entails utilising the features of the Internet as an information utility for schooling. There, educational materials shall be imparted purposefully and communications established between students, teachers, school administrators, parents, employers and all those connected with education. **This vision entails that traditional teaching practices develop into what may be called distributed education, with students engaging in studies in distributed learning schools. The Internet will play a**

key role in enabling students to engage in studies in many schools at once and shape the curriculum to their own needs. Distributed education will increase equal rights and everyone's accessibility to studies and create previously unknown opportunities for education. Icelandic schools have already shown that they are capable of harnessing new technology for the benefit of education. It is impossible to say where man's search for knowledge will lead him in the electronic world, but the ways described here aim at facilitating this search.

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